



NEW ENGLAND PROVINCE OF THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSION

Provincial's Newsletter

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FROM THE PROVINCIAL

Dear Confreres!

When Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York was asked in an interview who the most influential person in his life is, he answered, without hesitation, "*Jesus Christ, of course.*" A bit perplexed, the reporter clarified, "*I meant someone who is alive.*" To which the Cardinal answered, with all the surety of not merely belief but first-hand experience, "*You know? Jesus IS alive!*" (Fr. Bill Nicholas).

Easter is the greatest and the most important feast in the Church. It marks the birthday of our eternal hope. The Resurrection of Christ is the basis of our Christian Faith, for it proves that Jesus is God. That is why St. Paul writes: "*If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain; and your Faith is in vain. And if Christ has not been raised, then your Faith is a delusion, and you are still lost in your sins... But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep*" (1 Cor 15:14, 17, 20).

In the words of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC #638): "*The Resurrection of Jesus is the crowning truth of our Faith in Christ, a Faith believed and lived as the central truth by the first Christian community; handed on as fundamental by Tradition; established by the documents of the New Testament; and preached as an essential part of the Paschal mystery along with the cross...*"

All the basic doctrines of Christianity are founded on the truth of the Resurrection. "*Jesus is Lord; He is risen!*" (Rom 10:9) was the central theme of the *kerygma* (or "preaching"), of the apostles.

Easter is the guarantee of our own resurrection. Jesus assured Martha at the tomb of Lazarus: "*I am the Resurrection and the Life; whoever believes in Me will live even though he dies*" (Jn 11:25-26). Christ will raise us up on the last day, but it is also true, in a sense, that we have already risen with Christ. By virtue of the Holy Spirit, our Christian life is already a participation in the death and Resurrection of Christ (CCC #1002, #1003).

The real proof of Christ's Resurrection is not the empty tomb but the lives of believers filled with His

Spirit, then and today! The initial disbelief of Jesus' own disciples in his Resurrection, despite his repeated apparitions, is a strong proof of his Resurrection. It explains why the apostles started preaching the Risen Christ only after receiving the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, gives us the joyful message that we are a "Resurrection people." We are expected to live a joyful and peaceful life, constantly experiencing the real Presence of the Risen Lord in all the events of our lives. "*This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad*" (Ps 118:24).

For true Christians, especially priests, every day must be an Easter Day, lived joyfully in the close company of the Risen Lord. We are called to be transparent Christians, showing others, through our lives of love, mercy, compassion, and self-sacrificing service, that the Risen Jesus is living in our hearts. We need to live new, disciplined lives in the Risen Jesus.

"*Faith is not an album of past memories; Jesus is not outdated. He is alive here and now*" (Pope Francis)

Father Basil Pennington, a Catholic monk, tells of an encounter he once had with a teacher of Zen. Pennington was at a retreat. Each person met privately with this Zen teacher as part of the retreat. Pennington says that at his meeting, the Zen teacher sat there before him, smiling from ear to ear and rocking gleefully back and forth. Finally, the teacher said: "I like Christianity. But I would not like Christianity without the Resurrection. I want to see your Resurrection!" Pennington notes, "With his directness, the teacher was saying what everyone else implicitly says to Christians: "You are a Christian. You are risen with Christ. Show me (what this means for you in your life), and I will believe." (*sermon archive, Marilyn Omernick*)

That is how people know if the Resurrection is true or not: does it affect how we live?

Let us always be bearers of the Good News of Resurrection power. Happy Easter!

Marek Sobczak CM

TIME OF LENT

Lent, a time of dedicated services for priests in our Vincentian parishes, was marked by unique activities. The liturgical calendar was enriched with Lenten services and local traditions, creating a vibrant daily liturgical program. Notably, stations of the Cross services were held every Friday of Lent in both Polish and English across all four parishes. St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish in Brooklyn even had a special Stations of the Cross conducted in both languages for schoolchildren. The poignant Bitter Lamentations (Gorzkie Żale) were sung every Sunday, accompanied by adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Lenten retreats, led by Fr. Hipolit, a Bernardine friar and exorcist from Poland, and our confrere Fr. Aneesh Mathew, CM, were held in both Polish and English. St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish also hosted Lenten adorations, concerts of Lenten sacred music, and an exhibition of sacred art related to the passion and sufferings of Christ.

The unique Way of the Cross was held on the fifth Friday of Lent. This significant event was a testament to our community's faith and unity. Commencing after the evening Mass at St. Stanislaus Kostka Church, the Stations saw a remarkable turnout. More than a thousand people united in their devotion, marching through Greenpoint's streets to the Church of St. Cyril and Methodius, 1.5 miles away. The faithful, shouldering a giant wooden cross, paused to reflect on the Passion of Christ and sang penitential songs, creating a powerful and moving atmosphere.



Among the daily activities of priests in our parishes is the Sacrament of Penance. Many faithful make great use of this sacrament, coming to our churches even from very distant places. But during Lent, the number of those using the sacrament of reconciliation is always much higher. No wonder confession hours were extended each day, and in the second half of Lent, there were long lines for confessions despite the 3-to-4 priests present. It is worth being tired for such moments.

It should also be noted that throughout the Lent, donations were collected for the poor and needy in the area and for the needs of the poorest.

HOLY THURSDAY CELEBRATION

It was a blessed and joyous occasion to come together with our fellow priests from Greenpoint parishes on Maundy Thursday. The joint midday prayer at the Church of Saints Cyril and Methodius was a beautiful reminder of our unity and camaraderie in our calling. The festive lunch celebrating Priests' Day was a heartwarming gesture. The Superior of the House, Father Eugene Kotlinski, shared his kind words, Easter wishes, and blessings with us. Then greetings, wishes, and the Blessing from Superior General Father Tomaz Mavric were conveyed by Father Rafal Kopystynski, Assistant General, who came from Rome to participate in the liturgies of Holy Week and to help the priests fulfill their liturgical and sacramental duties at St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish.



HAPPY
Easter
HE IS RISEN