

EASTERTIME — Second Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:12-16; Revelations 1:9-11, 12-12, 17-19; John 20:19-31.

During the Easter season, planners are challenged to keep the Easter spirit alive within the community of the faithful. This is very much like the image in today's first reading from the Acts of the Apostles and its focus on people and their activities. We see the apostles gathering at Solomon's Portico, but are made aware of the people's enthusiastic activity surrounding them. The reconciling mission of Jesus is continued: the sick become well, the lost are found, the troubled are relieved.

The gospel speaks of forgiveness: if you forgive sins, they are forgiven ... as well as faith and belief (Thomas): Blessed are those who have not seen but believe! This belief is reinforced in the reading from Revelation: "There is nothing to fear. I am the First and Last and the One who lives. Once I was dead, but now I live — forever and ever." The Church is missioned to share the Easter light.

The Easter season is a time of rejoicing and celebration. This should be the focus of all seven Sundays. The flowers and plants are still fresh; the banners still hung. The liturgy should continue to reflect the joy of Easter and inspire people to continue the reconciling mission of the paschal season.

Perhaps a sprinkling renewal of baptism promises is an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of one's faith and one's commitment to the Church community.

This, too, is a time for parish groups to celebrate their common life together. Perhaps parish committees and/or societies could convene for an evening of party and celebration. It may be an opportunity to show appreciation as well as call people to be renewed in their various missions within the parish community. This would be an opportune time to realize the words of Sunday's responsorial psalm: "This is the day the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice."



CROSSROADS IV



Along the Way

Bishop Matthew H. Clark

Easter morning.

The brightness and warmth of this day are fitting for the feast. Easter is a day of life, hope and renewal.

At our vigil last evening, we celebrated the wonderful fidelity of the God who created us, redeemed us, nourishes us on our way and calls us to fullness of life with one another in the communion of life which is the Trinity.

Jesus is risen for the life of the people He loves so much. In His people, He does great works as through the power of the Holy Spirit. He continues to heal our wounds, to call us from slavery to freedom, to extend His love and compassion to the people of our time.

As we continue our celebration, we'll be privileged to contemplate His tender regard for His friends. He will make the meaning of the scriptures known to the two walking on the road to Emmaus. Peter, who denied Him three times, will have divine friendship lavished on him anew. The Lord's patience and forgiveness, always so graciously offered, will be extended to Thomas as he struggles with the reality of doubt.

The Church calls us in these Easter days to be mindful of the continuing presence of the living Lord among His people. We are meant to know Him as our friend who loves us and cares about us. Even more, we are invited to appreciate the way His deep regard for us leads Him to make us a part of His saving mission.

We are to be receivers during the Easter Season, but we are meant to be generous givers as well. If we have known mercy, we must show mercy. If we have been graced with life, we must give hope and encourage others.

It's a wonderful vocation that we have because we are joined by baptism to the Lord's dying and rising. Our great joy during Easter is to enter into the mystery of that relationship — what effects it has within us and how it relates us to others.

As you pray and think about this vocation in the days ahead, I would guess that two central themes will emerge. The first is that somehow you will be more aware of the people who really love you and of how their love changes your life and draws you closer to the Lord.

Secondly, I think you will somehow realize more deeply that the living love of Christ never lets us remain the same as we were yesterday. It continually leads us to new life, often in directions we would not choose for ourselves.

In all of this the Lord allows us to come more deeply into the mystery of His life. In doing so, He helps us to appreciate the mystery of our relationship to one another in Him.

The weeks ahead are a lesson for all of us in what it means to be a community of faith, a Church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Peace to all.

Pope issues Easter message: use Easter to end violence

By Agostino Bono

Vatican City (NC) — Easter is the time to join "God's great uprising" against death in the form of abortion, torture, terrorism, war and human rights violations, Pope John Paul II said March 30 in his annual Easter message.

"Man not only resigns himself to death, but he has often made death the method of his existence on earth," the pope said, reading his message to about 200,000 people in St. Peter's Square.

"Men continually inflict death upon others, people who are often unknown, innocent people, people not yet born," he said.

The pope asked for an end to violence "in the regions bloodied by guerrilla warfare and conflicts, where there arise temptations to use terrorism and reprisals, in nations where the dignity of the person, his rights and his freedoms are trampled upon."

The message capped a busy Easter weekend for the pope, which included a March 29 meeting with U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz. The Vatican announced the 40-minute meeting but did not say what was discussed.

The meeting came several days after the United States and Libya engaged in two days of fighting in a portion of the Gulf of Sidra, which Libya considers part of its territorial waters and which the United States and other nations consider international waters.

The pope had called for a peaceful solution to the conflict on March 26.

On March 27, the United States announced that its fleet had left the contested area after sinking Libyan ships and bombing an air-defense missile base.

The pope read his Easter message, called "Urbi et Orbi," Latin for "To the City and to the World," after celebrating an outdoor morning Easter Mass in St. Peter's Square.

"This is the day of God's great uprising: his against death," the pope said.

"Is not the method of death found in the

method of violence, the method of the bloody conquest of power, the method of the selfish accumulation of wealth, the method of the struggle against poverty that thrives on hatred and the longing for revenge, the method of intimidation and the abuse of power, the method of torture and terror?" he asked.

The pope called on Catholics to meet "the great challenge of peace. To choose peace means to choose life."

He reiterated his call to world religious leaders to join him later this year in the Italian city of Assisi for a day of prayer for world peace.

No date has been announced for the Assisi event.

"Christ rose at a particular moment of history, but he is still waiting to rise in the history of innumerable men and women, in the history of individuals and the history of peoples," the pope said.

"Wherever in active commitment for justice a true desire for peace emerges, there death gives way and the life of Christ is reaffirmed," he added.

At the end of the Easter message, the pope extended season's greetings in 49 languages, including Albanian, Bulgarian, Russian, Arabic, Hebrew, Swahili, Tamil, Chinese, Vietnamese and the Philippine language of Tagalog.

The Polish-born pope also added a short message in Polish, saying that God offers special comfort to the "afflicted and oppressed."

Human suffering forms part of Christ's suffering on the cross "and carries with it the seed of love and of ultimate victory," the pope said.

The pope began his public Easter weekend activities Good Friday, March 28, around noon when he heard confessions for about 90 minutes in St. Peter's Basilica.

Eleven people from Italy, Poland, Spain and Ecuador made their confessions to the pope.

Since 1979, Pope John Paul has made it a yearly practice of hearing confessions on Good Friday.

Also on Good Friday, the pope presided at an afternoon celebration of the Passion of Our Lord in St. Peter's Basilica and in an evening Way of the Cross at the Roman Colosseum.

A common theme of the pope's weekend talks was the need to recognize that sin is still an important factor in today's world, and it can be overcome through participation in Christ's salvation.

A major problem of contemporary society is the loss of the sense of sin, the pope said in a brief homily after the Way of the Cross.

"Man commits sin without calling by name what he does, but this is not the way of liberation," he said.

"It is only the way of falsifying the truth. The way of liberation reaches its goal only by

way of the truth," he added.

"And however much humanity wants to reject this truth, however much it tries to blot out the sense of sin from consciences and customs — the cross will always bear witness to this truth," the pope said.

At a March 29 Holy Saturday Easter vigil ceremony, the pope baptized 39 converts ranging in age from 8 to 54. They came from 14 countries, including 15 from South Korea.

"The primary cause of death is sin," the pope said during the homily.

Earlier on March 29, the pope met a group of Italian highway patrolmen and their families.

He told the policemen not to become pessimists because of the "distressing phenomena of delinquency and violence" they witness in their work.

"The victory of Christ over sin and death gives you a motive for hope against despair and authorizes you to hold to the belief that good will triumph over evil," the pope said.

On the evening of March 30, the pope traveled to the papal villa of Castelgandolfo, about 15 miles south of Rome, for several days of rest.

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