

Easter, 1990

My dear sisters and brothers:

Easter dawns upon us amid the action and confusion of Holy Week. Once again, our annual commemoration of Jesus' final days has given us an opportunity to reflect on the meaning of faith and on how deeply faith touches our hearts. To have journeyed with Jesus through his final days is an invitation to spend a lifetime with Jesus as we make our daily journeys of faith.

This Easter we welcome hundreds of new members into our community. Through the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, we have told our story to our new friends and listened as their story was told. We have invited them to search our riches and to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. This has been a purifying process. If you ask anyone involved in the rites, they will tell you that they experienced God's love in the lives and spirits of our Lenten elect. The Rites of Election were filled with the enthusiasm of new Christians — women and men ready to testify to the power of God in their lives.

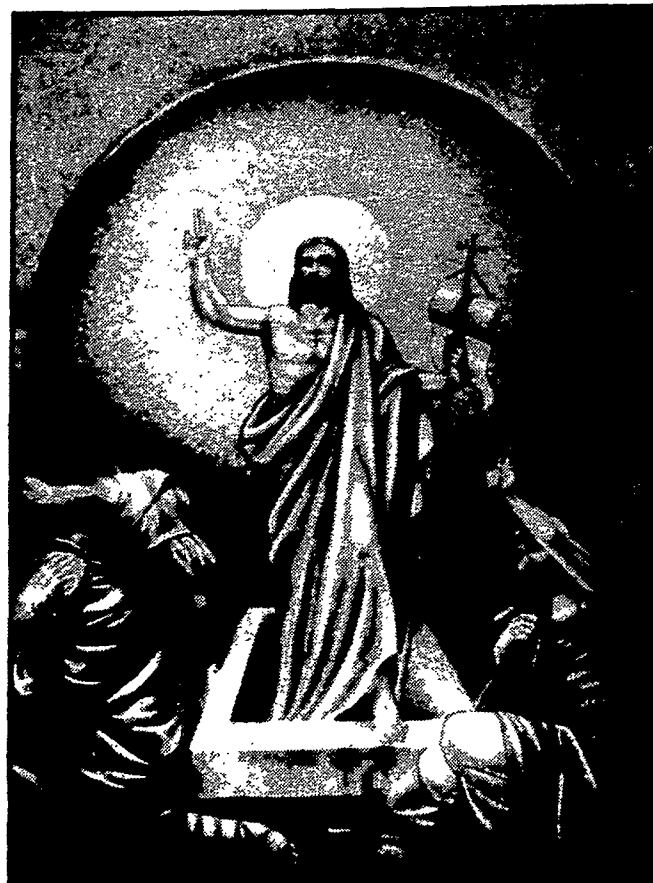
It is this excitement and enthusiasm that Easter calls forth. These neophytes become models to each and every one of us. Their faith-filled presence invites us to renew our own commitment to the Lord. It is a commitment that involves more than simple words. It is a commitment that touches our hearts — a commitment that tells the world that I am different because Jesus is risen. Faith calls each of us to renew the earth, just as truly as Jesus' resurrection has renewed us.

In these Easter days as you join with family and friends, take time to tell the story. Allow yourself to be caught up in the excitement of the newly baptized and realize that their story is your story, and that our story is part of the mystery of God. I wish the best to all in this holy time. May this Easter bring you the rich blessings your faith deserves.

Your brother in Christ,

Matthew Clark

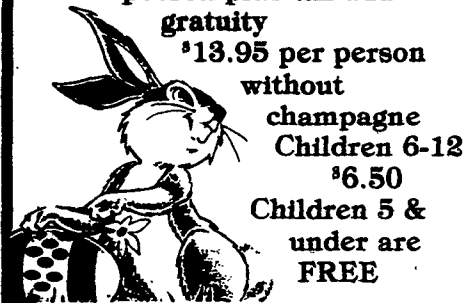
+ Matthew H. Clark
Bishop of Rochester



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Heed Easter's call to celebrate from head to foot

By Father David J. Faraone
Diocesan Liturgical Commission

Spring training puts baseball players through a rigorous season of preparation so that they will be ready, willing and able to meet the challenges of the playing season, not only individually, but as a team.

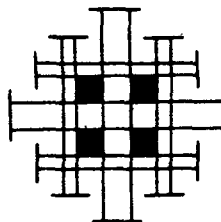
This spring's baseball lockout clearly would have had an effect not just on Opening Day, but also on the substance and length of the entire playing season if it didn't end when it did.

Notice how one season of preparation affects the season that follows it. "It is unthinkable," writes Daniel Connors, "that baseball teams would undergo a rigorous spring training, play just the opening game, and then quit until next year."

It should be equally unthinkable to have a 40-day spiritual spring training for Christians (Lent), followed by Opening Day (of the tomb on Easter Sunday) without following up with a full season of playing, sharing, and spirit-filled celebrations (Easter through Pentecost).

Many mystics, holier than I am, claim

From Repentance to Rebirth



that the problem in our church is that we have lost a sense of sin, penance and discipline. I couldn't agree more, but I would like to take it a step further.

We have lost a sense of penance, and we have also lost a sense of celebrating. If we don't take the time to prepare for and celebrate birthdays, graduations, anniversaries and other special moments, then it will be even more difficult to prepare for and celebrate the new life and joy of the Easter Season.

Last year, one of our catechumens struggled with allowing her beautiful Jewish faith to give birth to new life in Christ through the waters of baptism. Her discernment included a trip to Florida, where one afternoon she found herself all alone sitting under a palm tree.

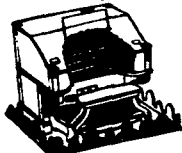
She later wrote to me: "I took a walk on the beach and actually walked into the cold water all the way to my shoulders. I let the waves then carry me for a few moments.

The Holy Spirit enveloped my body. The water was cold, but I was warm. I cried and smiled at the same time, turning my back on the beach and looking straight out into God's Gulf of Mexico.

"That day set the stage for the Easter Vigil. As the water was poured over my head that night in church, its coolness was refreshing, over my eyelids, my nose, my cheek. I had to open my mouth to breathe and actually gasped for air. You spoke about dying in baptism and new life. I never expected to feel it but I did! What a paradoxical experience of feeling like I couldn't breathe and the cool, refreshing bath, cleansing away my sins. When I was handed the lighted candle, and told it symbolized the light of Christ, the warmth of the flame warmed my heart."

Throughout the 50 Days of Easter, it was pure delight for me to watch this neophyte celebrate and grow at daily Eucharist. The Easter season changes lonesomeness — whether it be in a bullpen, under a palm tree, in a corporate boardroom or a nursing home — into a community of Christians who work as a team at being the body of Christ. Our spring training is about to come to an end. Color the eggs, open your hearts, smell the hyacinths, break bread and pour wine. Be, as St. Augustine said, "an alleluia from head to foot."

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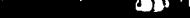
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