

Easter life is there for us all

My one desire this week, dear friends, is to wish you a Happy Easter. I pray that during this holy season, which extends even until the Feast of Pentecost, we will all grow in our knowledge and love of the Lord. We have that invitation to grow in friendship with the Risen Christ, together with our beloved sisters and brothers who receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.

I mention that invitation explicitly not because you are unaware of it, but because it is something all too easy to forget. Sometimes, the pace of life and its complexity keep us from spending the time and energy it takes to foster any loving relationship. Easter is a season that reminds us that God is patient and forgiving, bears no grudges and wants us continually to grow in peace and freedom. Yes, we need to accept the gift of Easter life, to be faithful to it and to share it. But, even our ability to do such things — as difficult as they may often seem — is God's gift to us as well.

We all have our ways of praying about or reflecting on such themes. One I find helpful is to be as attentive as I can be to all that is new, fresh and unexpected in daily living. The robin song, the fresh leaf, the newborn babe are obvious examples, to be enjoyed to the full. But what about other, perhaps less-obvious signs of new life — a bad habit conquered after a long, tough struggle; or the successful completion of an academic degree; or an insight that puts

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

aside a habit of pigeon-holing people because of race, gender, religion, ethnic origin or sexual orientation?

You could add any number of ways in which you do or would like to discover new life. I encourage you to do just that during the Easter season. Have a loving conversation with the Lord every day. It doesn't need to be long. It requires no special place or formula. Just speak with the Risen One and listen with great care. Tell him how you yearn for deeper life for yourself or for others. I cannot tell you that you or they will receive precisely what you ask for. What I can promise is that your prayer will be heard and that, somehow, you and they will experience new life.

In addition to inviting us to pray in this way, the Easter season reminds us repeatedly that Christ calls us always to a deep, intimate, personal, ever-growing friendship with him. Sometimes, we can forget that. And when we do, whatever the cause of our forgetfulness may be, we can slip into a

religion-by-the-rules mentality. Rules and regulations, which are the work of human hands, take on a force and proportion they do not merit. When that happens, our underlying call to genuine friendship with the Lord and one another dims. We grow tight and tense, fearful that if we miss but one beat, we'll be in for some stiff punishment. I think of Jesus' friends who were plucking heads of grain as they walked through the fields on the Sabbath and of Jesus' reaction to those who scolded them about that.

If you have stayed with this reflection, you have a fair idea about how I'll pray during the Easter season. I'll be asking the Lord to give me a new awareness of life all around me and for a deeper appreciation for the mystery of life wherever I may find it.

Just now I thank God for the early taste of Easter I experienced at our Junior High Youth Rally last Saturday. What a charge of life those boys and girls carried and shared with us old-timers who were with them! They did that in many ways for me that day. What I am particularly grateful for is the way these beautiful kids helped me remember when I was 12 years old. The joy was to name those who loved, supported and encouraged me in those days; and to think of those who do the same for me now. It's all Easter life. It's always there for all of us.

Peace to all.

MISSION NEWS

In a small village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Easter Vigil commemoration is celebrated outdoors. Father Ferdinand lights the Easter candle, so that its light, which symbolizes the Resurrected Christ, may be seen throughout the entire village.



"You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before all, that they may see the good that you do and give glory to God" (Matthew 5:14).

During this joyous season of Easter won't you please pray for the work of the Missions? Your generous donations will enable priests like Father Ferdinand, Religious and lay catechists to continue the worldwide work of bringing the Good News of redemption to those who do not know of the love that God has for them — a love so great that He sacrificed His only begotten Son so that we might have eternal life.



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