

BULLETIN -- APRIL 16

Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed! Alleluia! A blessed Easter to all our parishioners, as well as to visiting family members and friends today! We are delighted to have you with us, and assure you that you can always call SS. Peter & Paul your church home, or at least “home away from home.”

Our sincere thanks to our organist and choir members for their hours of work in preparation for Holy Week and Easter. Our choir is small, but they endeavor to make a beautiful gift to God with their ambitious enhancement of our worship. If you're of a mind to join your voice to the choir, please see Kathy Saladino and offer your services.

Thanks also to Greg and Coleen Kelly for providing the music at 4 p.m. Mass on a monthly or as-needed basis, whichever comes first. Many have mentioned that their devout renditions are a powerful support for prayer, and we deeply appreciate their eager generosity.

Our gratitude would be seriously lacking if we failed to direct attention to the behind-the-scenes efforts of Sheila Marzolf, Rosalie McCormick, their family, and their associated sacristy elves for the quiet transformation of our church for each liturgical season. Just when I realize I've forgotten to bring the palms over from the cooler or to inquire about who's going to do what, it's already been done, to perfection. From flowers to sanctuary appointments to window flourishes, they have developed a knack for the just-enough without overpowering us with “STATEMENT!!” Allowing the liturgy to speak for itself is a fine art, one which was nearly lost in the seminary for a few decades. Our liturgy crew assists us tremendously in bringing out the noble simplicity of the Roman rite, and no more clearly than during Holy Week and Easter.

Why am I a Christian? You might not think that's a question you really have to think about, much less answer. But it's a question that faces thousands upon thousands of our fellow believers each day in many countries around the world, as those in Alexandria and in Tanta, Egypt, learned again on Palm Sunday. At least 44 dead, due to the homicidal hatred of ISIS agents of evil. What if that happened in *our* church? Would it make you think twice about coming back next Sunday? Some people mistakenly think that believing in God and being a disciple of Jesus Christ will insulate us from attacks of this sort. Quite the contrary. Jesus warned us that this will be part of the cost of discipleship. If you've never suffered for being an agent of the Gospel, maybe you haven't done anything to be identified as such. And by suffering, I don't mean the terrible cross of abstaining from meat on the Fridays of Lent. Poor baby.

Easter can well give us opportunities to witness to Christ among our family members and friends. The chances are pretty good that in our Easter gatherings, there will be at least *someone* who, as we so often hear them describe themselves, was “born and raised Catholic” who has given up the practice of the faith. They had the privilege, free of charge, of being baptized and called by Jesus Christ to witness to him as a member of his Body in the universal Church. They might have given that up to become a member of a splinter group which rejects some aspect of universal Christian belief. Or to become a pagan. Or to become a “none.” Whatever the case, all that's standing between them and resuming their status as the witness Christ called them to be is a good confession. Let's just say that, like all of us, they're “between confessions.”

Sometimes the more argumentative among those who are between confessions will (nit)pick a fight with more devout relatives or friends. The Pope is nuts, the bishops and priests are all hypocrites, sacraments are woo-woo magic, religion is for the feeble-minded, reason and science are incompatible with faith, religion has murdered more people than any other cause, the Catholic Church isn't a Bible church, Constantine started the Catholic Church, and Sister cracked a ruler over my hands in grade school. Counter those with: Have you ever met him? Have you sat down and talked with one lately? Was Jesus Christ a magician, or the Savior of the world? And you have a mind superior to Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Benedict XVI, to name three out of millions? If you haven't read Anselm of Canterbury, how can you even comment on faith, reason, and science? Can anyone hold a candle to Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and the North Korean Kim family dictators, who have all been atheists who played god in and with the lives of millions? Members of the Catholic Church were the human authors of all the books of the New Testament, and, guided by the Holy Spirit, the Church determined what should be in it. Constantine became favorable to an already-established Christianity after a vision of the Cross of Christ. Sister is retired now, and you should allow your sob story to do the same.

Family time might stump you when it comes to questions of faith. Don't hesitate to write down the questions that come up that no one can answer satisfactorily, and get thee to a priest at the earliest opportunity to check them out. You'll hear things around the holiday table like: The Church is hung up on sex. (Only seems so because it has to respond so often to the nonsense of our sex-drenched culture.) Why can't we each have some of grandma's ashes as a souvenir? (Oh, shucks, we should have given you one of her fingers on a chain, it would go well with that tackle box you're wearing from the neck up.) It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere. (Even better to be sincerely right than sincerely wrong, though, right?) I believe a woman has the right to choose. (To choose to kill her baby? We're all here because a woman chose NOT to.) I believe everybody has a right to death with dignity. (Kneel in front of a crucifix and tell *Him* why you think you should be exempt.) I believe everybody should have the right to love whomever they want. (Right on. That's always been called *friendship*, and the Bible and the Church are all for it.) I don't think I have to go to church to be a Christian. (Christians are named after Christ, the Son of God, who went faithfully to synagogue all his life. Not good enough for you?) What's the big deal with Mass and Communion, anyway? (How about "Do this in memory of me"? Any of the Apostles say, "No thanks, I'll pass"?) I think religion is a private affair and shouldn't be discussed at the dinner table. (Well, if anybody spoke up and told a bold-faced lie about *you* at the dinner table, it's not a private affair. I'll respond, and I'll treat the Church with the same courtesy.)

Et cetera. Always say it with a smile. The point, my friends, is to help our fellow Christians who are between confessions to get the garbage out of their heads and start thinking clearly. Christ chose them in baptism because he needs them, now more than ever. If God can use you to get even one of them to re-consider their laxity, what a difference it could make in so many lives! Be prepared, always. Know Jesus Christ, know your Bible, know your catechism, get fluent about the Catholic faith. You'll never regret it. And the fringe benefits are infinite. Happy Easter! God bless you!

Fr. Den

Thought for the week: Philosophy is the art of learning how to ponder, and how to come to conclusions without closing the mind to further possibilities.