

REFLECT



June 2020

CALLED TO BE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTED CHRIST...

"Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you. Acts 1:11; Mt 28:20

All of us have, in some way, lived the experience of a separation with a very dear person, to whom we have given a privileged place in our life, and the following reaction differs depending on the



persons: we can seek to distract ourselves to forget, we can move on, we can keep on thinking about the person, we can understand and integrate the reality, we can ...

The apostles of Jesus were not spared either, they lived the separation with the one who was their "Teacher, who taught them", the one who "called each of them by name the one who made them 'know and love the Father'", the one who lived true love", the one who "welcomed, taught and fed the crowds", the one who "healed the sick", the one who "raised the dead", the one who "forgave sins", the one whom "they followed", the one from whom they

learned a lot... In short; the one who was everything to them, the one with whom they felt safe, secure and comfortable. As long as they were physically with Jesus, they had no worries because they knew that He was to do, that He was to act as required. However, in due time, Jesus should leave them on the mountain and

return to heaven. They reacted by standing there looking up at the sky. Here and now, the Master entrusted them with the mandate

to continue his work, the task of "proclaiming, teaching and baptizing". The task of walking on the way laid out by the Master, that is, the way of the Gospel. These are the three missions entrusted by Jesus. "This message of salvation implies, above all, the duty of witness to which we too, the disciples of today, are called to give an account of our faith", explains Pope Francis.

This mission also implies a deep commitment to the Kingdom so that "our world may become more human and more in conformity with God's plan to reunite everyone in one family. »

Today we live in an environment that faces challenges but also offers opportunities and chances. It is in this environment that we have to continue the mission that Christ entrusts to us.

We live in an environment where people need to tell their stories, to entrust someone, to seek answers to significant moments in their lives; where young people want to rediscover the meaning of their lives, where many people experience despair, violence, war, poverty, various diseases, loneliness, abandonment, uncertainty, where little attention is paid to others... How to be witnesses of the resurrection in such a neighborhood?

Through His resurrection, Christ built a bridge between death and life, between despair and hope, a bridge that leads to life.

Through our lives we become witnesses to Christ's love for every human being. Following Him, we can also build bridges, even where it seems impossible. Where there are divisions, separations, tears, we can seek to be peace makers, ambassadors of reconciliation and communion. We can welcome people, being close to them, admiring their sense of commitment, but also participating in their development, their suffering, making them experience God's love.

Through his resurrection Christ invites us to become more human, to bear witness to the resurrection with our lives. In order to carry out this mission Jesus reassures us of his presence: "And remember, I am with you every day until the end of the world. »

Sr. Bernadette Mwavita, OSU

STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN

Now is a time for a national retreat, or more correctly it is an international event of gigantic proportions. Governor Como calls it a "pause". Why not let it be a "pause that refreshes", a pause that renews our spirits, revitalizes our country and our world, and re-energizes our relationships?

We have the time. In a way we have been forced to STOP so let us remember the slogan that we would say before we crossed a street, "stop, look and listen. " We definitely will be crossing a street to another side which will have some resemblance to what we were, what we are becoming and also it will be something new.

Stop and take time to really LOOK at the whole world and also the world around us.

Did you know that there is a swarm of locusts in East Africa which is devastating a huge territory?

Did you know that there were storms in the Congo that destroyed buildings, left people homeless? Did you know that the rivers were rising and people were frightened that crocodiles would get into their homes?

Have you noticed the goose on the bank of the pond who has been sitting on her nest for many days? She is an example of patience and devotion as she stays on the eggs night and day, when it is sunny and when it is stormy.

It is also time for us to LISTEN.

Have you heard the concert (a Concert of Hope) which Andre Botticelli gave in the

city of Milan? It is on You-tube and has had over three million hits.

Have you heard the song from the Sound Of Music with words about the covid-19 virus?

Yes, there are many sights and sounds out there. Now that we have time to pause let us take this time to stop, look and listen-let us take advantage of this opportunity as a "pause that refreshes." Perhaps we might even start writing a list of things we see and hear, and share these "discoveries" with our friends and neighbors!

Sr. Margaret Golub, OSU
(written for the newspaper of the Braemar Residence in Medford, NY.)

The following was in response to an invitation to write *A reflection by an American priest living in Belgium*

You have given me quite a 'home-work' assignment 'An American Priest living in Belgium reflects on the corona virus' -- or maybe 'living within the lock-down'.

I have spent considerable time thinking about it and wondering what would be worth saying about this experience.

Several past 'living with the plague' examples came to mind -- the movie called "The Seventh Seal" which done by Ingmar Bergman treats a man seeking answers about life, death, and the existence of God, while playing chess against the 'Grim Reaper'. It is available on the Internet.

Another, and older example of dealing with 'plague times' is the *Decameron*, a series of 100 stories collected by Giovanni Boccaccio from 1348 to 1353 and told in the context of escaping from the Black

Death in Florence, Italy in those years. All the stories are told over 10 days by 7 women and 3 men -- so 100 stories. They tell and reveal a healthy pre-Reformation Catholicism.

I have not made a film, nor am I collecting stories, but I do see this 'plague time' as a bit of both of these examples. An 'enforced/imposed retreat' starting with the beginning of Lent this year 2020 and still going on past Easter to Pentecost. A time, just by the force of the occasion, of facing the same questions as in the film -- but also a time of hearing tales of all sorts via the media of radio, TV, Internet, Email, etc. -- the new media which have changed our world at least as much as Gutenberg did with book printing. So it is a time of 'catching up on reading in the new time that is unexpectedly available.

This time is a gift of living the hermitical existence (which is to live like an isolated monk -- or a Carthusian). One can via the media of Internet/Email at least take in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy -- and as a priest, I can celebrate Mass in a very primitive and rough situation using my kitchen table. And it gives me time to savor the Divine Office, especially the Morning Readings (Matins), and also praying the Office un-hastily, "keeping Time holy" at the several times of the day properly indicated.

But I do miss meeting with parishioners face to face -- though at times we speak on the phone or on social media besides. There are sacramental times too in response to urgent needs.

As ever in the Risen Lord,
Fr. Philip Sandstrom

Conversion

Coming together in prayer is an expression of our oneness in Christ. Praying together is necessary in order that the will of the Father may be truly discerned, strengthened and joy experienced. Such prayer should enable us to be more honest, more free and more open to conversion. It is only through this continual searching together before God that it is possible for us to enter life deeply and with reverence to touch the lives of others. Fullness in the Life of Christ (86)

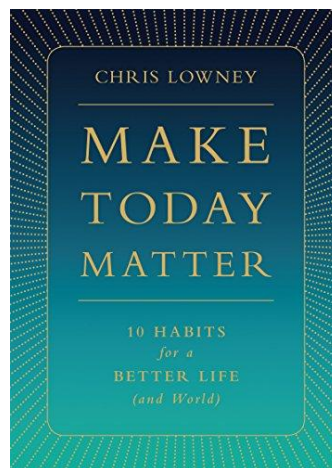
When we speak of conversion it has the connotation of returning to the center. For most of us the first act of conversion was from our parents and god parents at Baptism. Conversion for adults is clearly a choice of the person.

Three people from the Gospel come to mind who Jesus clearly invited to turn towards him: Zacchaeus the Samaritan woman, Nicodemus. The first step was the encounter, and then conversion followed where Jesus became the center of their lives.

St. Paul was seized by the light of God, has an instantaneous conversion and from that moment on he never wanted to be separated from Him for he was convinced Christ was in him. St. Paul was blinded and as he lay on the ground, he heard "Rise up" - Resurrection words.

It seems that our conversion is often a slower process aided by prayer and the sacraments. To be a Christian becomes a part of our identity... our being. After a fall, we are called back like St. Paul "Rise up" - Resurrection words.

Making a Difference



I've been reading **Make Today Matter: 10 Habits for a Better Life by Chris Lowney**. In the introduction he says: Crises often bring out the best in people. Ordinary persons become selfless

heroes in the wake of disaster. At such moments, we are no longer irked by life's minor annoyances; our sense of what ultimately matters becomes more vivid: we want to be our best selves; we're energized to make some positive difference. But why does it take a crisis to bring out our very best? Why not rise to the occasion every single day?

I have been struck by the stories of ordinary people who are giving extraordinary help to others during this pandemic. The nurses, doctors, aides, chaplains, policemen, firemen, volunteers shopping for the elderly, the people manning food pantries, and so many others give me great hope in this time of concern. Chris Lowney tells us that we have to do First Things First: Decide What Matters. I think this time of staying at home, being

six feet from others when we meet them, does have us questioning what matters.

The burden of our future is on us, and our task today is to surrender ourselves to the power of Divine Love. This is the heart of the Gospel message: if we want a different world, we must become a different people.

What are some behaviors you cannot wait to get back to? What are some behaviors you are thinking you might try to leave behind?

Where do you see a resonance with our General Chapter theme "Live a New Life Rooted in Christ."?



Sr. Joanne Callahan, OSU

In Memory of Sr. Beatrix Toppo (April 15, 2020)

We want to express our good memories and gratitude towards Sr. Beatrix, who was an Indian missionary in the Congo from 1978 - 1986. Her mission in Congo brought about many vocations. When she arrived in Congo, Sister Beatrix was immediately appointed to the « Emmaus » novitiate. She was a good example for the novices because she was a prayerful Sister. From her, we learned how to meditate the Gospel. When she arrived in Goma with Sister Benedicte Paquet, they created a group of prayer at school which was attached to the



charismatic group of the parish. This was a kind of a seed from which came solid Ursuline vocations in the DRC.

Sister Beatrix taught English, Religion and, Art. She had a strong desire of evangelization and whenever there was an occasion she used to teach us Christian songs.

A very gentle and peaceful woman, she had a gentle way of attracting her pupils whenever there was a problem. At the parish, she was very committed to the charismatic group and she liked to visit the poor.

Let us end our thanksgiving with one of the verse she taught us which has got a meaning for us:

*Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
Give me joy in my heart, I pray
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising
Keep me praising till the break of day*

*Bye Sister Beatrix bye, the Ursuline
Sisters of Congo will never forget you.*

Sr. Espérance Hamuli, OSU

