



The Franciscan Legionnaire

Newsletter of the Friars Legion of St. Peter's Church in the Loop
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Why are you Catholic?

By Fr Chuck Faso, OFM (www.frchuckofm.org)

During these weeks of April, we Christians continue the Lenten journey to Easter – Forty Days of *fasting* bursts into Fifty Days of *feasting*. The Lenten Journey begun on Ash Wednesday ends on the evening of Holy Thursday before the Mass of the Lord's Supper. The Triduum, the Three Days, enables us to enter into the last three Days of Jesus' Passover from Life through Death to Life.. The Triduum begins on Holy Thursday with Mass of the Lord's Supper and ends on Easter Sunday evening with the celebration of Evening Prayer.



Then the Fifty Days of Easter-ing, of returning to the empty Tomb again and again and rejoicing in the absence of Christ in the Tomb and in His Presence everywhere in the universe beginning with a place in our hearts.

During these Lenten Days the preparation for Catechumens' initiation into the Church at the Easter Vigil Service intensifies. On these last Sundays of Lent, the Church prays over the Catechumens and continues to support them as they say yes to God's call and invitation to become Catholic, to become a member of the Church, of the Body of Christ. For us who are already Baptized, these weeks prepare, challenge and invite us to verbalize again the reasons why we are Catholic. At the Easter Vigil Service and at all the Masses on Easter Sunday, we faithful already baptized are invited to renew our



Baptismal Vows by rejecting sin and evil, and with our "I do!" embrace again the faith of the Church.

Often I would ask the Catechumens, those preparing for Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist on Holy Saturday night, these questions: Why do you want to become Catholic? Why do you want to join this particular group of Christians, of those who believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior? What entices you to join this Church which has proved through the centuries to be so sinful and so holy, so selfless and selfish, so right and so wrong, so fragile and weak, so strong and courageous? What draws your heart to say Yes to sharing your life in the community of Catholic Christians? How have you heard the Holy Spirit call you to the Church or back to the Church?



Some respond with a simple phrase: "I have come home. I found my real home in the Church." How would you answer these questions?

If you have not participated in the Easter Vigil Service, I would encourage you to do so this year. This is the night of all nights, when the Church gathers around Fire, Word, Water, Eucharist. In the darkness of the evening, a fire is lighted and blessed. From this Fire, the Paschal Candle is lighted as well as the candles of all present – from darkness to a sea of shimmering light.

Then the deacon chants the great Proclamation of Praise and Joy that begins by inviting the Angels, the Earth, and the Church, to Rejoice:

“Rejoice, heavenly powers! Sing, choirs of angels!
Exult, all creation around God's throne!
Jesus Christ, our King, is risen!
Sound the trumpet of salvation!

Rejoice, O earth, in shining splendor,
radiant in the brightness of your King!
Christ has conquered! Glory fills you!
Darkness vanishes for ever!

Rejoice, O Mother Church! Exult in glory!
The risen Savior shines upon you!
Let this place resound with joy,
echoing the mighty song of all God's people!”

The Deacon sings four times: **“This is the Night when....first you saved our fathers...when the pillar of fire destroyed the darkness of sin...when Christians washed clean of sin...are restored to grace...when Jesus Christ broke the chains of death and rose triumphant from the grave.”** The last stanza of the Exsultet/Rejoice ends with a final acclamation of the Risen Christ:

May the Morning Star
which never sets
find this flame still
burning:
Christ, that Morning
Star,
who came back from
the dead,
and shed his peaceful light on all humankind,
your Son, who lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.



Candles are extinguished, all are seated and then begins Storytelling – our story of Creation and God’s faithfulness through the ages.

Grade School children in Houston were asked to tell the story of the Bible in only fifty words. This is what they created: God made-Adam bit-Noah arked-Abraham split-Joseph ruled-Jacob fooled-Bush talked-Moses balked-Pharaoh plagued-People walked-Sea divided-Tablets guided -Promise landed-Saul freaked-David peeked-Prophets warned-Jesus

born-God walked-Love talked-Anger crucified-Hope died-Love rose-Spirit flamed-Word spread-God remained. New Testament Scriptures are proclaimed that announce Jesus is Risen!

In response to the Word of God, the Church gathers around the Baptismal Font to bless the water, to Baptize and to Confirm with newly consecrated Chrism Oil (used for Baptism, Confirmation, and Ordination).

To Baptize means to be plunged down under the water – to drown to death all sin and in our lives - and then to rise gasping for New Life who is Christ, as Jesus went down to death and rose to new life on Easter. Chrism is poured over the head of the newly baptized to confirm, to strengthen, to configure the person to Christ forever through the power of the Holy Spirit. Gifts of bread and wine are brought to the altar for the great Eucharistic Prayer of Thanks, Praise and Transformation. The Catechumens eat and drink of the Body and Blood of Christ for their first time. They truly are the Body of Christ. Alleluia! Alleluia!



The Fifty Days of Easter have begun! Alleluia! Let us rejoice and be glad!

May the Lord Easter in you and be a Dayspring for any Dimness! Alleluia!

Books

One of our Friars says that every person needs to be reading a novel every day. And I agree. A good novel helps us to go over to another country or culture, another family and relationship, another time in history or religious experience. When we return from that time and place, to our own time and moment of history, we are changed. The way we look at and experience life will be changed. I like to read a novel and a spiritual book during the same time.

The novel I am reading is **Pretty Birds** (Random House) by Scott Simon. Some of you may know the name Scott Simon from Saturday 7:00 AM NPR program or from his other book and writings. I have known Scott Simon for thirty years. We met at St Peter's.



This adds to my interest in his book. *Pretty Birds* captures the impossible – the humanity of a teenage girl in 1992 Sarajevo caught up in the madness and inhumanity of war. These pages let the reader learn about the reality of war, day by day, about what war does to the human heart, and about who wins and what that costs. The more we know about war the more we will desire and work for peace.

The spiritual book I am reading for Lent is **The Ten Commandments: Laws of the Heart** (Orbis Books) by Sr Joan Chittister, O.S.B., a Benedictine Sister of Erie, Pennsylvania – a leading voice in contemporary spirituality for more than twenty-five years and author of many books.



Sr Joan deals in this book with these questions: Are the Ten Commandments a set of rules, or a way of life? How does each one call us to reflect and to act? What does it mean to love God and neighbor in a world of violence and fear that threatens our lives and our souls?

This book challenges me during this Lenten season. An insightful examination of conscience for Lent.

A new DVD by Ron Rolheiser, OMI, well known author and President of St Mary's University in San Antonio is entitled: **Sacred Fire: An Anthropolgy and Spirituality of Sexuality.**



He begins with a quote on the power of sexuality by Plato: "We are fired into life with a madness that comes from the gods." We are incurably sexual,

deeply sexed not just in our bodies but in every dimension of our being. Sexuality is a powerful fire inside of us, the best of all fires and the most dangerous of all fires. It is also a sacred fire, meant to be enjoyed as God's great gift to us even as it is guarded by chastity. "And God created them man and woman!" - the best of all creation. In our day of sexual abuse and violence, Fr Rolheiser's wisdom serves us well.

What are you reading these days?

Water – Do we take it for Granted?

Nearly 70 percent of the world's fresh water is locked in ice. –Most of the rest is in aquifers that we're draining much more quickly than the natural recharge rate. Two-thirds of our water is used to grow food. With 83 million more people on earth each year, water demand will keep going up unless we change how we use it.



Americans use about 100 gallons of water at home each day. Millions of the world's poorest subsist on fewer than five gallons. Forty-six percent of people on earth do not have water piped to their homes. Women in developing countries walk an average of 3.7 miles to get water. In fifteen years, 1.8 billion people will live in regions of severe water scarcity. (from National Geographic)

St Francis of Assisi: "Be praised, my Lord, through Sister Water; she is very useful, and humble, and precious, and pure."

Some facts about Nuclear Weapons:

- There are approximately 26,000 nuclear warheads in the world, enough to destroy civilization many times over.
- More than 95% of all nuclear weapons are in arsenals belonging to the United States and Russia
- The nuclear bomb that destroyed Hiroshima immediately killed approximately 90,000

