

April 16, 2017

An Easter letter from your Pastor



Alleluia! Christ is Risen, He is Risen indeed, Alleluia! I want to extend wishes of a beautiful and happy Easter to all parishioners, staff, and visitors who have gathered here at St. Mary Church to celebrate the resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We have now entered into the great season of Eastertide. May we all celebrate with great joy the promise of our new life in Christ, our Risen Lord. We indeed are sons and daughters of New Life (that is, ***new life in Christ***).

This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad. The Lord Jesus, through his cross and resurrection, has destroyed the power of sin and death and brought us into His life. Christ has won for us victory over the grave. The Church in her wisdom asks us to keep this feast alive for fifty days. We need to reflect on this and just how much our Lord loves us. Easter is so much more than flowers, cards, Easter eggs, candy and even beautiful music. It is the historical event that gives ultimate meaning and purpose to our lives. Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, we no longer have to fear sin and death. The victory has been won in Christ. We celebrate Jesus who is our Paschal Lamb who died out of sheer love for us.

To those who have been away from the Church, I sincerely welcome you home this Easter. It is my fervent hope and prayer that by worshipping with us, and celebrating Holy Mass, you will encounter the Risen Christ. In the spirit of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, I too, extend to you the love and mercy of our Risen Lord and sincerely invite you back into the fold of Holy Mother Church. From Pope Francis' Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel): *"I invite all Christians, everywhere at this very moment to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them: I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. The Lord does not disappoint those who take this risk; whenever we take a step toward Jesus, we come to realize that he is already there, waiting for us with open arms."*

I want to welcome our newest members into the Church at the Great Vigil of Easter: Joseph Popiolek, Denise Popiolek, Mia Popiolek, Lillie Popiolek, Zachary Popiolek, and Taylor Greenwood. Amanda Shreve will be receiving her First Holy Communion at the Easter Vigil and will receive Confirmation from Bishop Bradley on Thursday. Bryce Munn attended R.C.I.A. and will be confirmed on Thursday. What a great joy and privilege it has been walking with our catechumens and candidates this past year leading up to their coming into full communion with the Roman Catholic

Church. I want to thank our parishioners for welcoming our newest members into our blessed community of faith at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, Marshall, MI. Holy week started off with an awesome celebration of Palm-Passion Sunday with many from our parish community coming together to make a dramatic entrance into our church with an awesome procession. I thank Carol DiBiaggio, Sharon Linklater, Tina Johnston, Sara Rodgers, Lynn Gruber, Joseph Popiolek and Jim Oliver for orchestrating this moving procession that reminded us of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem and making it so meaningful for those worshipping with us.

Thank you to our choirs for assisting us as we entered into our Lord's passion, death and resurrection through the gift of music. I greatly appreciate the extra time and dedication they have given. Thank you to those who participated as readers for the Passion Readings. I thank Beverly Zalewski for the arrangements on the altar of palms and all the work that goes into Holy Week and Easter flower arrangements and decorations in the sanctuary. I thank all of my staff but in a special way, Gary Zink, Marcine McCarthy, Sharon Linklater, Andrea Cook and Carol DiBiaggio for all the extra hours of work that were involved in making our church so beautiful and liturgically appropriate for the celebrations of Holy Week and Easter. I would also like to thank all those behind the scenes who helped in any way to set up and/or decorate, such as the ladies that clean the church and the Garden Ministry Group. I thank Deacon Ken Snyder and Deacon Mike Moreno for all that they do. Finally, I would like to thank our altar servers, lectors, EMHCs, ushers, and volunteers who did so much to make this Easter so beautiful. Together we have been blessed to use our time and talents to praise and adore our Risen Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May the Peace of our Risen Lord be with you all.

*In His love,
Fr. Craig*

