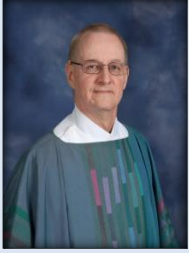


Fourth Sunday of Easter



The Pastor's Corner



from the pastor

More Holy Week Testimonies

#1 by Vicki Haynes

I did something different during Holy Week this year. I posted on Facebook, "Who needs a prayer?" and got a great response. I had many new names to add to my evening prayer time and that blessed me and many others.

2 by Ruth Conrad

This year, I realized my favorite season of the church year is Holy Week and Easter. I've been actively celebrating these days with many different faith communities over the years, ever since I was a little girl anticipating my Easter basket. But this year, it really hit me. I really love the solemnity and tradition of that week. I love the familiarity and the repetition. I love seeing the same faces throughout the week at the different services. We come because we believe, because we falter and because we support one another.

I love the physical experience of washing feet – of living out Jesus's words, "I have given you example". I truly love the garden. Coming back at night to pray and sit before the Blessed Sacrament fills me with a peace that's simply indescribable. Thanks to all who help make that garden happen each year. It is so special. This year, at the Good Friday Stations of the Cross, Therese Cox approached me and told me she was so glad I had been the one to wash her feet and she thanked me. Therese and I have been Blessed Sacrament parishioners for a long time. Although not close friends, we have shared smiles and stories and also "mother moments" as we watched our girls grow up and away. We are connected in this parish, and in a faith that has gifted and sustained us along the way. She is a companion on the journey with me.

I love reliving the sadness of Good Friday in community with friends, acquaintances and strangers who, like me, are flawed and broken but trying our best.

I loved Fr. John's Easter homily "We are going to do this together".... so simple and yet so profound.

And this year, I loved Easter Sunday more than I ever have before. I received a gift more special than any ever found in an Easter basket. My granddaughter, Adeline Rose Ibershoff, was baptized that afternoon, surrounded by family and friends and welcomed by many parishioners as we shared Easter dinner. What a wonderful ending to a spectacular week!

A Glimpse of the Universal Church

Two recent documents that are published by the Vatican each year give a broad picture of the Catholic Church around the world. They are known as the *Annuario Pontificum* and the *Annuario Statisticum Ecclesiae*. Here are a few facts revealed.

Since 2005, the number of Catholics worldwide has increased from 1.1 billion to 1.2 billion. Catholics now make up 17.7% of the total world population.

There has been a 34% increase in Catholics in Africa, which has experienced a total population increase of 1.9% between 2005 and 2013. The increase of Catholics in Asia (3.2% in 2013, compared to 2.9% in 2005) has been higher than that of the total population growth in Asia. In the Americas Catholics continue to represent 63% of a growing population. In Europe, where the population is stagnant, there has been a slight increase in the number of baptized faithful in recent years. The percentage of baptized Catholics in Oceania remains stable although in a declining population.

From 2012 to 2013 the number of bishops worldwide has increased by 40 from 5,133 to 5,173. The number of priests, diocesan and religious, increased from 414,313 in 2012 to 415,348 in 2013.

Candidates for the priesthood dropped from 120,616 in 2011 to 118,251 in 2013 (-2%). However, an increase of 1.5% is recorded in Africa. There was a decrease of 5.2% in North America.

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The number of permanent deacons continues to grow well, passing from 33,391 in 2005 to 43,000 in 2013. They are present in North America and Europe in particular (96.7%), with the remaining 2.4% distributed between Africa, Asia and Oceania.

The number of professed members of religious orders other than priests (sisters, brothers, monks, etc.) has grown by 1% worldwide, from 54,708 in 2005 to 55,000 in 2013. They have increased in Africa by 6% and in Asia by 30%. They have decreased in the Americas by 2.8%, in Europe by 10.9% and in Oceania by 2%.

You can find more interesting statistics about the religion in the USA:

<http://cara.georgetown.edu/CARAServices/requestedchurchstats.html>

<http://religions.pewforum.org/>