



Front the Heart

A Newsletter ♦ Published by Sacred Heart Parish ♦ Main Street South, P.O. Box 686 ♦ Southbury, CT 06488

The Power of Resurrection

During the season of Lent, we focus primarily on self-denial, sin and its effect upon our spiritual relationship with God, and ultimately the selfless act of love depicted in the crucifixion. We are urged to look beyond the pain, suffering and agony of the cross to an empty tomb and the power of resurrection. That presents a real difficulty for most of us. We were not eyewitnesses like those first disciples. Jesus never appeared to us with outstretched hands bearing the wounds of crucified flesh. No one whom we have loved and lost in death has ever reappeared to us in bodily form to tell us of the wonder of new life or encourage us to be strong in our faith. But in all honesty, haven't each of us experienced resurrection power in one way or another? If we reflect upon our past, we might realize that we have indeed been resurrected.

Let me share a few examples to help you better understand my point. A year ago my life was wonderful, and everything was moving along in a very positive way. Summer—my favorite season—was upon us. Suddenly, I became ill. I told myself it was a bug; it would pass. Without warning I found myself being wheeled into an operating room. My appendix had ruptured and was poisoning my system. This was to become the first of many dying events that I would experience over the next few months. But by dying I don't mean that human life was about to end. You see, dying takes many forms, and in this first experience I was no longer in control of what was happening to me. My dying event was all about becoming dependent on others to perform even the simplest tasks. As I look back now, that first dying was relatively painless in comparison to what was to follow.

Two months later, I found myself lying on a gurney under a massive medical apparatus with warm dye run-

ning through my veins. No need to panic, I told myself, until the results were in. I later learned that things were pretty serious—so much so that imminent surgery was mandatory and the "suggestion" that I get everything in order was much more than that. The realization that this just might be it forced me to reconsider my beliefs and my faith. I trusted God, but did I trust medical science? I wasn't afraid of dying, but I was fearful of the resurrection process, of coming back from surgery and all that would entail. And I died a little more that day when I handed myself over to an unknown anesthesiologist and entrusted myself to God's will.

Humbled and diminished, I began the painful resurrection process, only to be thrown into the painful process of dying once again, gasping for breath while painful blood clots inflicted unrelenting attacks. And then I knew death wasn't the worst thing; living was, because in living we are but waiting for the next assault, the next hardship, the next event over which we'll have no control.

Since last year I have come to realize that the power of resurrection is all about trust—the ability to trust in the God we

cannot see, who helps us to know what we otherwise would fail to perceive: that He is in charge; and only when we find ourselves dependent and not in control do his presence and his peace become real and understandable.

If you look at the times in your own life when everything spun out of control and you were dying inside because you couldn't see the light at the end of the tunnel, then perhaps you will begin to understand what resurrection power is all about. No one has to come back from the dead to tell you what it's like: you'll already know, firsthand.



Looking Back

10 Years of *From the Heart*

Why look back? Because we've published this newsletter for a decade. And, while looking back makes me think of Lot's wife, I know I won't share her fate. Rather, I feel a surge of pride that the *Heart* is still beating. Cheers for Volume 10!

The first issue of *From the Heart* was put together by six people—and at last count, 36 names now appear on the masthead. With the support of our Parish Council and our first liaison, Claire Garrera, our staff numbered three writers, two managing editors, and an editor. Among us we had no publishing experience but we had heart, hope, chutzpah and the will to prevail. Pam Nazelrod volunteered to be our editor and left a lasting legacy to the project: she came up with the name! Nothing discouraged Pam; her drive was an inspiration to us all. Jim Kowalski and Rich Stephens added their work-related knowledge, opinions and good sense, and Marie Fallon, Gail Chiasson and Sheila MacDonald provided the copy. We were launched!

The newsletter's reception was a hearty one and the staff expanded immediately. We soon acquired a professional editor, Kathleen Janson, who assumed Pam's tasks after Pam left. Geraldine Fox was Kathleen's successor,

and with her departure for Florida, Sue Follett is now our current editor. Managing Editor Katherine Pavone was first elected copy editor, and her role has expanded to the extent that she has been the driving force behind the publication. For years, Jim Kowalski and Rich Stephens added their expertise, each serving a stint as managing editor, and both are still on the staff.

Over time our appearance has changed: the artistic

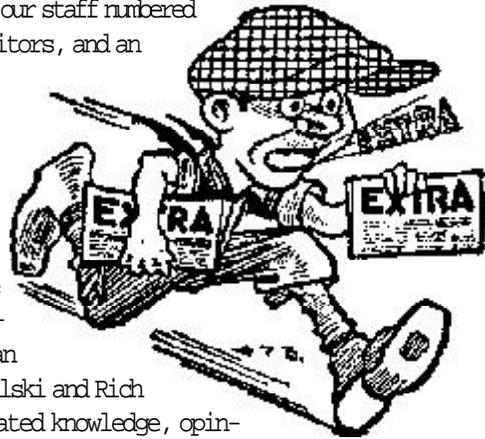
Magdalene Shuster enhanced the graphics in our publication. A new masthead appeared in September 1992 and was improved again in August 1996, all thanks to our graphic specialist Selena Carella. From the start, pictures added life to our copy, thanks to Fran Garrera and his camera, with assistance from Jean Brickey. And, our last issue came in "living color"—did you notice?

Getting *From the Heart* to your mailbox calls for a big push. When all the writing, editing, planning and arranging of pages is done, the production editor, currently Jean Brickey, moves it along to you. The Com-

munications Committee meets, and the newsletter is folded, labeled, sorted, stacked and delivered to the post office. Then it's out to you.

We hope you enjoy it. And we'd love to hear your praise or suggestions.

Sheila MacDonald



A Light of Hope

It's that time of year again when spring fills the air with signs of life. You can see it all around you. Waking from a winter's sleep, the buds on the trees anxiously await the blossoms of their new life. The birds return from their winter holiday and busy themselves looking for birdhouse lodgings in which to bring a new family to life. Reflecting on all this wonderful activity, I couldn't help but think how springtime is a resurrection to new life, a new awakening and a new spirit full of hope.

Thinking more about the new life emerging around me,

it occurred to me that we are coming closer to Easter Sunday and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and I reflected on what that means to me.

I imagined a very dark, dreary, endless Good Friday, a day of deep sorrow and pain. Jesus, on that day, was the ultimate sacrifice. He gave Himself without reservation. Through His suffering and death on the cross at Calvary, our sins were washed away with the blood of His sacrifice. What went on in the hearts and minds of those who were close to Him? Jesus always took care of them, was always in their midst. Seeing His battered, lifeless body on the cross, His followers must have felt

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Seeking New Fulfillment

The 1999 RCIA Candidates

One often sets perspective in terms of his or her experiences. Such was the case when I met with the new candidates in Sacred Heart's Rite of Catholic Initiation for Adults (RCIA). When I finally committed to joining the Church, after a long association with Sacred Heart, I did so to make that continued association legitimate and to strengthen our family. Some of the candidates I spoke with mentioned similar intentions, and all spoke of a real need for the proposed conversion.

At this point in the program, the candidates have committed only to instruction. It won't be until February 21, the first Sunday in Lent, that these four women and one man will commit to the entire program, which culminates in their initiation into the Catholic Church. Intelligent people will always ask questions, and the RCIA program is structured so that those questions can be answered in this period.

The program is holding up well under all the questioning, and the

candidates feel that the RCIA program is meeting their expectations. I was somewhat overwhelmed as an RCIA candidate, but in the end I felt that I learned much more than I ever expected. I found this to be extremely satisfying and can only hope that the current candidates also find what they seek.

For the most part, the candidates reported that the program thus far has been a pleasant experience and they anxiously await each session. The five participants meet after being dismissed from Mass each Sunday and attend a longer meeting every Tuesday night—quite a commitment, given today's busy schedules.

In talking with the candidates, I also tried to gain a sense of how they were looking forward to participating in the fabric of Sacred Heart, in part to convey my feeling that the parish ministries are served by those joining the Church. The candidates spoke of their interests, but felt that a more in-depth discussion should be reserved



for a later date, perhaps during their first weeks as full members of the Catholic Church.

It is too soon to congratulate this class, as their journey of inquiry has only just begun. However, I feel that they are a committed group and will attain their goals. I ask that we offer our encouragement and help in their quest. Make the candidates feel that they have your complete support in their journey to full membership and fellowship in the Church. This year's RCIA class includes Susan Ronna Eason, Lisa Marquis, Fran Haut, Debbie Zachariewicz and Charles Guck. I wish them well and look forward to being closely associated with them in the activities of our parish.

A Light of Hope

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that the plans, desires and dreams they had with Jesus had ended.

We too may think that way in our darkest moments, in times when all hope seems lost. Is He gone forever? No. Jesus rose from the dead in fulfillment of the Scriptures. On that very day, He made a life for us with the hope that His death and resurrection will free us from those endless "Good Friday" days; from days of sorrow, pain, bitterness, anger, jealousy and fear that keep us from seeing the light of hope in our lives.

Jesus is the light and hope for all of us. He paid the price by dying on the cross. We now have the chance to gain salvation through Him through His ultimate sacrifice. Jesus is our source of hope for all the days of our lives. He is the light that guides us, takes care of us and consoles us through every aspect of our lives. By continually trusting in the risen Lord, we can anticipate a life full of light and hope. We can become beacons of that light and a presence of hope to everyone we meet, and truly believe that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, has risen today. Alleluia.

Paula Vaghi

Ernest Swanberg



Reflections on Resurrection

To really understand the true meaning of resurrection, we must first put ourselves at the foot of the cross of Jesus, so that we might be witnesses to what Christ did for us. If we are to look forward to our own resurrection, can we possibly imagine that death could be as painful and humiliating as being nailed to a cross? We certainly must be cleansed of our sins before we are able to enter into the Kingdom, but when is that to be done: here or later? Although Jesus' death was salvation for all mankind, it is certainly not without merit on our part.

The risen Christ has endowed us with many gifts, gifts that are meant to be shared: gladness in the midst of fear, faith in the midst of doubt, peace flowing from the wounds of torture, and an abundance of God's spirit in the midst of sin. These are gifts that should be shared with our fellow man, but are we capable or even concerned enough to be the bearers of them?

If we accept the resurrection of Christ, then we must be ready to reform our lives in order to live _____ as Christ commanded us. By Christ's death we are freed from our sin, and by His resurrection He opens for us the way to a new life. This new life is above all justification that reinstates us in God's grace.



Deacon Vincent Cassidy

Mark Your Calendar

On February 28, at 3:00 p.m., Frank Runyeon will return to Sacred Heart for a performance of the "Beatitudes". Everyone is invited to attend this dramatic event.

Whenever I reflect on the resurrection of our Lord, there are two phrases that immediately come to mind, "Risen Christ," and "Risen Christian."



What does "Risen Christ" say to me? A physical fact indeed: the Jesus who died came alive—and not just to his previous earthly life, but to an even better one. The body of Jesus that rose on Easter morning was totally different from the body of Jesus buried on Good Friday. It was not a resuscitated body like Lazarus or the son of the widow Naim or the daughter of Jairus. Rather, it was a body that had taken a quantum leap forward into an infinitely higher life. St. Paul tells us, "When a body is buried, it is ugly and weak; when raised, it will be beautiful and strong. When buried, it is a physical body; when raised, it will be a spiritual body." (1 Cor 15:42-44). The body of Jesus that rose on Easter morning was a glorified body: a totally living, totally life-giving body. And so at baptism, "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal 2:20).

I am not just a Christian, but a "Risen Christian." The risen Christ who lives in me makes it possible for me to have a risen faith, a risen hope, a risen love! I don't have to wait until I die to share in the risen life and risen power of Jesus. I share in it at this very moment. Each time I love again after having my love rejected, each time I trust again after my trust was betrayed, each time I fail and try again, each time I hope again, each time I pick up the pieces, wipe away the tears, face the sun and start again, I share in the power of the resurrection. Risen Christ—Risen Christian.

Deacon Mike Kulas

Rest...

Would you like to join or help out the Communications Committee? We always welcome article ideas, writers, artists, distribution assistance and input from the parish. So, take this opportunity to contact Katherine Pavone at 264-6599 and let us know your interest.

Whatever

"Fortunately for you, you little cretin, I have elected to let you exist another week," proclaimed Big Sister Lauren, speaking to Sean, my youngest. It must have been serious: I then heard Lauren's customary stomp, stomp, stomp, slam as she retreated to her room.

"Now what," I thought on this dreary Sunday a few days after Christmas. I was sitting in the living room, surrounded by the scattered remnants of the New York Times, the Daily News, and the New York Post. (With deep resolve, I had promised myself—as I do every Sunday—that I shall never buy the Times again.) My middle son Paul was busy reading the Daily News comics.

"What's with Sean and Lauren?" I asked him.

"Don't know, don't care," he replied. But with Paul, nothing is that cut and dried. I waited for more. "He got in her face when she was on the phone with Don."

"Aha," I thought. At least I knew who this one was: a star basketball

player at Fordham.

"And how do you know this?" I asked, My son, and I write th unashamedly, is our fa Catholic version of a

"The Holy Ghost gave me a revelation," he replied. This caught my attention.

"Spirit, you mean. Only people my age still use the term 'Holy Ghost,'" I said.

"Oh yes," he noted, "You've often said you remember the Civil War vividly," he said laughingly, moving to avoid my half-hearted kick.

"It's nice to see that the Jesuits have taught you something other than where the girls are at Mount St. Ursula. And I didn't know that the Holy Spirit gave you revelations." Grace I knew about, but Lauren's love life was another story. "May I presume that you are speaking about the third member of the Blessed Trinity, the one who brings unity, direction and support to the



nurch and is the master of teaching s to pray?" I inquired professorially.

"I believe that Jesus is in me since the Holy Spirit is in me, and know He helps me, especially at exam time. He hasn't failed me yet," said a very serious Paul. He had discarded the comics and was giving me his full attention.

"Us, you mean. He helps us," I corrected.

"Whatever," was his reply.

The phone rang, and I heard a race ensue upstairs to see who could answer it first. Lauren won.

"It's Don," whispered Paul knowingly.

"The Holy Spirit gave you another revelation?" I asked as I heard Lauren's gleeful "Hi Don!."

"Nope. I heard Lauren tell him to call her back."

"Continue to have faith in the Holy Spirit, Paul. He'll never desert us."

"You mean me," Paul exclaimed. "Whatever."

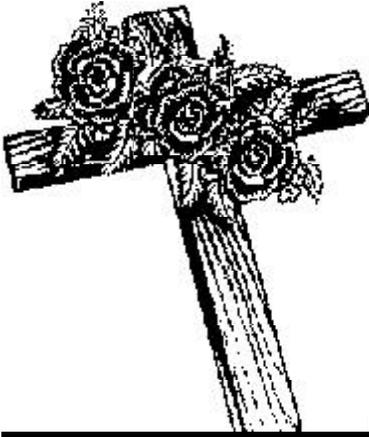
Dennis J. McLaughlin

Ask Father Flynn

Q *What is the significance of making the sign of the cross on the forehead, lips and heart when the proclamation of the Gospel is announced?*

A Many Catholics have for years taken their right thumb and made the sign of the cross on these areas without ever really knowing why they do it or what the gesture means. Because the cross is the ultimate sign of our life of faith, we consistently place ourselves under the sign of our salvation and redemption. At the introduction of the Gospel proclamation, we place ourselves under the sign of the cross and anoint ourselves as we silently say, "May the words of the Lord be in my thoughts, spoken on my lips, and lived within my heart."

If you have a question about your faith, send it to the Communications Committee in care of the rectory and watch for the answer in a future newsletter.



*a time of dying—a
lifetime of living*

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