

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK



EASTER SUNDAY – April 16, 2006 B

WELCOME AND EASTER GREETINGS

Welcome and Easter Greetings to all of you—parishioners and visitors. Today is the most important celebration of our church year. Today we celebrate the victory of life over death and goodness over the forces of evil. True enough the forces of evil, sin and suffering continue to be very present in our world but they do not need to destroy us. With God’s help we can be victorious no matter what dark forces enter our lives. We can share in Jesus’ victory over sin, suffering and death. But this assumes we are doing everything we can to cooperate with his saving grace.

For me the most recent concrete example of this victory over the forces that seek to destroy is the faith attitude of one of our parishioners name Kim Doyle. Last year Kim was diagnosed with lung cancer and was told that she didn’t have a lot of time to live. This news could destroy most of us. But not Kim. Even as Kim and her husband Jim are doing everything possible to extend Kim’s life here on earth, a powerful victory has already happened in her heart and soul. Kim told me recently that she feels *more alive* now than she did before she got the news of her cancer. She is *more alive* to the presence of God in her life, more alive to the gift of every day. Kim and Jim appreciate each other more. If this is not an example of “resurrection power” at work I don’t know what is. In this life our most secure “Life Insurance” is not the one offered by Insurance Companies or Health Care Providers (although these are indeed a huge help). Our best “Life Insurance” is the one offered to us when we place our trust in God and when we are *alive and responsive* to his presence in our lives. With faith comes the promise or guarantee of Eternal Life. We can have the best medical help and the best insurance policy available but if we don’t have the *assurance* that comes to us in and through *faith* in Christ, we stand on very, very shaky grounds. Only the gift of faith will help us face our own mortality.

In addition to faith, we also need the attitude of the donkey in the following cute story.

Shake it off and step up

This is a parable told about a farmer whose mule fell into a well. The farmer heard the mule ‘praying’ or whatever mules do when they fall into wells. After carefully assessing the situation, the farmer sympathized with the mule, but decided that neither the mule nor the well was worth the trouble of saving. Instead, he called his neighbors together and told them what had happened

... And enlisted them to help haul dirt to bury the old mule in the well and put him out of his misery.

Initially, the old mule was hysterical! But as the farmer and his neighbors continued shoveling and the dirt hit his back . . . A thought struck him. It suddenly dawned on him that every time a shovel load of dirt landed on his back . . .

HE SHOULD SHAKE IT OFF AND STEP UP!

This he did, blow after blow. “shake it off and step us... shake it off and step up . . . Shake it off and step up!” He repeated to encourage himself. No matter how painful the blows, or how distressing the situation seemed the old mule fought “panic” and just kept right on “shaking It off and stepping up”!

It wasn’t long before the old mule, battered and exhausted, Stepped Triumphantly Over The Wall of That Well! What seemed like it would bury him, actually helped him . . . All because of the manner in which he handled his adversity.

That’s Life! If we face our problems and respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness, or self-pity ... The adversities that come along to bury us usually have within them the very real potential to benefit us!

In difficult times we need a strong faith in God, the ‘shake it off and step u’ attitude of the donkey and also the help of good people. The following story is a lovely example of how caring people can help to bring resurrection into a disastrous situation.

From Disaster to New Life

In the aftermath of the death and destruction Hurricane Katrina visited upon the Gulf Coast, many survivors lost everything they had and basically became displaced persons. One such person was 42-year-old Yvette Warren, who, with her family, found herself evacuated to San Antonio, Texas. But with the assistance of an organization called the “Can Do Girls,” Warren turned her losses into a new life.

According to a Nation Public Radio story, this organization and other members of the San Antonio community helped Warren find work with the district attorney’s office. She had never before had a job with health and retirement benefits. She also enjoys another benefit of her position with the county: paid tuition as long as she works fulltime. For the first time since she started her family, she can think about the possibility of earning a college degree.

While her husband has returned to New Orleans to work, her two youngest children have entered elementary

school, and the three oldest—once again with the help of the “Can Do Girls” - have started working at Starbucks.

Though none of those Katrina affected planned on the devastation and displacement, Yvette Warren seized the opportunity disaster brought to change her life for the better.

In the midst of difficult times we need inspiring stories to keep us motivated to face any darkness at work in our lives. Many such stories are found in the “Chicken Soup” book series:

A Teen’s Easter Prayer
(from www.homefaith.com)

What’s so awesome about Easter is all the surprise. What people thought was an ending, God turned into a beginning. And what began as something sad, in three days’ time turned into endless joy.

Dear God, help me to remember the surprising, unexpected ways of Jesus: When the people expected a king, he chose to hang out with fishermen and kids. When people expected him to take charge, to take prisoners, to take back Jerusalem, he taught that real power lies in persuading the human heart.

Dear God, help me live the surprising ways of Jesus: When friends expect me to always be a certain way, let me show how the unexpected can be better. When my family does the same old boring stuff, help me show how new ways can work, too, or at least surprise them by not complaining. When I expect myself to fail, or my parents to misunderstand, or my siblings to get it wrong, grant me the wisdom not to jump to conclusions, so that they get the chance to surprise me, too.

By Mary Lynn Hendrickson

Our God is a ‘God of surprises’. Our challenge is to work with him, travel with him and be alert for his surprising ways.

Seeking A Spiritual Lift?

If you live in the area and feel a need for a spiritual shot in the arm, consider coming to one of the **Men & Women’s Renewal Weekends** that we host in our parish twice a year. These fun filled and spirit filled weekends have touched the lives of thousands of our parishioners in the past ten years. Each weekend is hosted by a team of women and men from the parish. There is no heavy preaching on the weekend, rather what touches the lives of the participants is men and women sharing their faith stories. Our next *Women’s Retreat* is next weekend, April 22 & 23. You can check if there are any spots left on this weekend by calling the Invitation Coordinator Joy Lee at 242-6069. Our next *Men’s Weekend* is May 20 & 21. To reserve a spot or get more information on the weekend call Bill Keilitz at 779-3965.

Parish and School Website

If you have young children you may want to check out our

school webpage at www.ascensioncatholic.org. If interested in the ministries and activities of our parish check out our parish website, www.ascensioncatholic.net If you need to speak to me or one of our staff, do not hesitate to call us at 254-1595.

One resource you might want to check out is a Booklet of Prayers called *Daily Prayers for the People of God*, which I recently put together. A sample morning prayer is:

*I thank you, Lord,
for the wonder of my being,
for giving me another day to love
and serve you,
And enjoy the awesome beauty
of your creation.
May I often think of you during this day
Inspire everything that I say and do.
May it all begin from you
And with your unfailing help,
be carried through for your glory;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

The booklet also contains two daily prayers for each day of the month - most of them by saints and other friends of God from the past and present. Copies of the booklet are available from the parish office or you can get it from our parish website, www.ascensioncatholic.net See *Daily Prayers for the People of God*.

An Easter House Blessing

It is a very good practice to bless our house even if it has been blessed before or to bless our place of business. You can pray the following blessing before you share your Easter dinner or pray it at another suitable time. Gather those present in the living room and pray.

*Lord,
We rejoice in the victory of your Son over death:
By rising from the tomb to new life
He gives us new hope and promise.
Bless all the members of this household
And surround us with your protection,
That we may find comfort and peace
In Jesus Christ, the paschal lamb
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
One God, for ever and ever. Amen.*

Now sprinkle the rooms of the house with holy water and then say:

Let this water call to mind our baptism in Christ, who by his death and resurrection has redeemed us.

Have a Blessed Easter Day and week,

