

FROM THE PASTOR'S



Our Lord Jesus, Christ the King November 25, 2007 C

A DIOCESAN FESTIVAL OF FAITH - THE BIGGEST FAITH FESTIVAL IN THE HISTORY OF DIOCESE—MAY 8-10, 2008

Recently, all pastors received the following letter from our bishop, Thomas Wenski, which I now share with you.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

The year 2008 will mark the 40th anniversary of the Diocese of Orlando. To celebrate this milestone in the life of this local Church, I have asked that we observe this jubilee as a Year of Evangelization so that, as Catholics here in Central Florida, we will increase our efforts to *grow* in our faith and to *lead* others to a greater knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ by *sharing* with them the saving message of the Gospel.

To this end, special liturgical celebrations are being planned throughout the year, but the most anticipated event of this jubilee year will be the Diocese of Orlando's first ever **Festival of Faith** which will take place at the Orange County Convention Center South Concourse from May 8-10, 2008. This gathering will be a celebration of our 40th anniversary as well as a "convention of evangelization" or a Catholic "home show and exhibition". Some of the activities planned include beautiful liturgies, dynamic invited speakers, sacred music, youth gatherings and an expo of the parishes, people and ministries that comprise our diocese.

So that everyone can participate, Catholics as well as non-Catholics, we plan to offer all the events and activities free of charge.

To do this, of course, I need your help. I ask for your prayers, your enthusiastic participation in the events planned throughout next year and during the **Festival of Faith**. I am also asking you to help underwrite the costs of the **Festival of Faith** by generously supporting a special collection that will be taken up in our parishes on the First Sunday of Advent December 1 and 2, 2007.

As Jesus was sent to bring the good news so too are we. I thank you for your continued response to his

Great Commission: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" . . . (Matthew 28:19).

As the heading of my column indicates, *The Festival of Faith* will be the biggest event in the history of our diocese. The bishop is hoping for 20,000+ people to attend. In the coming months we will keep you updated on this event. But, right now, I invite you to mark your calendars so that you can be a part of the Ascension representation at the *Festival of Faith*. We plan to rent several buses to get our people to this event. I am grateful to Rita Billingsley for accepting my invitation to Chair Ascension's Festival of Faith committee. Rita has been a member of our parish for years and she has also been very active in the *Council of Catholic Women* on both a parish and diocesan level for many years. As the bishop's letter stated, next weekend on the First Sunday of Advent, we will have a special second collection for this big event.

Three Stories That Speak to Our Hearts on the Feast of Christ the King.

Jay Cormier writes reflections on the Sunday readings. The following are three of his reflections on today's Feast of Christ the King.

The Witness of the Marks of Myanmar

They have defied the arrogant generals who have devastated their country. They have faced down armed soldiers with their only "weapon" - wooden bowls.

We have all read the stories of the Buddhist monks and nuns who have taken to the streets of Burma (now Myanmar) to challenge the 20-year rule of the brutal junta that has sunk the country further into poverty and repression. The monks have been detained, tear-gassed, beaten and shot by government troops, but the barefoot, saffron-robed religious continue their nonviolent march for democracy. They have been joined by thousands of Burmese citizens who have been inspired by the witness of the monks. As they walk through the streets, many carry banners reading "loving kindness"; the monks and people chant "Do-aye" - "It is our task."

In better times, monks and nuns—revered by the Burmese people as the country’s highest moral authority—walk through the streets carrying wooden begging bowls, collecting alms and donations. To place a gift in a monks bowl is considered making a gift to God. But during the pro-democracy demonstrations of the past few weeks, the monks have refused to accept alms from members of the military, a refusal known as “turning over the rice bowl” that amounts to a gesture of excommunication. The message to the military: *Your brutality and oppression have put you at odds with the ways of God.*

During their march, monks have been seen holding their begging bowls upside down, the black lacquer surfaces reflecting the light. In the Myanmar language, the word for boycott comes from the words for holding the bowl upside down.

By the quiet witness of their peaceful march, with the simple “weapon” of a bowl, the monks and nuns of Burma are risking their lives to bring down a cruel reign of fear and replacing it with the reign of God.

Unforgiveness Keeps Us in Prison

Two veterans visit the Vietnam War memorial in Washington, D.C. With tears in their eyes, they touch the names etched into the black marble” the names of their brothers with whom they served in Southeast Asia and with whom they were imprisoned by the Viet Cong.

As they leave the memorial, one of the ex-POWS asks, “Have you forgiven your captors yet?”

“No, never,” his friend replies.

His buddy pauses for a moment, looks behind him again at the wall, and then says, “Then it seems they still have you in prison, don’t they?”

On this last Sunday of the liturgical year, we stand on the edge of paradise; we look through the doorway of heaven. In his promise to the “good thief,” Jesus opens the door to true freedom; he invites us to enter Paradise here and now; he has established the reign of God in our time and place. All we have to do—and it is no small thing—is put aside our hurts and slights, drop our demand for restitution and vengeance, realize our need to be re-created in the love of God. The thief crucified with Jesus recognizes that need in himself and calls out to Jesus—and Jesus, in the last, painful moments of his

own life, responds with compassion and hope. In the shadow of the cross, we are able to finally admit our need for healing, for peace, for God. In acknowledging our own need to forgive and be forgiven, to love and be loved, to give and be ministered to, Christ’s promise of Paradise is ours.

**I hope you are having a good
Thanksgiving weekend
and that you didn’t eat
too much turkey!**

Have a blessed week,

