



APRIL 2020

EASTER REFLECTIONS FROM THE MINISTER PROVINCIAL

Easter 2020

Dear Friars, Benefactors and Friends of the Franciscans,

Greetings and prayers for an abundance of blessings at this solemn and sacred time. May He Who offered Himself to incredible suffering and death lift any fear and uncertainty from you at this remarkable moment in history.

I am writing this reflection to you when our lives are surrounded by a surreal experience—that of a global pandemic. All of us have had our normal experience of life, of church and of relationships so phenomenally changed. And this is not even close to an end. None of us have ever celebrated Lent as we have this year. None of us have celebrated Easter as we have this year.

The Friars have been praying for our parishioners who have not been able to interact with us, who have not been able to gather as the community of the Risen Lord. They are also praying for one another, for their families, for their close friends and for all who rely on us for guidance and profound support. They pray that our local, national and world communities may return to a normal way of interaction.

Will we ever really be able to return to the normal of yesteryear? That is something to be revealed. But I suggest that a “new normal” may be what the future will bring. Sadly, I don’t seem to feel that the global pandemic has brought people closer to their Creator and Lord. It may be that I am out of touch, being so isolated and not in contact with our faith community.

I was hoping that the experience of the pandemic would drive humanity closer to another surreal reality—the love of God for the human beings that He created. Why do I say surreal? Because how can any of us wrap our minds and hearts around the existence of God and His desire to have created humanity be with Him forever? Believers rely on the continual revelation of God throughout history. Faith tells us that God exists, that He offers forgiveness without limit and that He wishes to be with us both in this world and in the future glory of heaven. That is what the Lord’s Resurrection is all about, making God’s wishes possible.

This Easter I beg you to turn to the Lord in ways that you never have before. When all seems so hopeless, God’s love not only brings hope, but also a peace and joy that allows us to confront the challenges and sufferings of our human existence. Help one another as best that you can. Whatever we do to help one another and to respond to God does not approach the magnitude of what God has done for us.

Saint Francis of Assisi recognized this so completely in his own life and tried to pass that ability to see the wondrous commitment of God on to us. Ours should be a response of joy, thanks and exuberance that we have been and continue to be so richly cared for. May we pass that insight and response along to others.

Revel in the love of God for you, for your loved ones and for all of humanity, even if your loved ones and much of humanity don’t share your belief and joy. I send these reflections to each of you with much affection and with gratitude for your being part of the Franciscan family.

May God pour forth His gifts of love, support and care in abundance on each of you.

The Vocation Picture

As we are too well aware, vocations to the Franciscan community and to the Church in general have been very sparse in the developed “first” world, as we call it. And yet I remain positive. There have been an increased number of inquiries from those seeking to join the Franciscan community. That is the good news. The bad news is that only a small fraction of inquirers actually has a Franciscan vocation. We know this by the work of discernment that we do.

On the other hand, the vocation picture in our Vietnamese delegation (third world) is remarkably wonderful. There are many fine young men who have entered the community there. It is such a joy to spend time with them as I try to do when I go to Asia. The Catholic community in Vietnam is solidly founded on faith, devotion and community. Somewhere between 50 and 70% of Catholic Vietnamese go to church each Sunday (the local Friars are very upset by this—that the percentage is not higher). No Friar has asked to be released from his vows since 2016. And the Friars enter into a rigorous and demanding daily schedule.

I make these comments to ask you to join us in prayer that God may send an increased number of dedicated men to us in the United States and that the flow of new recruits may continue in Viet Nam. I find it a true pleasure to work with those who approach us for entrance into the community. It is a goal of mine to help each one of these men find the place where God wants them to be, most of the time somewhere other than the Franciscan community.

Let me close this commentary by saying that I look forward to three Friars making their solemn (lifetime) vows in 2021 and that two may be ordained priests in 2022. These are true gifts from God that brighten our Easter celebration.

Father Victor

Minister Provincial | Vocations Director

Conventual Franciscans of California

Saint Joseph of Cupertino Province

Castro Valley, CA

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SAVE THE DATE

Fundraiser Dinner

September 20th, 2020

San Luis Obispo

Country Club