



>> Bishop Hurley congratulates Kimberly Randall following her initiation into the church last year. Standing on either side of her are her sponsors Laura Kruger (left) and Frances Carmona (right).

M

y dear friends,

The Holy Week and Easter liturgies celebrate the great mystery of faith: the dying and rising of Jesus and our sharing in his victory over sin, darkness and death. The celebration of these liturgies and others throughout the year is a “mystery of faith” and not just accounts of historical events in the life of Jesus. The Holy Week and Easter celebrations are not solely intended to “take us back” to the upper room; retrace the path to Calvary; relive the last hours of Jesus’ life; or catch sight of him emerging from the tomb at Easter’s dawning. Through these celebrations, as a people we are gathered in faith, gifted with the Spirit of holiness and called to conversion.

At Easter each of us is asked to renew our baptismal promises. Saint Paul writes that when we were baptized we died to our old way of life to live a new way of life. He says that when we were baptized we went into the tomb with Jesus and rose out of the tomb with him – we set aside our sinful ways to embrace a fuller and richer life in Christ.

The notion of dying and rising, of death and resurrection is not just a religious concept but is a natural part of our life experience. In nature, the seeds are planted in the ground and become the beautiful flowers. Winter gives way to spring and spring to summer and fall to winter again. In our human lives one generation gives way to the next. One dies and a new life begins. Our human experience teaches us that growth often comes through a slow, painful process of change.

Over the past weeks I reread parts of Msgr. Gaspar Ancona’s wonderful book “Where the Star Came to Rest”. It made me reflect on how the notion of death and resurrection permeates our society and our diocese. There was a time when places like Muskegon and Ludington were teeming with sawmills and places like Big Rapids, Greenville and Grand Rapids were manufacturing and shipping centers. Grand Rapids became known as the furniture capital of the world crafting some of the finest furniture. Belding was once the silk center of the world. St. Mary’s Hospital in Big Rapids was an amazing structure as were Grand Rapids’ St. John’s Home and the Little Sisters of

The Poor facility. Religious women taught in our many schools. St. Joseph Seminary’s high school program began in 1909 and closed in 1981. Christopher House (also now closed) served college seminarians. Priests and bishops, family and friends and some parishes and schools have come and gone. Muskegon, Belding, Big Rapids, Greenville, Grand Rapids and all our cities, towns and villages have seen and experienced death and resurrection as the old dies and the new arises. Change is not necessarily bad or good, it is what we make of it.

The Easter season is a wonderful time for us to cherish our pasts which have brought us to this day and season. It is a history filled with death and resurrection. Though we may value institutions or particular people who have helped us on our faith journey, as people who believe, we realize that the growth of our faith is not reliant on them. Our future will be filled with hope if we set aside our own agendas and place our trust in God who has promised to be with us until the end of time.

Christ has died! Christ has risen! Christ will come again! This day is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad that our gracious God has loved us so much that he sent his only Son to redeem and save us.

Blessings to all in this Easter Season.

Bishop Hurley