

## SPIRITUAL HOUSE CLEANING: THE GIFT OF EASTER GRATITUDE

Vacuum, check. Wire radiator brush, check. Windex, check. Paper towels, check. All the items necessary for Spring Cleaning were securely in hand. The only thing left was to load the records onto the Victrola. (Given the renewed popularity in LP's, the turntable company has been revived to the delight of audiophiles everywhere!). Ours was a massive cabinet with a built-in speaker, and as I recall it could hold several LPs that would play in succession. Typically, the music was classical, but on one occasion, a newly released "rock-opera" about Jesus even played. Spoiler alert– **bad theology!** It was 1971, and it was time for Spring cleaning. That this happened to coincide with Holy Week was a manifestly intentional act by the powers to be in our house. After all, my mother had a ready, willing (**i.e. captive!**) and cheap "source of labor" on hand. Just teasing, Mom! After morning chores, we headed up to Church.

Looking back, they are actually amongst my fondest memories growing up. We had the opportunity to spend time together at home, able to appreciate our results while also giving primacy to the life of faith. Ideally, the season of Lent serves as a **spring cleaning** for the soul. For forty days, we have been focused on the threefold practice of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We have done so to purify our hearts of evil intentions and disordered passions. We have turned our attention away from ourselves, focusing on the needs of others. Most importantly, we have turned our gaze towards the cross of Jesus Christ, engaging the Paschal mystery in a way that makes it real and relevant today. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus must not be thought of merely as an historical event, as profound as it was.

Indeed, the Paschal mystery is very much alive. In a certain sense, the historic and present difficulties that we have endured as a local church—not to mention nationally and even universally—give voice to the reality of the Paschal Mystery. We have been brought low, we have come **face-to-face with sinfulness** and pain. For many of our faithful laity, this is particularly difficult because the pain experienced is accentuated by the fact that they neither had anything to do with it, nor were they in any position to relieve the pain. The lay faithful could only endure it. To all Catholics who have **remained engaged**, God bless you. To those who have drifted, I certainly understand and want you to know that we are so blessed that you came to worship here today.

Something **very exciting** is beginning to emerge. I am seeing firsthand the **resolute determination** of the laity, not only to hold onto their faith, but to work assiduously to **preserve and purify** it. I believe that the rebirth of a stronger Catholic Church is largely in the hands of the faithful laity. Young families coming to church want an authentic Gospel message; they are appropriately discerning and have high expectations. This can be difficult when one is on the side of church leadership, but frankly I welcome it. I am thankful for our Cathedral Pastoral Council, Finance Council as well as other key organizations within the parish, each of which provides tremendous assistance to me in my ministry as rector.

These groups not only provide tremendous **support and encouragement**, but continually call me to the most authentic exercise of my ministry. In other words, I do not want to let the faithful down. I am proud to walk with you on the journey of faith, as we all process towards our Lord and Savior. To see **sixty volunteers** turn out for our pre-Easter cleaning last Saturday was immensely gratifying. The spirit of service was willing, and a large group of girls had come the previous Saturday to focus on the Baptistry and Founders Chapel. The girls did a fantastic job! This demonstrates your **pride** and your desire to maintain and **care for God's House**. Our altar servers put in extra time at rehearsal and our Corps continues to grow in number and stature! Our lectors, choir members, cantors, ushers, sanctuary and chapel flower designers, sacristans, deacons— all of you have made me realize just how truly blessed I am to serve.

The **turnout for confessions** was consistent throughout the season of Lent, and quite **intense** during Holy Week. Our society seeks to dismiss the relevance of the Christian faith in an increasingly pluralistic world. Critics of faith do so under the guise of the separation of Church and State. In reality, they seek the removal of any of the accoutrements of religious ritual and vocabulary from the lexicon of enlightened members of society. Easter Sunday reminds them (and us!) that **we're still here!** We are not going anywhere; we place our trust and

hope in our resurrected Lord and Savior. Though cognizant of the stormy seas from which we have emerged, this Easter we **march forward in faith** and hope and love. We do so with our eyes fixed on Jesus and we continually ask the Lord to help build and rebuild his church. The church exists for His glory not ours, and we are proud to walk together on this journey of faith.

- Due to a relatively late Easter, a **crowded** Confirmation season necessitates hosting one here next Sunday. As a result, I encourage your participation in the **Divine Mercy Sunday** devotions held at the Church of Saint Agnes at 3:00 p.m. on Sunday, April 28, 2019.
- The safety of parishioners and visitors to the Cathedral is of paramount importance to me. Thanks to an **extremely generous** donation, we are poised to purchase a state-of-the-art **security camera system** for the upper Church and Cathedral grounds, in addition to the security personnel present at all Sunday Masses. The donor would like to **encourage your support** as well to put us over the top. I heartily concur. There will be envelopes in the coming weeks for a special collection to complete the project.
- Eternally youthful...the body of **Venerable Carlo Acutis** († 2006) is reportedly incorrupt. Pope Francis mentions this young man in his recent post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, "Christ is Alive." Carlos died of leukemia at the age of 15, offering his sufferings in the end for the sake of newly elected Pope Benedict XVI. Acutis discouraged his peers from hiding their unique gifts, noting that "everyone is born as an original, but many people end up dying as photocopies." Young people remain our hope and our pride in the Church.
- Our rescheduled **Marie Marcotte Lemon Pie Sale** is just around the corner on Sunday May 5, 2019, after the 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Masses (possibly Noon, if supplies last). Mark your calendars for this long-standing Cathedral tradition. Hands down, these are the best homemade lemon meringue pies ever!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. John L. Ubel,  
Rector