Letter from Our Pastor

Another year is upon us and reflecting back as a church, we had quite a few unexpected events that marked our history, such as: resignation of a Pope; the election of the first Latin American Pope, the death of Nelson Mandela, to name just a few.

Looking back in our personal lives, it is always easy to think that we haven't done much or anything that made a difference in someone else's life; the reason is that we, as humans, ten to look for big events and forget that every little thing counts.

As a parish we have received into full communion more than ten converts. Around 180 made their First Communion; 92 babies, children and adults received the Sacrament of Baptism. And an amazing 153 youth and adults have been confirmed. Hundreds of parishioners have volunteered as catechists in our Religious Education Program and the RCIA program; ushers, lectors, Eucharistic ministers serve weekly during the many weekend and weekday liturgies; gardening work continues and so on. As our parish grows so grows the many responsibilities of our parish family. How blessed we are to have our seminarian Jorge ... to live and grow with us for almost an entire year.

Talking about our church building, we have made steady and noticeable progress towards reducing our building loan from the Diocese. Even with this ongoing financial challenge, our parishioners have been very generous with those in need in our community and also to the many worthy causes and appeals from outside the diocese, such as: Food for the Poor, Cross International, and the Redemptorists.

My thoughts are of deep gratitude and appreciation for all our volunteers who have offered their time, talent and treasure to help me take care for the material and spiritual needs of our parish community. May this New Year once again provide us the opportunity to serve others and to share our talents and gifts with one another...and the world.

Yours in Christ,
Father Francisco

Expiration Date

by Rich Horrell

“When we journey without the cross, when we build without the cross, and when we confess a Christ without the cross, we are not disciples of the Lord; we are worldly . . . I would like for us all, after these days of grace, to have courage, precisely the courage, to walk in the presence of the Lord’s presence . . . to build the Church upon the blood of the Lord, which is poured out on the cross; and to confess the only glory there is: Christ crucified.” - Pope Francis

Recently I entered a Catholic Church in another town and I could not help but notice an imposing replica of the Risen Christ above the altar. With only a smaller Crucifix present, it crushed my heart. It's not that I don't want to focus on the Resurrection—it's just that I can't get there without the Crucifix being front and center in the Church, in my daily life,
in my soul. When a depiction of the resurrected Christ replaces Christ on the cross, our great ship with our Lord and Master at the helm will begin to lose its way. Without the crucified Christ, we become worldly as Pope Francis wrote, trying to shape our lives the way we think they should be, making heaven what we want it to be. In the end, Christ’s blood dries up, and so do we. If we skip over Christ crucified straight to Christ resurrected, we lose ourselves in what only appears to be joy and happiness. Our reality as Catholics is suffering into final joy. And we ain’t there yet.

Let’s ponder the resurrection at the foot of the Crucifix. It’s where we learn to embrace true love. Christ’s love is what gets us to heaven. The Crucifix is the only porthole home for us. This is where we must embrace suffering, accepting it as what God wants for each one of us.

You can find everything you need to know about forgiveness, happiness, and joy at the foot of the Crucifix, as you look up. The peace that the Cross of Christ can bring when we come to Him for strength in our suffering and our joy can replace every pill ever made, every drink ever drunk, and every New Age guru or professional psychiatrist that ever lived. It’s not a secret. Without loss, we gain nothing. Some may say to themselves, But I have had no suffering—I am perfectly okay, perfectly happy.

A priest once responded to that, “It ain’t over yet!”

There can be no heaven on earth, no hope for eternal joy, without the crucified Christ. This is why Catholic churches worldwide need to stick with the crucified Christ front and center. When we allow suffering to become our friend, this friend becomes Jesus. When we embrace suffering, Jesus embraces us.

I once had a dog named Honey Bee. When I was six years old, I thought she was the most beautiful German Shepherd in the world. We were inseparable. Then one morning, I woke up, and she was gone. My mother said she had gone to a farm because she would be happier there. I was so heartbroken then that I still shed tears now as I write this, 49 years later.

No long after, I suffered an even greater loss. I was eight years old when my father woke me up to tell me my mother had gone to heaven. God had taken her home. A farm may have sounded better, but I was no longer six. Once again, loss crushed me.

Many of us have faced such losses; many of us are going through loss right now. We have to know that Jesus is right by our side, mourning with us, embracing us. With Him we can get back up.

Why did Jesus have to die? Why do we have to die? Why do we have suffering and pain?

The answers I have received make perfect sense to me. God knows our hearts, and He knows what we need as fallen people to discover His love and His home for us. He gave us an expiration date that is the gateway to a new life. Our Lord has passed through that gate, too. Stand below the Crucifix, look up, and there is our proof on the Cross. That’s love.

Editor’s Note: Former parishioner Rich Horrell lives with his family in Sacramento, CA. Rich contributes frequently to The Mustard Seed and shares his faith with us.

Newman Center Gets a Facelift
by Adrienne Akers

If you have lived in Logan for less than five years, you may not yet have attended Mass or visited our former parish home--St Thomas Aquinas Church and St. Jerome’s Newman Center. For many northern Utah Catholics, it was our “home” for many, many years until our new church and administration buildings were completed in 2006.

The recent return of Sister Marilyn Mark to our parish sparked a renewed interest in spiffing up the Newman Center as it serves as her residence, apartments for a small number of students as well as the hub for our Newman activities. The time had finally come to put the pedal to metal! Thousands of volunteer hours and donations, small and large, helped with the transformation.

Roofing
In the summer 2012, the roofing over the former first floor “pastor’s apartment” was replaced and the bell tower (speakers for the old carillon system) were removed. Then in the summer of 2013, the asphalt shingles over the main portion of the
Newman Center were replaced and new membrane roofing was installed over the former second floor library, the flat deck on the third floor, and another section of flat roof. A metal cap was installed over the cracked concrete parapets on the sections of flat roof on the upper levels.

In summary: all of the roofing at the Newman Center has been replaced with the exception of the chapel, which has deteriorated asbestos shingles (see photo). Anticipated replacement of the chapel roof is summer 2014. We are grateful that the roofing work was done by Zane Rust of Mt. Peak Roofing.

Windows
Almost all of the old crank-out aluminum windows in the Newman Center were replaced with new side-slide vinyl windows by Gordon’s Glass. The windows in the old library, the social hall, and the chapel were not replaced and will have to wait a bit longer.

Renovations of the Former Pastor’s Apartment
This main floor area needed major renovation to make it habitable for Sr. Marilyn. In the bathroom, the sink and toilet were replaced, a vanity was installed; and the bathroom floor was retiled. A room partition which had been removed to create a classroom was put back in to create a bedroom.

The first-floor kitchen underwent a major renovation, thanks to the dedication and hard work of Sister Marilyn’s family. The old cupboards were ripped out and replaced and all new appliances were installed, including a stacked washer and dryer.

Basement Bathrooms and Kitchen
Traditionally, the lower level of the Newman Center housed the social hall with adjoining kitchen and public bathrooms that were used to support both parish and community events over the years. During the recent renovations, three bathrooms sinks and two toilets were replaced and vanities were installed. The floors were re-tiled in the west basement bathroom, the main hallway by the stairs, and in the west side of the kitchen. Paneling in the west bathroom was replaced because of termite damage from a number of years ago (see photos). Various cupboards and appliances have been moved and/or relocated to make the kitchen area more efficient for student residents.

Hundreds of volunteer hours were provided by many parishioners too numerous mention without leaving some out. The generous contributions of time, talent, and treasure made by parishioners, St. Marilyn’s family and members of the community are a gift to us all - keep them in your prayers.

Note: Details and photos for this article (as well as plenty of man hours of labor) were provided by Don Fiesinger and Father Francisco.
Spotlight on the Roosendaals
by Linda Bradak

Lisa and Quinn Roosendaal have been a significant presence at St. Thomas Aquinas Church for nearly 15 years. Recently they moved to Salt Lake. However, we couldn’t let them get away without acknowledging that now is the time for us to honor their contributions and devotion to our parish.

Quinn was away in Texas for training for his new position with Lewiston State Bank/Bank of American Fork when I interviewed Lisa, so this interview comes through her eyes. Lisa hails from Pittsburgh PA and grew up in Ohio. Her grandmother Mary was “a staunch Catholic” who walked to daily Mass. After Lisa’s mother and father divorced, Lisa’s mother remarried, her second husband, a non-practicing LDS man, but Lisa’s mother did not convert from the Catholic faith herself. The family eventually moved to Salt Lake City, where Lisa went to Granite High School. Quinn was in her class. Lisa says, “We were both shy,” and they didn’t actually meet until after graduation. Lisa was doing office work for a temp agency, and Quinn was working there too, as a janitor. Toward the end of the summer, Lisa left a Post-It note saying, “Hi, Quinn!” on her wastebasket. The next morning, she found a “Hi, Lisa!” reply. That broke the ice; Lisa still has the entirety of their early Post-It note communication.

Lisa came to Logan to study psychology at USU in 1985. Quinn followed one year later to study finance and they were married at St. Ambrose Church in 1987, having been told by Lisa’s mother, “You WILL get married in the Catholic faith.” Prior to their wedding, Quinn, a non-practicing Mormon, began classes in Catholicism. Lisa claims to remember little but says of her husband, “Quinn remembers everything! It must have been the grace of God, as His Good News truly sank in! Quinn was touched and moved by the priest, his words and works, and the unbroken history of the Church.” The young couple graduated in 1989 and then moved to Salt Lake City, where their faith “sort of ebbed” for awhile.

It was the birth of daughter Emily in 1995 that got their faith “flowing” again. Lisa’s sister Eileen, also Catholic, served as Emily’s godmother. When Sarah was born in 1998, she too was baptized. Eileen insisted to Lisa that they take the children to Mass every weekend. “Sit in the front row so the kids can see and hear everything!” said Eileen; thus was born a custom the Roosendaals still follow.

“I have had many ‘grace of God’ moments,” Lisa reports. “Quinn’s pull toward the Church, my grandmother’s example of faith, my sister’s gentle prodding. When we moved back to Logan in 1999, leaving my mother in Salt Lake City, I felt alone, until it was as if I felt God’s hand on my shoulder and I heard ‘It’s going to be OK.’ I didn’t know what that meant yet.” Then, Lisa spoke of the recent reflection by our seminarian, Jorge Martinez, who mentioned being lost as a new driver and finding comfort in the calm words of his GPS system, “recalculating.”

Lisa says, “My God is a patient God. Over and over I find He recalculates the path for me. Now He’s recalculating it again.”

After the young family moved here, Quinn and Lisa took turns going to the original St. Thomas Aquinas Church, with one staying home with their small daughters. Shortly afterwards, they met Eric and Nicole Held, who encouraged them to bring the girls to Mass. They did, and when Sarah was baptized, Nicole stepped forth as Sarah’s godmother. Lisa subsequently got involved with the first MOMS group.

Quinn was baptized in 2000 by Fr. Clarence Sandoval. “God was working Quinn below the surface,” says Lisa. “Quinn felt someone close, the presence of God in his personal space. It was as though he heard the words, ‘What are you waiting for?’” “Quinn is a no-nonsense guy. With that experience, he announced, ‘No excuses. We’re going to Mass regularly as a family.’

Once they were thus committed to the faith, Lisa taught Christian Formation to third graders. Eventually, Fr. Clarence asked her to serve as coordinator of Christian Formation. “In retrospect, I see that God was bringing me forward,” she reports. Lisa always loved office work, but she had scant awareness of what her faith journey would become. “I was hired as a formation coordinator: it formed ME,” says Lisa. She served as Christian Formation Coordinator from 2002-07. Meeting Margaret Stepan, then the USU Campus Minister, was also a turning point for Lisa. “We had an instant close friendship. Margaret asked ‘Please pray for me,’ and that she was asking me for my prayers really touched me.”

After leaving the position in 2007, Lisa and Quinn started working together...
with parents preparing for children for the Sacrament of Baptism. “We love helping them understand their role in rearing children in our Catholic faith. We also enjoy helping parents with more experience in the faith to help others with less experience -- as WE have been helped. We seek to meet them where they are in their faith life and invite them to join us.” Lisa expresses joy in seeing faith-filled actions bloom “The Sacrament invites them in.”

Quinn and Lisa’s prayer has become, “Show me, God, where you want me in the next step.” Their next step was to leave Logan. It has been difficult for sincerely Catholic, non-LDS girls Emily and Sarah in Cache Valley, and the family is looking forward to a fresh start closer to Quinn’s new job. Lisa says, “I’m surrendering everything to you, God. I’m holding steadfast to you, letting go of everything else.” The move that the Roosendaals are making to the Salt Lake area is truly a leap of faith for them.

Lisa says, “The point is for people to see how God works. He is not like a vending machine, delivering what you expect. You have to be close to God to hear His will. I pray the Serenity Prayer daily. God uses everything -- our lapses, our difficulties, our triumphs. God can turn everything into His good.” Of Quinn’s faith journey, Lisa says, “like the parable of the seeds falling onto fertile soil, Quinn was ready. We trust God, and we know we’ll find friends in our new parish. We will of course be active in our new parish.”

We here at St. Thomas Aquinas will miss Quinn, Lisa, Emily and Sarah Roosendaal, but Lori Jenkins, newly in charge of Children’s Christian formation (and Sarah’s confirmation teacher) will carry forth the torch of excellence they have so capably borne. We send them forth with our love and respect.

**Future Priest on Loan**

by Adrienne Akers

Our parish has been blessed with the presence of seminarian Jorge Martinez who is spending his pastoral year assignment at our parish. Jorge explained that his studies to become a diocesan priest require two years of theology, a pastoral year serving in a parish community followed by two more years of study. He joined our parish in the fall and will be in Logan until June 2014. Jorge commented that he was surprised to find the northern Utah is so sparsely populated but is enjoying his time here.

**Early Life**

Jorge grew up in Vera Cruz, Mexico, and is one of three children. His older brother and his two younger sisters are married and still live in Vera Cruz near their parents. In fact, Jorge has six nieces and nephews who miss their uncle very much. Jorge explained that he had an extended illness when he was a child from age six to twelve years of age. He remembers enjoying his friends, especially the ones in his neighborhood but missed out on playing active sports like soccer. Certainly this type of experience as a child could contribute to feeling sorry for yourself or to be a stronger individual -- Jorge clearly has been able to use his faith and his experiences to move forward.

Jorge explained that his mother took the children to weekly Mass as they were growing up. But a memorable early experience was when his mother took him to a local monastery called Madres Adoratrices. The congregation at the monastery practiced continuous adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and Jorge recalled that he felt a sense of peace there that he had felt nowhere else. He continued to go there whenever his mother would take him.

Another early memory was a children’s picture book of bible stories. Before he could read, he was deeply drawn to the pictures and the stories read to him by his mother. He remembers that his brothers and sisters didn’t seem to be very interested and yet he couldn’t get enough of the stories. By the time that he was in the 5th grade, Jorge told his mother that he wanted to become a priest. While she didn’t discourage him, she explained that he would have to finish high school first before he could make a decision.

**A Vocation Emerges**

Even though his early devotion was very strong, by the time he finished high school, Jorge wanted to go on to study at the University of Vera Cruz to become an engineer or physician so he put his vocation on the back burner. But by his second year, he met some lay missionaries who invited him to participate in a series of retreats; it was during this time that his vocation rekindled. He found a great sense of peace in the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and in studying the Bible. He began to discuss his vocation with the lay missionaries and they cautioned him that he should be careful to be sure that his vocation was not simply based on a feeling of emotion. “Finish college first” they told him and he went on to get a degree in communication.

Once finished he worked for the Mexican federal government and also as a journalist for a radio station. However, in his
called Ministerio De Matrimonios.

and the marriage group Grupo Oracion Vino Nuevo, Spanish ministries, such as enjoys participating in children. Likewise, Jorge enjoys being with the Formation classes and Jorge has attended Christian Holy Communion to those in the hospital, and taken our parish life in the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking Jorge also shared that he tries to participate in many aspects of not happen in Mexico. It's so nice to see people talking and Mass. And of course, the coffee and donuts after Mass would people hug or shake hands with Father Francisco and me after immediately to travel to say Mass at another parish. I like how "At home after Mass, the priest usually has to leave Vera Cruz contrasted with what he has experienced in Logan. "At home after Mass, the priest usually has to leave immediately to travel to say Mass at another parish. I like how people hug or shake hands with Father Francisco and me after Mass. And of course, the coffee and donuts after Mass would not happen in Mexico. It's so nice to see people talking and sharing with one another after Mass."

Jorge also shared that he tries to participate in many aspects of our parish life in the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking communities. He has participated in RCIA three or four times so far, visited the sick who are in the hospital, and taken Holy Communion to those who cannot come to Mass. Jorge has attended Christian Formation classes and enjoys being with the children. Likewise, Jorge enjoys participating in Spanish ministries, such as the prayer group called Grupo Oracion Vino Nuevo, and the marriage group called Ministerio De Matrimonios.

I asked Jorge what saints and Catholic scholars had influenced him. He spoke lovingly of Pope Francis and said that he admired him because “His message is very deep yet so easy to understand.” He also referred to the two pillars of vocations...Mother Theresa and Pope John Paul II. Words spoken by Pope John Paul during World Youth Day one year deeply affected Jorge. “Do not be afraid to be the saints of the future.” Let us pray that Jorge is on his way to become just that.

Carrying on the Gospel Message
by Joseph Delka, Seminarian in Rome

The night that Pope Francis was elected, one of the cardinals came out and gave the announcement saying: Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum – I announce to you a great joy! Indeed, it was a joyous moment and the energy has continued as the excitement over our beloved Holy Father has built up over the last several months. Large crowds continue to flood St. Peter’s Square for the Sunday Angelus, Wednesday audience, special Masses, and other events led by the Pope. In the midst of all this excitement and this joy Pope Francis is pointing us towards a greater joy, something to be even more excited about. This is the joy of the Gospel, the Evangelii Gaudium as he entitled his first apostolic exhortation.

Pope Francis is challenging us to live our faith. We have just celebrated his coming at Christmas - God’s coming in the flesh so that we may see him, touch him, and hear his voice. In this encounter with Jesus we are given new life and we come to know the truth about our identity as children of God, and this brings us great joy. Our joy can only be sustained by our relationship with Jesus Christ which is nourished through prayer, Scripture, and receiving the sacraments.

This joy given to us is not to be kept to ourselves. Having heard the truth of the Gospel and having received Christ into our lives we are now given a mission to go out into the world and preach the good news. This is manifested first and foremost in our works of charity. That is how we treat others, having concern for their good and for their salvation. This is especially true for how we treat the poor (materially and spiritually) in our midst. The Holy Father has given us a beautiful example of how to live out this joy of the Gospel. Just think of the powerful image of the Pope embracing the disfigured man!

Let us continue to pray for and support Pope Francis that he may always remain faithful and continue to provide an example of Christian charity to the entire world. The good he is doing flows from his intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. May we learn from his example and so carry the joy of the Gospel to all people. This task begins with our very own community in which we live. This task begins.

Joseph Delka, Diocese of Salt Lake City, Seminarian
2013 Vacation Bible School Photos
Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic

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