



Our Faith in Action

American Martyrs Catholic Community

A LETTER FROM OUR PASTOR

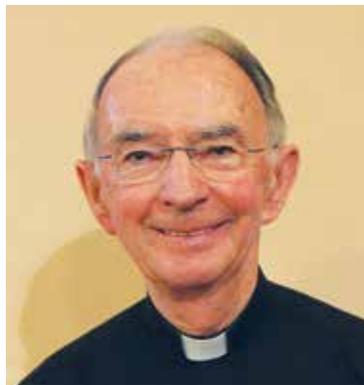
Opportunities to Enrich Our Faith and Community During Lent

Dear Parishioners,

We are in the midst of Lent. By this time many of us have been humbled by some of the resolutions which have caved in as we were tested by the reality of life's demands and challenges. Yet, there are others who may have to arm wrestle with pride as they see themselves succeeding in following those good resolutions. Wherever we are, we are all on the same journey of Lenten conversion and renewal and must continue to be open to the many opportunities we have to enrich our sense of community and our spiritual life.

Every Friday, we have those great Lenten Dinners. They follow the praying of the Stations of the Cross and Mass. If you haven't experienced this soup dinner and the sharing of table with fellow parishioners and guests, you need to try it. All donations go to feed the hungry.

Have you ever attended one of the Lenten Penance services at one of our five cluster parishes? They are scheduled the week prior to Holy Week, beginning Monday evening, March 23 here at American Martyrs. Additional priests are available at all of



these locations hearing confessions. As we celebrate this Sacrament, we open ourselves to the mercy of Our Loving Father who forgives us and gifts us with grace and peace for our souls. I encourage you to put one of these celebrations on your calendar.

Holy Week is that sacred time when we have so many other experiences such as the Seven Last Words, a meditation led by Deacon Chris. Check the bulletin or our website for other sessions and event details to help you enrich your faith. A special experience within the Archdiocese is the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Here the Holy Oils are blessed by our Archbishop, José Gomez, and sent to every parish for the Anointings at Baptism, Confirmation, and in the Sacrament of the Sick. In this way he is connecting all of us to Christ and to himself as our Chief Shepherd in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

The Sacred Triduum begins our journeying with Christ on *Holy Thursday* with the Mass of the Lord's Supper. This beautiful liturgy is the first "leg" of the "One Day" broken into three and concludes with a

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PALM SUNDAY

Will You Carry Christ on the Journey?

As we continue our Lenten journey this month, we celebrate Passion Sunday, also known as Palm Sunday, on March 29.

The readings will focus our attention on two major events in our salvation history. In our Palm Sunday reading, we hear of Christ's triumphant journey into Jerusalem where He is joyfully greeted by the crowds. People throw down palms and cloaks in His path as they shout "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" (Mk. 11:9-10)

Yet Christ does not come with the splendor often surrounding royalty.

Christ chose to make His glorious entrance into the holy city of Jerusalem riding a donkey – Christ calls this humble animal into service on His bittersweet journey that by the week's end will lead to the cross on Calvary.

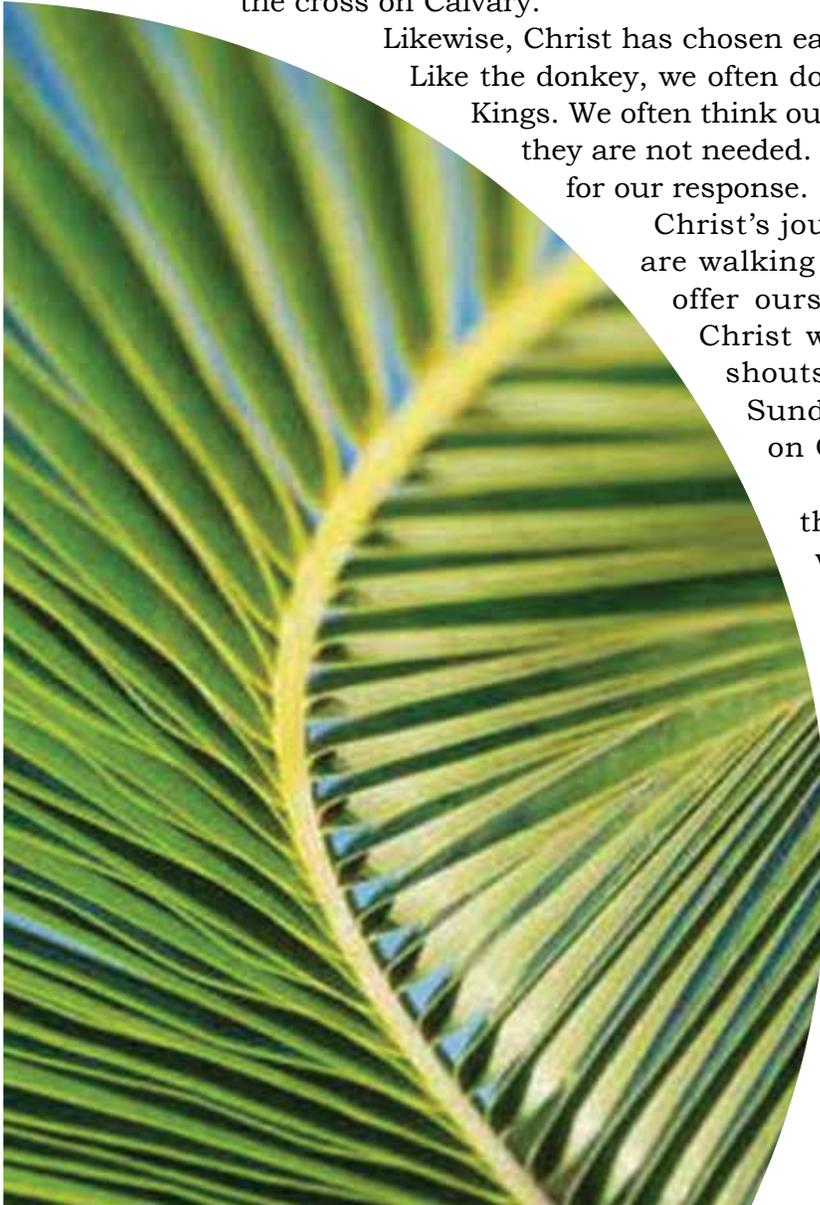
Likewise, Christ has chosen each of us to carry Him during our life on earth.

Like the donkey, we often don't feel fit to carry out the work of the King of Kings. We often think our gifts are not good enough for the King or that they are not needed. Nevertheless, He calls us and He eagerly waits for our response.

Christ's journey into the Holy City continues today. We are walking with Christ now and He asks us to humbly offer ourselves in service to Him. This journey with Christ will not always be easy. Remember how the shouts of celebration that greeted Christ on Palm Sunday are quickly replaced with jeering mockery on Good Friday.

As we each respond to Christ's call to serve the Church, we will likely experience times when our feeling of victory and triumph are replaced with sacrifices that sometimes seem too much to carry. But we must be steadfast in our response to Christ. We must be committed to carrying Him on our journey here on earth as we live out our lives as disciples.

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THE WAY OF THE CROSS: *A Parish Tradition of Growth*

As our eighth-grade students prepare for their two presentations of The Way of the Cross on Good Friday, they will most likely find they have not only depicted Christ's journey to Calvary, but that they have taken their own journey to a deeper relationship with Him.

Jennifer Robbins Brannan, Director for The Way of the Cross, says the students grow spiritually as they enter into their characters.

"They understand in a very deep way what Good Friday means to them," she says. "This presentation gives the parents and parishioners the opportunity to enter in this journey in such an artful way. The students receive a gift and give it right back to the community."

While The Way of the Cross provides the students with a way to become closer to Christ, Jennifer says the hours of rehearsals and the presentation itself allow them to grow closer to each other as well.

"What I see is that this is a beautiful way for them to end their experience at American Martyrs School," she says. "Because it involves all of the students, they really come together as a grade. It's very bonding for them. Friendships are deepened, and they see each other in a different way."

The Way of the Cross allows each student to use his or her unique gifts in the presentation, and even at times enables students to find their own gifts. As an actress and writer, Jennifer says she appreciates being able to use her gifts and to learn from the students.

"The kids can shine in a way they haven't before," Jennifer says. "Kids who are wonderful speakers, or budding actors, find expression in the arts as a way to come to the forefront of the class. Kids who are on the technical crew with me, sometimes are kids who are quieter or who are not visible like athletes, [they] find their niche doing technical work with sound and lights – there are lots of opportunities to mix it up."

As the presentation comes together during



Mary and Jesus reach out to each other after the First Station in this scene from a past Way of the Cross dramatization.

rehearsals, Jennifer says that in addition to observing the students closely bonding with each other, individual students get to know their character and view the story from their character's perspective.

"A very large component of the presentation is the journals they keep and the essay they write at the end about their character," Jennifer says. "I want to encourage their spiritual growth through writing and reflecting."

Parents are affected by their children's performances, Jennifer says, with some parents telling her that the preparation they observed for The Way of the Cross became their own Lenten journey. Other parents, who see the presentation for the first time on Good Friday, are amazed at what the kids have accomplished.

"They are so genuine and deep in their character, and so reverent in telling the story," Jennifer says. "They have to enter into the journey as their characters, and they accomplish that. It's really spiritually profound for the parents and kind of a rite of passage for the kids."

See the web page and bulletin for Way of the Cross times.

THIRD ANNUAL DAY *Provides Opportunity*

Oftentimes, we as Catholics feel the call to become more involved in our church through volunteering or spending time with other parishioners, “giving back” – yet, we’re not sure how to take that first step. We have the desire, but our busy schedule, prior commitments and perhaps the act of going outside of our comfort zone causes us to hold back. If you have felt this way at some point, then the March 28 Day of Volunteering (DOV) at American Martyrs could be the perfect opportunity to join with others in making a difference in the parish and surrounding community.

“We started the Day of Volunteering three years ago as a way to compile, package and promote all the ministries and opportunities available through the parish,” says Tom Hoffarth, Facilitator of DOV at American Martyrs. “We want to plant the seed that volunteering

is a year-round opportunity through gathering as one big community, one big heartbeat on this day.”

Tom, a USC alum, modeled the DOV after a similar event the university hosts each year, at which volunteering opportunities are showcased to the community. The DOV at American Martyrs works in a similar fashion and starts with 8 a.m. Mass in the church on the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Afterwards, all of the volunteers gather in the parking lot and group up with the ministries that they want to help that day. The anchor project for this year will be through the Greater Los Angeles Habitat for Humanity, in which volunteers can help build homes in the community. Many other ministries will provide volunteer opportunities, including sandwich making for Hearts for the Hungry, participating in a home

build through the Catholic Coalition, volunteering with the Pregnancy Help Center, helping clean up the beach, and more. Parishioners can sign up prior to the DOV, or they can just come and see where they are most needed.

“My family and I have participated in the last two events,” says Kathleen Truman, a member of the Social Justice and Outreach Commission at American Martyrs. “The first year, my sons and I made sack lunches and delivered them to the Downtown Women’s Center. The second year, one son and I made sack lunches for the Downtown Women’s Center, and another son and my husband participated in the Habitat for Humanity house build. Volunteering with hundreds of fellow parishioners fills you with the Holy Spirit and is a positive kick-off to Easter Week.”

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OF VOLUNTEERING

to Get Involved

Lynne Hook, Co-Chair of Matthew 25, finds the DOV a great way for parishioners to become involved and really live their faith.

“The Day of Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity for parishioners and community members to spend a morning assisting those in need, learning more about social services or improving our environment,” Lynne says. “We had over 100 people participate in 2014 at five different projects around Los Angeles. Spending one day with your friends or family doing good deeds is a great way to improve your year, and many learn that it is easy to become ‘doers of the Word’ on a regular basis!”

Tom is excited about the third DOV this year and encourages all parishioners to attend and jump in wholeheartedly, especially if you’ve been hesitant to get involved in the past.

“If you’re ready to take that next step, we’re here to catch you and help you along,” Tom says. “American Martyrs is an active place and we want you to get involved. Don’t hesitate, put it off or come up with excuses – try to set aside the time and go for it!”

For more information on the DOV, please contact Tom Hoffarth through the parish office at 310-545-5651 or at dov@americanmartyrs.org.



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CATECHESIS ON THE TRIDUUM: *The Great Week and the Feast of Feasts*



Each year, three days merge liturgically into one. This is the single event or prayer that commemorates the heart of the Gospel message – “by dying He destroyed our death; by rising He restored our life.”

Though Advent marks the beginning of the liturgical calendar, the culmination of this calendar is in the Easter or Paschal Triduum, which is its own liturgical season. Around the world, the communion of the faithful are united in celebration of the Triduum with liturgies for Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil rich with tradition and symbolism.

Both the word “Passover” and the word “Paschal” have roots in the Hebrew *pesach* meaning a “passing over.” In the Jewish tradition, Passover recalls when the Israelites were saved from slavery as the angel of death “passed over” the chosen people. In gathering for the Feast of Passover, Christ and the apostles celebrated the Last Supper, the beginning of the Paschal Triduum when Christ “passed through” His passion, death and resurrection.

The Triduum, from the Latin for “three days,” begins at dusk on Holy Thursday with the Mass of Our Lord’s Supper. As the apostles and Christ gathered to celebrate the Passover, we gather on Holy Thursday and commemorate the institution of the Eucharist, the institution of the priesthood and the new commandment to “love one another...as I have loved you” (John 13:34-35). In many churches, in imitation of Christ’s action of humility and service, the celebrant washes the feet of several of the faithful.

Christ and His disciples went from the Last Supper to the Garden of Gethsemane. In a similar tradition, Holy Thursday concludes with a solemn procession to a place set aside for the repose of the Eucharist. Here, we adore the Blessed Sacrament as Christ asked His disciples to “stay and keep watch” with him when His soul was “overwhelmed

with sorrow” (Matthew 26: 38). The liturgy ends without a closing rite, and the altar is stripped.

Beginning without an introductory rite, the Good Friday service commemorates Christ’s passion from His condemnation to His crucifixion and death. Though the Mass itself is not celebrated, we read from John of the Lord’s passion, death and burial. We offer prayers of petition and venerate the cross before receiving Communion. Again, the liturgy ends without a closing rite as the celebrant departs in silence.

At this time around the world, the doors of the tabernacle are left open as we mourn the death of Christ.

Without an introductory rite, the Easter Vigil – the Feast of Feasts – on Holy Saturday evening begins in darkness and continues the same holy event or prayer begun on Holy Thursday.

This is the night when we celebrate Christ’s triumph over death! This is the night when the Alleluia is sung for the first time since the beginning of Lent. This is the night when we welcome new members into full communion with the Church.

After the procession of the Paschal Candle, representing Christ Himself as the light of the world, we hear the story of our salvation history from Genesis to the Resurrection. We then welcome the Elect into the Church, and together with our brothers and sisters in Christ, we celebrate the Liturgy of the Eucharist and conclude Mass with the triumphant double Alleluia.

While three days are set aside annually to celebrate the Paschal Mystery, we, the communion of the faithful, continue meditating on the salvific passion, death and resurrection of Christ throughout all our lives. For Christ, as we hear in the Easter Proclamation, “has ransomed us with his blood, and paid for us the price of Adam’s sin to our eternal Father!”

MAKING OUR PARISH A THRIVING COMMUNITY

In any organization or community, it is important for all members to share their knowledge and perspectives, from the newest members to those in leadership roles. This is also true of a Catholic parish – the pastor should be well connected to the lives of the parishioners - many times this occurs through a Pastoral Council. Here “The Pastoral Council members provide one, of many, lay connections with Monsignor Barry,” says Gregory McGinity, Past President. “Serving as leaders in the parish, we speak with parishioners, listen to their concerns, sometimes identify new ideas that can be implemented throughout the parish and bring that to the Pastor for discussion. Ultimately, we strive to find ways to make our Catholic experience and our American Martyrs community a more fulfilling one for parishioners and more inviting for visitors.”

One of the things that makes our parish unique and strong is the value Monsignor places upon the lay leadership. With that and our mission - A welcoming community, helping one another to live holy lives in Jesus Christ – we have served and continue to serve with those in our 60-plus parish ministries.” The ministries provide the opportunity for parishioners of all ages to find the right place for them to serve and grow in their faith within our thriving parish community.

Recently, the Pastoral Council members, led by Edna Murphy, President, in collaboration with Monsignor redefined the Council’s role. “The Pastoral Council is the lay leadership group primarily responsible for providing thoughtful and prayerful advice and counsel to the pastor.” The council is made up of four officers, President, Vice President, Secretary and Past President; Parishioners at Large (PALs) who each serve a three-year term; and Parish Life Commission Chairs who have a dual function of communicating between the Commission each represents and the Council.

A number of years ago, Gregory was a member of the Pastoral Council as a then Member At



*Past President Gregory McGinity
and President Edna Murphy*

Large. “At the end of my three-year term, I rotated off of the Council for a few years but was asked to return as the Secretary in the spring of 2011. Being involved in this ministry has been a great blessing for me and an opportunity for me to give back to American Martyrs.” He continues, “The chance to work with the pastoral leadership at American Martyrs has been a great joy for me. My experience on the Pastoral Council has been one of the best experiences of my life.

“We are approaching the time of year where many of us will rotate from our leadership positions and new parishioners will find themselves called to serve in some way. I would encourage them to take that opportunity because you get out of it a lot more than you put in, and you do end up putting in a lot.”

For more information about the Pastoral Council, please call the Parish Center at 310-545-5651.

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OPPORTUNITIES TO ENRICH *continued from front cover*

procession that carries the Blessed Sacrament to a “quiet place” where we spend some time in prayer until midnight according to each person’s ability to stay and pray. On *Good Friday* we have our parish tradition of the “Way of the Cross” dramatized by our eighth grade students at American Martyrs School. The prayerfulness of this journey touches our souls and helps us to more fully appreciate the journey of Jesus to Calvary where He is sacrificed on the Cross for all of us. This is followed by the Good Friday Service—not a Mass but a service including the Adoration of the Cross and Holy Communion. *The Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday* completes the Sacred Triduum. It is the most solemn and beautiful liturgy of the Church

Year ushering in the greatest feast of our Christian year, Easter. It is a night of joy as many new sisters and brothers are fully initiated into our Catholic Faith through Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist. There is no better way to experience the joy of Easter than to share in the celebration of this most Holy Night. Lent is over and the “Easter Joy” begins.

In Christ,



Rev. Msgr. John F. Barry, P.A.
Pastor

Our Faith in Action is provided by the American Martyrs Stewardship Commission

LITURGY SCHEDULE

Saturday, 5:00 p.m. | **Sunday**, 7:00 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 9:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m.

Monday/Wednesday/Friday, 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m.

Tuesday/Thursday, 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 5:00 p.m. | **Saturday**, 8:00 a.m.

Holy Day, 5:00 p.m. (Vigil), 6:30 a.m., 8:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., 5:00 p.m., 7:30 p.m.