

## An Easter Message

Fr John O'Connor SAC

A few years ago, in his Easter message, Pope John Paul II told us "You are an Easter people and Alleluia is your song". But are we really an Easter People?

The Easter Vigil liturgy teaches us that everything in the Risen Christ is new. Surely that is what an Easter Person is. Surely that is what the world needs to see in us, people who are truly new. The world needs to see the Church as a community of loving people committed to their faith, a community which communicates to all people the gift of a loving God.

Unfortunately the world does not see in us the Father, the Brother, the Risen Christ of whom we should be witnesses. More than ever, society in Ireland needs a Church that can live in the real world, with its feet on the ground but with its sights in Heaven. Ireland needs a Church that can humanise the human being.

A true Christian is a happy person who doesn't feel oppressed by, or a slave to, the things of the world. The New Person, the Easter Person, is a brotherly person. It is a person in whom there is no division, no tension, no fragmentation. It is a person who loves to live life to the full, who understands others and their needs, who discovers the problems, anxieties and sadness's of other people, who shares their sufferings, who tries to give his or her life for them. The New Person is not simply the one who gives; it is above all the one who gives himself or herself. The New Person cares, with a brave spirit, for their own weakness and for the weakness of others.

Each year Easter reminds us that we must renew the Church in a continual way. Renewal doesn't mean destroying the Church. Rather it means bringing it to its fullness. It means renewing it from within and not by criticising it from without. Renewing the life of the Church means renewing our own lives because we are Church. By virtue of our



baptism we are all Church, with rights and duties and we are all responsible for the success or failure of the Church's mission in the world.

Why do so many people reject the Church of the past? They do so because we showed them something artificial, something that wasn't authentic, something that lacked life. We passed on our faith with rules and regulations and we did so with long faces and little life. We have handed out too many laws and too little spirit. We have spoken negatively and not positively about life and about what we believe in.

We certainly should not change our moral values or cease to hand them on but we should change the way that we present them. We worry too much about the consequences but do nothing about the causes. We speak too much about abortions, euthanasia and suicide and too little about life. We speak too much about divorce and too little about love and fidelity. We speak of contraception and condoms but we don't speak about chastity or love. We present a severe and judging God, not a loving Father.

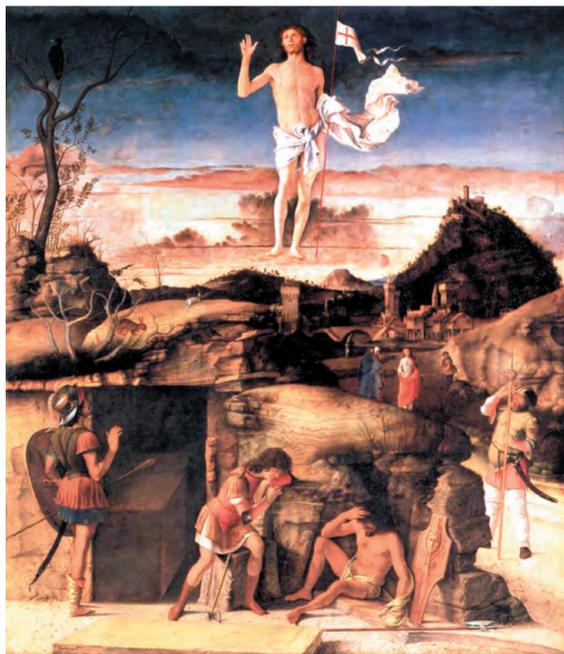
It's wonderful to see that Pope Francis is presenting a different image of Church and inviting us to do the same. There is nothing new in what he is saying but there is a

big change in the way that he is saying it. Pope Francis is without doubt a New Person, an Easter Person, and a Christ-like person. There is nothing in what he says or does that Christ Himself did not say or do during His time on earth.

We may be surprised by the way people, Christians and non-Christians alike, respond to the Holy Father but we shouldn't be. When we read the Gospels we see that people responded in the same way to Christ and His teaching.

Surely the message is abundantly clear. Surely the challenge for us is evident. If we are Easter People we must be more Christ-like in all that we

do or say. If we are really Church, the Church that Christ wanted us to be, we must be the continuation of Christ in history; we must be witnesses to Christ and bring His message and His love into the lives of the people we live with. If we are an Easter People we must live the Easter message every day of the year.



## Fr Martin Writes

From Tanzania, to Thurles, to Texas USA!

In November last year, Fr. Mathew Sanka SAC, left Thurles for the USA to take up his new appointment in St. Stephen's Parish, in the Diocese of Fort Worth, Texas. He joins Fr. John Karanja, a Pallottine from Kenya, and Fr. John Casey from Kilbehenny.



Fr. Mathew was the first African Pallottine to work as Director of our Mission Promotion Office in Thurles. During his time here his top priority was to create an awareness of the spiritual and material needs of the people we serve in our mission territories. He spent his spare time football training with a local club here in Thurles and his presence among the young people was inspirational and is very well remembered by all. The wheel has come full circle now in that we are now sending out African Pallottines to work in different countries. We wish them all an abundance of God's blessings in all their work.

### Our thanks to St. Anne's Parish Community

The Mission Promotion Office wishes to thank our Pallottine confreres and all of St. Anne's Parish Community for organising a very successful and fruitful annual mission promotion and appeal on 18-19 January. It was a great privilege for me to celebrate the Eucharist with you and to speak about our work in the missions in East Africa. With the help of your sacrifices much has been done there but much more remains to be done. Thanks to your generosity we continue to help the people we serve in the mission to live a dignified life and to bring much needed relief to the needy. Through the intercession of St. Vincent Pallotti, may God answer the prayers of your hearts.

Please remember our Pallottine Mission Promotion Office in your Will. You can use a form of Bequest like this:

#### FORM OF BEQUEST

I give and bequest to the Pallottine Mission Promotion Office, Pallottine College, Kickham Street, Thurles, the sum of €..... for mission work, and I declare that the Provincial Bursar of the Pallottine Fathers and Brothers shall be sufficient discharge to my Executor.

For more information, contact Fr. Derry Murphy SAC, Provincial Rector, or Fr. John B. Kelly SAC, Provincial Bursar and Mission Secretary, at Sandyford Road, Dundrum, Dublin 16, or Fr. Martin Mareja SAC, Mission Promotion Office, Pallottine College, Thurles, Co. Tipperary.

### Please Help the Pallottines.

Please cut out this form and return it with your donation. Please remember the Pallottines in your will. Thank you.

#### MY GIFT TO THE PALLOTTINES

Dear Fr. Martin Mareja, SAC

I enclose an offering of € ..... to help the Pallottines' mission to evangelise, educate and empower people.

#### PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS.

Name .....

Address .....

Send to

**Fr. Martin Mareja, SAC**  
**Pallottine Fathers Missions**  
**Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Ireland**  
**Email: palmissions@gmail.com**

If you would like us to acknowledge your donation, please tick this box.

Registered Charity Number: CHY 6438



### Disaster Strikes

The 12th of February was a memorable day due to the high winds and storm conditions. At the Pallottine College some trees were uprooted and a section of the roof was blown off and landed in the garden, knocking down part of the surrounding wall. We thank the Lord that nobody was injured. Our community would like to express sincere thanks to all our friends who rushed in to lend a helping hand and to prevent further damage.

**A friend in need is a friend indeed!**

The Society of the Catholic Apostolate

Easter

2014

The Pallottine Fathers Missions Thurles Co Tipperary Ireland Tel. (0504) 23678 Email: palmissions@gmail.com Web: http://pallottines.ie/

## Easter Greetings

Fr Martin Mareja SAC



Dear Friends and Associates,

Greetings to you all during this "Holy Season" of preparation for the celebration of the Lord's Resurrection.

We began preparations for the Easter celebration with the season of Lent. It is a journey that extends over forty days and leads us towards the joy of Easter, to victory of life over death.

In his lantern message Pope Francis opens his reflection with the following words: "As Lent draws near, I would like to offer some helpful thoughts on our path of conversion as individuals and as a community. These insights are inspired by the words of Saint Paul: 'For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.' (2 Cor 8:9)"

The Pope poses these questions: What do these words of Saint Paul mean for us Christians today? What does this invitation to poverty, a life of evangelical poverty, mean to us today?

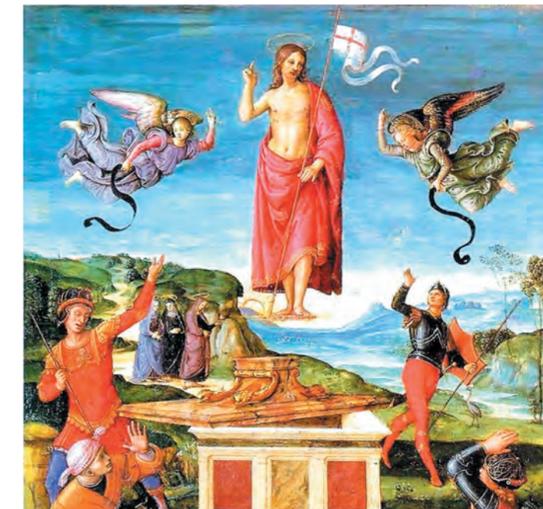
Pope Francis guides us through his reflection to give answers to these questions as a Church. But I think the answers we give as individuals matter a lot. We can only experience the true joy of Easter if true conversion has taken place in our lives. In order for the true conversion to happen there has to be a deep desire within to build and to nourish an eternal relationship with God through prayer. Our main prayer is by participating in the Mass. In the Mass we participate in the loving sacrifice of Christ which prepares us to enjoy the fullness of the resurrection in heaven. Prayer is the foundation of our friendship with God and others and it also opens the way to eternal life. 'Ask and it will be given to you.' (Mt.7:1ff)

Lent leads us to practise the discipline of abstinence or fasting. Before one begins to fast he or she must pose a question: what is the goal of Lenten fasting? Is it to have a sleek body one can be proud of? Lenten fasting is a voluntary self-denial that makes us develop a deep desire for God. This is the sole purpose of Lenten fasting. This is the kind of fasting that Jesus did when he wanted to make an important decision: 'Then Jesus was led by the Spirit out

into the wilderness to be tempted by devil...' (Mt. 4:1-11)

And finally, Lent must help us to see the face of the suffering Christ in the needy. The practice of almsgiving is an ancient and good tradition in the Catholic Church. Genuine almsgiving is rewarded by God. Jesus warns us that whatever we give as alms must not attract the attention of others. But is almsgiving enough in itself? I don't think so! Almsgiving is effective if it makes us see the face of the suffering Christ in the recipients or in the needy.

The pontificate of Pope Francis reminds us as a community and as individuals of what we should be doing this Lent, that there are many who need us to show them some understanding, love and compassion. We often forget them. In serving the needy, we must reflect God's generosity to us. Let this Lent be a time of cleansing for each one of us. St. Augustine speaks of cleansing as a necessary condition for the exercise of holy desire. This will be effective only to the extent that we free ourselves from infatuation with this world. Our reward will be that the Risen Lord will fill each one of us with what is good.



The Mission Office wishes to thank all of you who constantly pray, fast and give donations for our work in the Missions. We deeply appreciate and find inspiration from your prayers and the many sacrifices you make for our apostolate. May the Good Lord fill each one of you with the blessings of the risen Christ.

**Happy Easter to you all.**

## Return to Esso

Elaine Hogan



I returned to Tanzania in January to visit Esso – a parish run by the Pallottine Fathers – where I had lived before for over a year, and also to visit Malambo in the Ngorongoro conservation area where Fr. Mike O’Sullivan, a Pallottine Father from Co. Kerry is now ministering to the Maasai tribe.

Esso is as vibrant as ever. I visited all the various “Pallotti projects” which have been set up over the past eight years and I am delighted to say that they are all thriving. The computer classroom was filled with new students, and being taught by Tanzanian teachers. The primary school now occupies six rooms in the Resource Centre. The Faraja (Joy) centre for children and adults with disabilities was being looked after by a young Tanzanian occupational therapist while Clare, the Irish lady who set it up was home on holiday. The sports hall was packed with teenagers every afternoon and the buzz of activity around “Pallotti” is still there. The local people are now taking leadership of the projects themselves.

The new Church, built to hold 1,400 people will be handed over to the parish for the Easter services... a credit to the locals who provided a lot of the cost through their weekly contributions. What a success story for all involved!



Fr. Noel O’Connor asked me to visit a family on his behalf to find out how they are getting on. There are seven children in the family and Fr. Noel is trying to support them by raising funds to send them to school. They lived in the changing rooms on a football field in Esso for a long time, but now they have a small plot of land in another parish and live in a wooden house – with absolutely no flooring,

just mud – and the interior dividing walls are made from sheets of cardboard. They are gradually buying materials to build a brick house. The children are all doing very well in school. Their father is now working on a building site and the eldest son has found work installing solar panels. They are very happy and healthy, and each one proudly recorded a video greeting in English for me to show to Fr. Noel when I got home. I visited Fr. Mike in Malambo, an outstation of Loliondo parish. There are several outstations all around the hills and mountains of Malambo, which Fr. Mike tries to visit as often as possible. The landscape is outstanding and the peace and quiet was astounding! Fr. Mike says Malambo is “Africa’s best kept secret”.



One Sunday, Fr. Mike said Mass in Piaya. In this rural area the community only sees a priest two or three times a year. There are no tarmac roads and it is a three-hour drive away. In Piaya we visited the home of the parish chairman who had died tragically two weeks previously (Christmas week) leaving nine children behind, the youngest being only two years old.

When we arrived, his widow welcomed us and had already prepared refreshments. She was a truly beautiful lady and an inspiration. Her attitude was to get on with things for the sake of her children. There were a lot of other children around that day and also a catechist who had been in Piaya to prepare them for the sacraments. Fr. Mike heard confessions before Mass; and during Mass there were baptisms, first communions and confirmations.

After the long Mass, we were invited back to the house where a feast had been prepared for everyone in celebration of all the sacraments received that day. On the journey home we were joined by an old Maasai man and two young boys. There are only a handful of cars in the area, so if there is the opportunity of a lift somewhere, the people will take it. The boys were on their way to a government-run boarding school for hundreds of Maasai children., and without a lift, they would have to walk for two days through wide open land with lots of wild animals.

The school year begins in January, so driving around the area at that time we saw children either running after a car asking for a lift, or running in the other direction if they thought it was a government car sent to take them to school. But some parents don’t send their children to school as they are needed at home to look after the cattle.

On that Sunday, our youngest passenger, who was about eight years old, had car sickness... and there was nothing we could do only keep on driving; we were in the middle of nowhere. Fr. Mike had arranged a meeting at another outstation on the way home as he was planning a seminar and wanted to personally invite the young people. While the meeting took place under a tree with the men of the village, the women took the sick little boy and washed him and his clothes, and by the time we left a half an hour later, the car was clean, the child was clean, his clothes were dry and the women had wrapped a plastic sick bag around his ears before allowing him back into the car again, the poor little guy!

We returned to the same village later in the week for their first catechism class. It had rained the night before, so the people who had requested the classes were out in the fields looking after their crops. We waited around for them for over an hour (no hurry in Africa). In their first class they learned how to make the sign of the cross. Then Fr. Mike spoke to the surprisingly large gathering of men, women and children.



He held up a bottle of water and explained how it would be blessed and then he would sprinkle it over them and they would be blessed. The sign of the cross and holy water: two things I take for granted every day, these people were only learning now, in the year 2014! Fr. Mike told them that he would be back again soon to bless their houses (mud huts) and their animals, and they were very happy. An elderly woman jokingly asked if she could attend the seminar for the youth: she must have been eighty years old... and she was only just learning how to make the sign of the cross! One day in Malambo we visited a woman Fr. Mike had met a few times before. She had been working in the field one day when a dust storm came and lifted her into the air with such force that when she landed she was paralysed.

Now she was sitting outside on a bucket in the shade with her three toddlers playing beside her. Fr. Mike said it was the first time he had seen her sitting; she was usually in so much pain she had to lie flat on the ground. There was also a very beautiful, quiet and shy teenage girl. They all lived in a tiny mud hut, but a strong wind had blown the roof off it. Fr. Mike told her that he was making arrangements to build a small two-bedroomed house for her and her family – it would be made from brick and would have windows and doors. (At a cost of about one thousand Euro). The woman was stunned by this news: she was speechless. As we walked away Fr. Mike said “If anyone deserves a break in life, it’s that woman”.



I must mention the child who was born while I was there – whose father I had met a few days before he had died of cancer a week earlier and whose mother had died as she gave birth to him. That little boy will be raised by his relations now and I have no doubt he will be happy, but I can’t help but feel sad for him.

I could write a hundred stories about how difficult life is for the people, but I would also have to say how unbelievably happy they are despite all the hardships and poverty they face every day. And I have to take this opportunity to say a sincere “Thank You” to all who have donated towards the work of the Pallottines in Tanzania. Your donations really do go a very long way.



## A Spiritual Solution to a spiritual problem

Fr John Egan SAC



Major questions are surfacing in contemporary society today: For instance, “How come so many people are being diagnosed with depression; so many people contemplating suicide? How is it that there is so many young people addicted to drink, to drugs and so on? There is grave concern about the huge increase in youth and young adult suicide. Statistics show that **there are approximately 400 deaths from suicide per year in Ireland – an incredible figure for such a small country.** Research confirms that the vast majority of such deaths occur in people who have depression, or who suffer from illnesses such as schizophrenia, or who have panic attacks, or alcohol or drug problems.

I often think of those people who contemplate suicide. Treatment may include the prescribing of medication or psychological treatment. Such therapies have certain effectiveness, yet there is a real question that needs to be asked, and that is, “What is actually being treated?”

The psychiatric may diagnose depression, but is depression the actual problem... or is it merely a symptom of something else? The truth is, the root cause of the patient’s suffering has yet to be discovered. So where is the actual depression coming from? Experts admit that they don’t know the cause of such pain and suffering, and thus there is no remedy. All they can offer is medication etc. which may help to a certain degree but which unfortunately has no lasting effect.

### Suffering of the Spiritual Soul

An area of suffering that’s not discussed very often is what’s known as spiritual suffering, or illness, or moral suffering or the suffering of the spiritual soul. It is much more complex than physical suffering, yet it’s very much part of our human existence. Our experience of guilt, fear, anxiety, anger, aggression, self-pity, lack of meaning and purpose, sexual deviations, and so on, may be rooted in hurts that we carry



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from our past. These are symptoms that point to a sickness of the spiritual soul. Evil can be described as, ‘that which is lacking’, a lack of existence or life, a lack of goodness, of love and of truth. We experience pain and sufferings because of the affects of evil which destroys and wounds the spiritual soul. Spiritually wounded and weak, we can find ourselves becoming dependant on psychophysical things and become addicted to, for example, food, drink, drugs, sex.

### Identifying the Cause of Pain and Suffering

For spiritual pain and suffering there is a need to identify its root cause. Dr. Arthur Yoras, a medical anthropologist from Hamburg, states that ‘almost 70% of all somatic or physical illnesses have their cause in the spiritual soul’. Unfortunately, the great tragedy of the medical profession is that the spiritual dimension is not recognized. I believe what’s missing today in our treatment of depression or suicidal thoughts is that there has to be some attempt to diagnose and treat this spiritual aspect of the human person: of treating the whole person, body, mind and spirit.



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The great doctor of the Church, St. John of the Cross, once said that “Where there is no love, put love and there love will be”. If someone has suffered from a lack of love in their lives then the way to healing is to restore what was lost: to bring a person to that experience of love, to heal that feeling of rejection and loss. Goodness, love, truth and beauty are the medicines of the spiritual soul, the ways to spiritual health and happiness, the cures for a wounded society. Ultimately they are the ways to the Creator, for as soon as we enter into goodness and love, we enter into God, for “God is love” (1 John 4). To bring people to spiritual health, we must help them turn from evil to good; show them how to enter into the experience of goodness: evil is the cause and goodness the solution.

People with suicidal thoughts must be told that killing themselves will not solve their pain because it stays with them and is not resolved by going to the next world. We must remind them how everyone, their family and friends whom they leave behind, will be left with the stigma that their loved one committed suicide. The medicine is the embrace of the Father’s Goodness and love, and we are, primarily, those channels of goodness. An encounter with goodness restores dignity and heals a personality that has been wounded by humiliation and the deprivation of love; it heals the conscience that carries the guilt. We praise all that is good in them, point out their talents and abilities, thus enkindling new faith within and restoring purpose and meaning to their lives.