



Spirit Echoings

He Is Truly Risen!!!

Who can believe it? Imagine! This Jesus, who had been crucified, was standing in their midst even though the doors were locked. Yet, there Jesus stood, greeting them with words of 'Peace'. What must these apostles have felt? And later, when Thomas arrived, he who had refused to believe that Jesus was alive, Jesus showed him His hands and feet and side which bore the marks of His suffering.

For the next forty days, Jesus met with many of His followers. He ate with them, walked and talked with them and then, took His leave of them as He ascended to heaven. He promised He would send the Holy Spirit and would be with us until the end of time.

Who cannot believe it? Many people throughout the centuries, have even suffered torture and death because of their belief that Jesus Christ, true God and true man, who had suffered terrible tortures and execution by crucifixion, actually rose from the dead.



Today, at the celebration of each Holy Mass, we too encounter the living God in the Gift He left us of His precious body and blood in the Eucharist. The living Jesus comes, reminding us that he had come that we may have life, and have it to the full. Let us praise our living God for He is truly risen from the dead!

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from Sister Diane



Sister Diane Smith, SHS
General Superior

A Reflection

How I welcome the sound of birds as they return in the spring!

I am amazed when I consider how such small creatures manage their long exhausting journeys as they return north to, or through, western Pennsylvania.

In what ways is our spiritual growth journey like the flights of these birds?

- Many birds prepare for the arduous flight by gaining weight to sustain them and molt new feathers. How often do I call upon the Holy Spirit to strengthen me in my difficult times? Do I persevere in my daily prayer, begging God to nourish me even when it seems that God is not hearing me.
- Just as the birds have an innate sense of when to travel thousands of miles, we have the inner longing for God. The message of St. Augustine is "Our hearts are restless until they rest in Thee." Do I regularly beg the Lord to fill me with the desire to grow in my relationship with him?

- The birds usually migrate south in the fall to the same location each year. Even the young, which never made the flight before, seem to know where to go. God, their creator, gives them such a predisposition. The Holy Spirit is our internal compass, guiding us.

Do I take quiet time each day to hear the Holy Spirit's whispers to guide me in my everyday decisions?

- Eighty percent of migrating birds travel under the darkness of night. Light pollution in our cities causes disorientation for them and increases the risk of collisions with buildings. What are the distractions in my life which get me off course and draw me away from the Lord? Can I name one and commit to lessen it this week?

Sometimes the image of migrating birds calls us to let go of what is familiar in our ways of doing things and to risk new ideas of thinking. It is in these moments that we allow God's love to transform us toward a deeper more authentic life.

"...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

Isaiah 40:31



Bishop
blesses
food.

While families take their baskets of food to their churches to be blessed, we are fortunate to have our chaplain, Bishop William J. Waltersheid, bless our display of foods in our Motherhouse dining room.

Community Celebrates

Once Lent is over, Holy Saturday welcomes the beginning of celebrations in honor of the resurrection of Jesus. In many households, especially those which reflect the customs of Eastern Europe, the blessing of foods holds a special place in the day leading up to Easter Sunday.



Fr. Dominik's
beautiful basket
of food.



Gathering
to celebrate.

This year, Sister Diane Smith, General Superior, assisted Bishop Waltersheid as he prayed over and blessed each food group.

For the past several years, we have been blessed to have some of our seminarians and priests join us for the blessing. Very Rev. Thomas Sparacino, Rector of St. Paul Seminary, and Rev. Kevin Dominik, Vocations Director, each contributed delicious foods that they had prepared and brought for the blessing. At the conclusion of the blessing we all sat down and enjoyed some of the abundance of food and the company of friends.



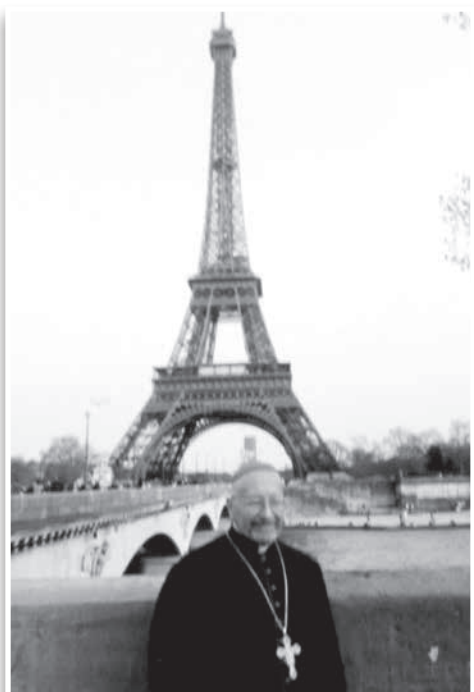
Celebrations
continued on
Easter Sunday.



Priests and seminarians
gather with Bishop
Waltersheid before the
blessing of food.



Easter
Sunday



Bishop Waltersheid in Paris.

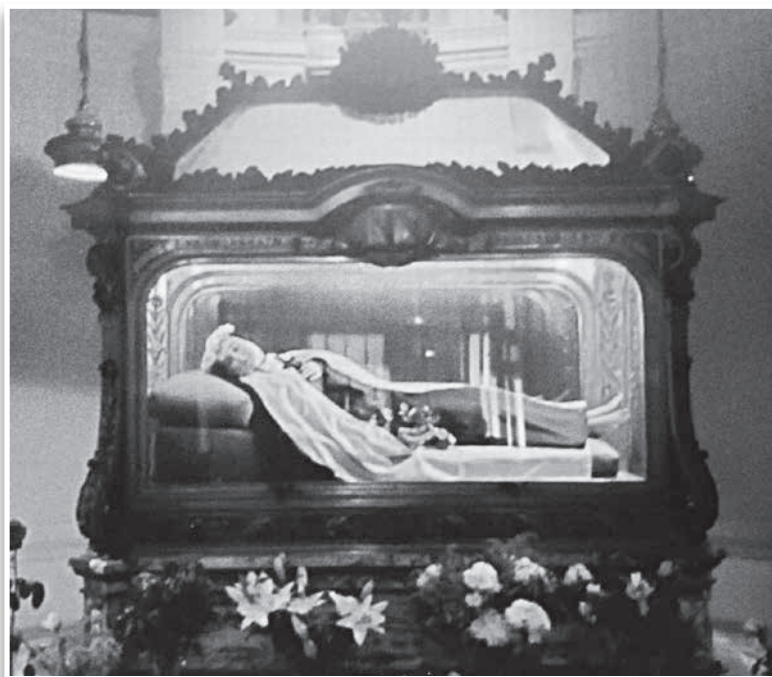
Bishop Waltersheid Leads Pilgrimage

Thirty-two people joined our chaplain Bishop William J. Waltersheid in March for an eleven day pilgrimage to France. They arrived in Paris where they began their travels to places made holy by the lives of saints whose lives continue to inspire us.

At each holy place, the bishop offered a description of the site, emphasizing the importance of what had occurred there or why the place held special significance for people whose lives had been touched in some grace-filled way.



Incorruptible Body of St. Bernadette Soubirous.



Tomb of St. Therese of Lisieux.

The first site visited was Lisieux, the home of St. Therese, the Carmelite nun known as "The Little Flower". Following Mass which the bishop celebrated at the Basilica of St. Therese, the group visited the site of the Lisieux family home, and the Carmelite Convent Chapel where St. Therese and her parents are entombed.

The next day provided a visit to the Monastery of Mont St-Michel and a stop at the Normandy beaches and the American cemetery to honor the soldiers of WWII.

Returning to Paris, a driving tour and a visit to the Chapel of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal included the celebration of Mass. After a visit to the church of Saint Vincent de Paul to pay homage to that great saint, the pilgrims enjoyed time for shopping and enjoying the atmosphere of Paris.



Cathedral of Chartres where Veil of Our Lady is kept.

The following day took them to Sacre Coeur and to Notre Dame. Bishop Waltersheid experienced a marvelous grace for he viewed and touched the Crown of Thorns worn by our Saviour which is preserved in the cathedral. The day concluded with a visit to Sainte-Chapelle and a cruise on the Seine.

Having spent memorable days in Paris, the group headed for Chartres. Once a pagan sanctuary, it was evangelized in the fourth century. In 876 Charles the Bald gave the town a veil, that tradition holds was worn by the Blessed Virgin Mary while giving birth to Jesus. In 876, Chartres became a pilgrimage site. The magnificent cathedral has over 4,000 sculpted figures and 5,000 figures in its stained glass windows making it a literal Bible in stone.

During a visit to the convent of St. Gildard where Saint Bernadette spent the last days of her life, the group viewed the incorrupted body of the saint which is kept in a glass reliquary. They then journeyed to Paray le Monial, which is known as the City of the Eucharist, to the Shrine of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque. In 1673, Jesus revealed His Sacred Heart to Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a

Visitation nun. This led to the Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to the Communion of Reparation on the First Fridays of the month. The village of Ars was the next destination where Mass was celebrated at the shrine of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests.

France has been gifted with visits from our Blessed Mother as well as having the blessing of many of her children rising to sainthood. One of the most famous sites of the pilgrimage which this group visited and prayed in is Lourdes where our Blessed Mother appeared to Saint Bernadette. "I am the Immaculate Conception", the words Bernadette reported to the authorities, were the proving point of the authenticity of the apparitions. A visit to the home where St. Bernadette was born and lived in during the apparitions, celebrations of Mass, Eucharistic Processions, experience of the miraculous baths of Lourdes and many opportunities for prayer and visits to the Grotto concluded the pilgrimage and the return home. At the conclusion of the pilgrimage, Bishop Waltersheid said, "It has been a joy to share this journey with you, to celebrate the daily Eucharist and to be inspired by your presence."



Our Lady of Lourdes.



Basilica of Sacred Heart in Paris.



Sister Janelle at Food Bank.

Retired but the Mission Goes On

By Sister Janelle Banko

When our school closed at St. Agnes and our parishes merged into St. Thomas the Apostle Parish many people began asking questions about what we would do now. Well, here's a look at what religious life is like after retiring from a full-time job in education.

No longer responding to the school bell every forty minutes means we can spend time with people who need a listening ear. Not having to write lesson plans and plan curriculum means being able to say yes to an unexpected request for help. Not working late into the night allows more time for quiet prayer. And besides, we have the mission of the Sisters of the Holy Spirit to consider: *to be joy-filled disciples of Jesus, prophetically witnessing to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, aware of our call to work for the transformation of society into a Gospel community, reconciled with God and with one another.* That's quite a job even for a retired person!



Sister Cynthia and Sister Janelle.

Our days in salaried employment may be over but our mission never ends, so here's how we spend some of our time now.

We're "*church ladies*": preparing the altar and worship space for Mass, decorating for each Liturgical season, greeting the parishioners as they come and go, sharing stories on Donut Sunday and keeping them all in prayer. We're also musicians, lectors, Eucharistic ministers and bereavement ministers.

Away from the parish we visit the sick and dying at Jefferson Hospital to pray and listen in those final moments, and we visit families at the funeral home in those final acts of kindness and remembrance.



Sisters with Barbara Urban on her 90th birthday.

Sister Janelle,
Ginny Ackerman,
and Sister Cynthia
at Fish Fry.



Sisters Janelle, Teresa
Baldi, and Cynthia.

We also volunteer at the Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank. At the Market we shop with our neighbors in need, pack emergency boxes and get to know wonderful people who also believe in justice for all. We join many retirees who give of their time and energy so that others can feel safe, respected and well fed.

We often attend meetings concerning the social needs of the suffering and vulnerable. We make our voices heard when our society fails its forgotten citizens.

And finally, there are the fundraisers we support: fish fries, parish festivals, hoagie sales, bingos, raffles, (you know the list). These make for fond friendships, happy times and of course the funds necessary for continued existence.

Editor's note:

Sister Janelle and Sister Cynthia Wessel remain at St. Agnes where they continue to be a vital and praying presence to the people.

School may be closed but we are still being Joy-filled disciples of Jesus, prophetically witnessing to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit.



Sister Janelle
with her Folk
Group.

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Mission Statement

We, the Sisters of the Holy Spirit of Pittsburgh, declare our mission is to be joy-filled disciples of Jesus, prophetically witnessing to the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit, aware of our call to work for the transformation of society into a Gospel community, reconciled with God and with one another.

**Is God calling you to religious life?
Would you like to join us in our work of Love and Joy?**

Contact Sisters of the Holy Spirit - Vocations Office

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