

Reflections

by the
Most Reverend Thomas J. Murphy



Preparing for Holy Week

This first year in Eastern Montana offers a variety of initial experiences for me as the Bishop of Eastern Montana. It only seems like yesterday when I chased across a Montana sky to celebrate Christmas with different communities in our diocese. And now I prepare to celebrate the greatest feast of the Church year with the people and priests of the Diocese. Once again, I plan to seek the Risen Lord during Holy Week among the different communities and people who make the Lord come alive today in our diocese. On Wednesday, I will be in Circle after having spent the first three days of Holy Week in the Billings areas with Confirmations at Ryegate and St. Patrick's. A Mass for the school children of Holy Rosary will highlight Monday of Holy Week. On Tuesday evening, I will have the Vatican II telephone class once again from St. Pius.

Holy Thursday this year will be very important for me. I plan to celebrate this great feast in Glendive. The day itself is most important, but for myself personally, it has an even greater importance. April 12th will mark the 21st anniversary of my ordination to the priesthood. It seems like only yesterday when my mother, brother, sister, family, relatives and friends joined with me in that unique happening that occurs in the life of a priest when God will take an ordinary human being and give that person a unique privilege and vocation. So many memories flood my mind even as I type this column. My father had died only a few years before, and an Irish mother could only do one thing as she tried to hold back the tears of joy that were mixed with a tremendous sense of pride - and so she cried even more.

The past 21 years have been good years, and, in fact, great years. They have been such because of the people who have allowed me to enter into their lives and to share in the dreams and hopes, the joys and sorrows of what it means to live in the world today. I really owe so much to my family, my friends, and now to you, the people of Eastern Montana for allowing me the privilege of sharing in your lives and learning the meaning of the Gospel, the significance of love, and the power of faith from whom you are and what you do.

The important celebration of Good Friday will be spent with the people of Forsyth, Hysham and Sumatra. I look forward to these experiences of prayer on this holy day when we celebrate the Passion and Death of the Lord. But all the sorrow gives way to joy when on Holy Saturday, I celebrate the Easter Vigil at the Cathedral of St. Ann's in Great Falls.

It promises to be an exciting week, a time to remember and a time to look ahead. But it is also a time to pray that other young people in our community might consider a vocation to the priesthood and religious life. The past twenty one years have offered me a unique joy! I would hope that others might have the same experience.

And finally on Sunday, a whole world celebrates new life and hope in the feast of Easter. There is so much about this feast that needs translation into our lives. I find it interesting that women are the first to discover the fact and reality of the Risen Lord. They carry the announcement of the message of what happened. And in so many ways, that same procedure occurs today as religious women, mothers, housewives, and single women continue to influence a society which cries out for the presence of the Lord.

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Easter marks the beginning of new life, new hope, another Spring. I really pray and hope that this season of life and joy may be a pervasive force in all our lives. The Lord is Risen! He has changed the perspective on everything! He calls us to greatness! In fact, I'd bet my life on it!

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The CARE and SHARE DRIVE is over! But the results are still to come. Will the appeal be successful? Will we be able to respond to the call to greatness that is ours as a Diocese to offer programs and services that will affect the life of our people in the year ahead? The questions are there, but the answers remain to be given. Maybe you have been unable to contribute at this time. If so, please use the pledge card which is available in each of your parishes. Maybe too you might want to contribute to a special cause or offer a special donation to a specific project. There is still time to do so. We need your help. If you have not yet done so, please consider making your gift to the annual CARE and SHARE appeal...The Vatican II telephone course continues to be an exciting event for me each Tuesday evening. It is really fun to be able to speak with so many people from one end of our Diocese to the other. I hope the material has proved to be helpful to those who enrolled in the course...I also enjoyed this past Lent to spend some time on reflecting on the Stations of the Cross. If you have any reactions to the meditations that appeared in the MONTANA CATHOLIC REGISTER, please let me know... Easter week will involve some travel with a visit to the parents at St. Jude's in Havre with visits also to Hays and Harlem. On Sunday, April 22nd, I return to Glendive to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation and then on to Billings for a meeting of the Montana Catholic Conference and a celebration of Confirmation at St. Plus...So much has been happening, but all the activity makes sense in the light of the season we are celebrating. He is risen! Alleluia. Happy Easter!