

**Spiritually Speaking**

**Peace be with you**

**By Fr. Thankachan Joseph SDB, St. Patrick Church**

The theme of Easter is "Peace" (shalom). Peace... We can't turn on the TV news or listen to the radio without hearing daily reports of worldwide tragedies, especially since corona drastically changed the world we live in. And on top of that, we are all going through our own personal trials, struggling with things like broken relationships, deaths of loved ones, battling addictions, hurt feelings, broken hearts, regrets for mistakes, unfulfilled dreams... none of which bring us feelings of peace. Easter reminds us that peace isn't something we find on the outside, rather it is a blessing we can experience on the inside. What we notice in all the post resurrection scenes is that the first words when Jesus appears to his disciples are "peace be with you." Maybe something that we and the world are looking for and longing to have. As I was thinking of the Easter-message preparation, something from the Bible struck me very intensely, from the Gospel of John an apt message for the occasion: Jesus answered them, "Do you believe now? The time is coming and is already here when all of you will be scattered, each of you to your own home, and I will be left all alone. But I am not really alone, because the father is with me. I have told you this so that you will have peace by being united to me. The world will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!" (John 16:31-33)



**Fr. Thankachan Joseph**

Last year, due to the pandemic, we could not even come together to worship and praise the Lord as a community. Unthinkable is the image of Jesus arriving in Jerusalem without even a sparse number of admirers practicing social distancing, a Maundy Thursday meal without the disciples, the way to the Crucifixion without the loved ones watching His journey. Last year, the Church found different ways for us to celebrate life and hope during a time of uncertainty. Easter has once again arrived, and I am sure we are going to witness the Risen Lord once again as a worshipping community.

Easter reminds us that peace is available to us at any time and in even the most difficult of circumstances because of Christ and the sacrifices He made for every single one of us. Our Christian hope cannot be quarantined. On this Easter Sunday, the fear of coronavirus and joy of Easter are simultaneously possible. Even at this time we need to shout, "Alleluia, God is with us!" because Jesus declared, much before His death what was going to take place after His death: "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). In this world, in 2020 and 2021, we really courageously face troubles.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles (10:34a, 37-43), we see the continued work of Christ in his Church after His resurrection. This continued work of Christ was made possible as a result of the witnesses of the apostles. Peter's address to Cornelius and his household was preceded by the baptism of Cornelius and his entire household, a witness which was made possible by the resurrection of Jesus. Peter reminds them that "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem..." (Acts 10:38-39). Witnessing comes as a result of experience. We are all real witnesses of Living Christ in our personal life last year, especially in the defense against the pandemic.

The letter of St. Paul to the Colossians (3:1-4) reminds us of one thing: "Brothers and sisters: if then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above" (3:1). We are really witness to God's infinite love in the previous year, especially when the pandemic hit all around us. Since we all sought Christ above everything else, somehow we are all still holding on because to His infinite love. Last year while we were affected by the pandemic, Pope Francis tried to keep us focused on Christ in a unique manner. He tried to keep the church united to Christ. His Urbit et Orbi, blessing was actually a moment of building peace with Christ; this is what Christ reiterated to disciples before his death and to us when we are caught in the grief and loss of our dear ones due to COVID-19, "you will have peace by being united to me." It is very apt at this time. We can really overcome fear, anxiety, nervousness, through the support of our praying communities in which we take part.

The risen Lord always greeted his disciples in all the post resurrection scenes with these words: "Peace be with you" (John 20:19). He also mentions, "Peace is what I leave with you; it is my own peace that I give you. I do not give it as the world does. Do not be worried and upset; do not be afraid" (John 14:27). This Easter season reminds us all to come a little closer to the Lord, who is caring for us, who continues to protect us from all threatening events of the world. Instead of looking for comfort and pleasures from the material and worldly things, the Lord invites everyone to come closer to Him and trust Him more. Let the words of Christ resonate in our mind and heart. I think that is the real message of Easter, "Be brave I have conquered the world." If you remain in Him and His words remain in you, surely we can conquer with our faith anything and everything that challenges us every day. The gift of peace is available to us because Christ is the prince of peace. Jesus Christ is the light that dispels darkness and ushers lasting peace and joy.

**Good News Only**

**By Doris Brosnan**

Quite a challenge for my brain when I came back into town last Tuesday: How to get from Main Street to my home on West Center through the demolition warnings and cones. Great to see that work has begun and Gale Street will soon look like a new street. The bridge at the end of the street will not be tampered with, however, as it is designated "historic," according to the city manager.

Another change occurred while I was away: Gone is the unstable stable-Green Feed-etc.-Lott's Electric building. Sidewalk supervisors will soon have a job as work begins on the new building that Allstott Construction will erect on that site.

And I notice that some clean-up effort has occurred by the bridge to HES. Apparently, efforts were curtailed for some reason, but already an improvement is underway, so hope is that an attractive, peaceful, clean Willow Creek space will soon invite visitors.

Cora Marie Ellis was born on March 24 in Pendleton, joining mom and dad, Janelle and Jon, and brother, Cole. The big reveal took place when Cora was delivered, finally satisfying everyone's curiosity. Everyone who has met Cora says she is the spitting image of her brother, who also weighed 6lbs. 8oz. at birth, so she must be cute. Congratulations, Ellises and grandparents Ellis of Pilot Rock and Healy of Heppner.

And we are watching for announcements for familiar last names of two other baby girls born in Pendleton within three days of each other.

Signs of spring keep popping up or out. Other evidence that it is here: daylight savings time has come (still amid debate on the need to switch with standard); the calendar (official first day, a couple of days before that skiff of snow greeted early risers); spring break from school (just in time for some cooling, windy wind, periodic rain); reminder that April 1 (yes, tomorrow) is when winter tires have to be removed.

Another sure sign of spring a couple of weeks ago, according to Shirley George: Colden and Garin Hoefft, 8 and 6, are having a great time on their hillside on their dirt bikes. The sons of Justin and Danielle knew exactly what use to put the bikes to in the sunny weather, which their mom says happens as often as they can get out there.

And Kay Proctor has noted that Jennifer Wilson has posted a photo and caption: "Operation Take Back Waterland Field currently underway." If interested in this ball field in Heppner below the dam, a person can get information from Jennifer, apparently.

Spring break and relaxed Covid rules were allowing students to travel last week, which made Martha Doherty very happy. Her grandniece Cate, from Hermiston, came to

stay for some days of visiting and activity. Time with a softball was followed by a first: a trip to Fossil, to search for fossils. Yes, they found some shard with parts of leaves imprinted. A suggestion from Martha, however: remembering to take digging tools would probably have resulted in more impressive finds.

Merlin and Claudia Hughes were totally surprised and astounded on Friday, March 12, when (vaccinated) grandson Austin Dennis showed up all the way from Virginia, with his mom, Kimberly (Pendleton), for a two-day visit. Austin's wife, Angela, could not come on this trip because of work and no vaccination yet. Adding to the impromptu family gathering for a short time on Saturday morning were granddaughter Makenzi Hughes and fiancé Cole Evans of Hooper, WA.

Back in Heppner in time for our return to spring, Omer Huston says, "It feels good to be back." Omer graduated from HHS in 1961, soon left the area for Portland, Irrigon, Coos Bay and Pendleton but is ready to settle down in his recently purchased house on Gilmore.

A move across the street explains why some customers at Heppner Family Foods are missing a favorite clerk, Cynthia Wenberg. Cynthia says that she regretted leaving her work with those customers, but she is excited over having been asked to run the Country Rose business in Murray's. She has had a strong, earlier familiarity with the floral business and is eager to get back into it. She is certainly hoping, though, that familiar faces from across the street will come in to say hi.

Though modified, the return to classrooms at Heppner High School is back this week, and the Red Cross Blood Drive is also back. Sponsored by HHS, it will be held on April 5 at St. Patrick's Parish Hall, and donors can call 1-800-733-2767 to schedule an appointment.

For south Morrow County organizations, clubs, special districts, or government entities, a Community and Public Enhancement grant program will be available through the Willow Creek Valley Economic Development group until April 19. The Heppner Chamber has details and application forms.

Only if you jot down your good news as an email or call it in, will we continue to see "Good News Only" in the Gazette. I know the readers will be glad you do. (A reminder of those few ideas I have to offer are new babies, marriages, anniversaries, new jobs, new businesses, projects, visitors, travels, vacations, adventures, promotions and successes, education and sports news, great pets, children's accomplishments.) Anyone who has a tidbit is invited to email it to dbrosnan123@gmail.com or to call 541-223-1490. And I accept helpful suggestions, as well.

Hoping some good news comes to everyone reading this.

**~ Letters to the Editor ~**

The Heppner Gazette Times will print all letters to the Editor with the following criteria met: letters submitted to the newspaper will need to have the name of the sender along with a legible signature. We are also requesting that you provide your address and a phone number where you can be reached. The address and phone number will only be used for verification and will not be printed in the newspaper. Letters may not be libelous. The GT reserves the right to edit. The GT is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters. Any letters expressing thanks will be placed in the classifieds under "Card of Thanks" at a cost of \$10. Email to editor@rapidsolve.net or upload to Heppner.net.

**Vietnam war, first war America lost**

To the editor:  
Editor David Sykes poignant testimony of his preparation for and service in Vietnam is a fitting testament for the National Vietnam War Veterans Day March 29. "Looking back, I should have questioned my sanity for volunteering to go there; after all, everyone I knew was trying to stay out of Vietnam...I just had to find out what was going on and see for myself what everyone was talking about."

2,594,000 Americans actively served their country in the war in Vietnam. The vast majority of Vietnam soldiers were young white men (88.4 percent), 10.6 percent were black, and one percent were associated races. 7,484 were women, mostly nurses (83 percent). 58,202 Vietnam soldiers sacrificed their lives, predominantly white Americans from lower to middle class homes of an average age of 23. 303,704 Vietnam soldiers were wounded, 75,000 severely disabled and the number of amputees was four times the number in WW2.

John F. Kennedy opposed American military involvement Vietnam and would never have allowed our country to become entangled in the warfare in SE Asia. This is the major reason he was assassinated. One of Lyndon Johnson's first acts as president was the "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution" falsely declaring war against the communists in Vietnam. This disastrous war, the first war America lost (and has not won since) changed America forever. Those Americans that came of age during the Vietnam War were indelibly molded by nightly horrors of the killing fields of SE Asia for over a decade. These 2.6 plus million American soldiers of war did not come home to ticker tape parades of an adoring, grateful nation. They were sometimes spit at and mostly shamed as baby killers by the general public because of the brutal and horrific press releases coming from Vietnam. Today, these Vietnam Vets are appropriately honored to the point that four out of five that claim to have fought in Vietnam, lie. These courageous men fought against a war seasoned entrenched army in their terrain. They fought to thwart the spread of communism, courageously representing an American government that had no intention of winning this war. America owes the remanding pillars of liberty left in America to men like these.

The stain of the Vietnam war was only the tip of the iceberg of the devastating turn of direction and commitment against one nation under God during the

60s. Those that attempted to steer America back on course were silenced or assassinated (Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Prayer was taken out of our schools by a spurious Supreme Court decision in 1962. The removal of the Bible followed in 1963. The Ten Commandments toppled in 1968 all by the same activist Supreme Court. The church was a silent accomplice to these blatant acts of kicking God out of American. America has never recovered and now the very Communism our boys fought to contain has taken over our government. The rebellion birthed by the Vietnam War has metastasized into what we now call the swamp, or deep state, or the One World Order.

Like the majority of young men of age during the 60s I understood the lies and deception of President Johnson and the Vietnam War hawks. I avoided going to the killing fields in SE Asia by joining the National Guard (Weekend Warriors). While my Heppner and college classmates were fighting and some dear friends dying in Vietnam, I was safe as a teacher and coach in Corvallis. The problem was the war would not end, even after President Nixon claimed "Peace is at Hand" in the fall of 1972.

After Nixon bombed Hanoi and Haiphong over Christmas in 1972 I made a decision that changed my life and ended my teaching career. I organized one of the largest peace marches in Oregon in Corvallis and my Guard unit was called out to police the march. The fact I had been nominated for Guardsman of the Year and my principal was a Commander in the National Guard made my predicament untenable. Like David Sykes, I had to find out for myself what was going on in Vietnam and why my friends and thousands of other young men were dying in Vietnam. After a vicious nine month battle I won an honorable discharge as a C.O. and sold everything I owned and headed for the killing fields of SE Asia in the fall of 1973. I documented the results in a book "Outback to Asia" dedicated to every soldier that fought in Vietnam. These men (and women) are the greatest heroes America will ever honor, even though it has taken decades. Thank you David Sykes, all our Heppner High School warriors, Oregon Vietnam veterans, and every soldier who served our country in SE Asia. Most of these men would serve again, even knowing their government had backstabbed them. Semper Fi, 'always faithful' to the end.

Stuart Dick, Irrigon

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