

Monday, March 30

Greetings, everyone! I hope this letter finds you well. Yesterday marked the 5th Sunday of Lent.

Last week, Wednesday, March 25, was the date of a yearly Feast in the Church. Logical thinkers out there might be able to figure out what the Feast was, but for the sake of keeping suspense at a minimum I will tell you. It was the Feast of “The Annunciation of the Lord.” On this day we celebrate the visitation of the angel Gabriel to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, where he visits with a young lady named Mary. Yes indeed, my friends, the Feast of the Annunciation happens nine months before Christmas! I love Christmas and can hardly wait. What do you want for Christmas this year?

Perhaps we can pray for all expectant mothers during this time of troubles. They, and their children, are always a living sign of hope in the world.

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From an anonymously written Christian book of the first century, called the *Didache*, we read: **“Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies, and fast for those who persecute you.”**

This past week I read in the *Catholic Register* the story of Asia Bibi. She is a Catholic mother of five who was charged in Pakistan for “blasphemy” against Islam. She had been a farmhand who fell into an argument with other workers over being able to have a drink of water. The argument led to an unjust accusation of blasphemy against the Prophet. The charge put Asia Bibi on death row in Pakistan. Because many people wanted her killed as soon as possible, for her safety, Asia Bibi was put in solitary confinement for nine years. She was allowed two hours of sunlight per month. “During my detention, I held the hand of Christ,” she said. “It is thanks to Him that I have stayed standing. Do not be afraid.” Asia Bibi was eventually released and smuggled out of Pakistan. She was helped by Christians around the world and Pakistani leaders, 2 of whom were killed for being sympathetic to her case. She and her family remain in hiding.

Beginning with the Bible, and for two thousand years since, there has been a great deal written about human freedom, particularly freedom in Christ, or freedom in the Spirit. This freedom is a type of inner freedom, a freedom which a Catholic writer once suggested, “means you will never be bored.” For two thousand years countless Christians have been imprisoned. It is not uncommon to read accounts of Christians in jail who took the time to grow in faith, reading the scriptures, praying, and sharing good thoughts and actions. During Lent this is a particularly clear invitation for all of us. And this year, of course, we are experiencing Lent in the confines of our homes. Will we be able to make use of this time of relative isolation? Will we look back at this experience and appreciate that it was “fruitful time?”

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“The wider our contemplation of creation, the grander is our conception of God.” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

Perhaps you can take a walk in nature during this time of isolation, and prayerfully look for the little signs of new life beginning to show themselves in the world. Spring truly feels like a miracle. Just watch out for the bears who are also beginning to show themselves. Haha.

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The Sunday Psalm (Ps 130)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord.
Lord, hear my voice!
Let your ears be attentive
to the voice of my supplications.

If you, O Lord, should mark iniquities,
Lord, who could stand?
But there is forgiveness with you,
so that you may be revered.

I wait for the Lord,
my soul waits, and in his word I hope;
my soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen for the morning.

For with the Lord there is steadfast love,
and with him is great power to redeem.
It is he who will redeem Israel
from all its iniquities.

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Stay safe! Blessings to you and your family.

All good wishes,

Michael Buhler

ANNOUNCEMENTS

For parents who have children at home grade 8 and younger, the *Catholic Register* has an art contest going on right now. Visit: <https://catholicregister.org/eastercontest> for information. I believe there are cash prizes to be won!

Your local parish/church community does not operate with government funding. Churches operate from the tithing people offer—the Sunday collection most often. These faith communities are now closed to gatherings and masses, so their budget is under stress. One goodwill gesture during this time might be to mail an offering to your local church. Offerings are tax deductible.

Related to the above note, this past Sunday churches across Canada were supposed to collect offerings for Development and Peace (D & P). D & P is the overseas social justice and development branch of the Canadian Catholic Church. Check out their web-page. Another strong development organization in Canada is called *Chalice*.