

In the Heartland With Bishop Pates

He is Risen, He is Risen Indeed

These triumphant, definitive words resound once again around the globe signaling the reality that has changed human history forever.

The Paschal Mystery, the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, in which we are immersed through Baptism and the other Sacraments, has transformed our hearts and united us once again in relationship with our loving God. The chasm, created by sin has been bridged. We live in hope that God who has justified us will bring us to the fullness of life in eternity.

I wholeheartedly welcome and congratulate the hundreds who have entered the Catholic community through the RCIA program. Your dedication to the journey of faith and your enthusiasm in living the life of Jesus generate great excitement among your fellow Christians. We pray mightily that you now persevere, with the continuing support of family and parishioners, in deepening your faith and engaging in activities in your parish and diocesan community.

For all of us, the days of Lent have hopefully deepened our personal faith and increased our determination to witness to others the love and sacrifice that characterize the attitude communicated to us by our Risen Savior. To all, a very Happy Easter. May the joy we express reflect the deep happiness that is ours because of what God has done for us.

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TWO NEW SAINTS: POPE ST. JOHN XXIII AND POPE ST. JOHN PAUL II

A lady recently commented to me that we in our generation have been enormously blessed to be led by two Popes whom we now acclaim saints. These men lived in times challenged intensely by secularism, indifference and in some cases outright rejection of faith.

Yet they survived with grace, generated great admiration and are appreciated far beyond the Catholic family for the gift they are to everybody.

“Good Pope John” entered the world stage as an “interim Pope” at age 78. Yet, he proved to be courageous and spirit filled all the while a man of great charity, simplicity and warmth. Through and through he was recognized as being genuine. He promoted a vision that embraced the entire human family as brothers and sisters who are called by the one God to live together in peace and justice.

He called the Second Vatican Council so that the Catholic Church might be awakened to its mission of Evangelization. After his death, two documents of the council emerged which captured John's spirit. Lumen Gentium, "Light of Nations," highlighted the Church as the people of God whose mission is servant in nature so that through its light the world might experience the presence of a loving, creating God.

Gaudium et Spes "Joy and Hope" teaches that the joy and hopes, indeed all of human experience is embraced by the Church. It is our call as the Body of Christ to see the hand of God in all creation and to promote the unity of brothers and sisters everywhere. More than ever his vision is relevant today as the world reels from one crisis to another. With John's legacy may we reject this direction and be committed to achieving "peace on earth."

Pope John Paul II, with his husky voice and indefatigable energy stood without weapon to fight for human rights and the dismantling of communism and totalitarianism. He traveled tirelessly seeking to be a symbol that brings people together in a spirit committed to encouraging the very best in all of us.

Pope John Paul II had a particularly striking influence on youth. He began World Youth Day and the millions of young people from around the world who attended these events became "The Pope John Paul Generation." At these gatherings the youth would raise their voices in unison "Pope John Paul II, we love you." To which he responded "Pope John Paul II, he loves you too." It was a powerful relationship that cemented the faith ever so deeply in young people thirsting for the message of Jesus.

Our generation is indeed blessed by two men who lived in our times, who spoke so powerfully to the truth, whose inspiration still lives on. On April 27th the world will acknowledge that at this moment they live fully with God in heaven. They are saints. The miracle of it all is that if we remain faithful that is our destiny also.