

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

As we begin the month of April, the season of Lent continues. However, a few days into the month, the church enters into the holiest of weeks in our faith. In dramatic and solemn fashion, the faith community moves through Holy Week. The passion of the Lord dominates these days, but the bleakness of Calvary gives way to Easter joy. No sooner do we see the empty tomb than we begin a seven-week festival of celebration.

The resurrection accounts we will read and ponder during April have a profound character to them. The disciples (and we along with them!) are invited to a threshold where time and space are suspended. An event has occurred in time and beyond time. The risen Jesus is the same Jesus the disciples knew before his death, yet he is profoundly different. He comes to them as a stranger who opens their minds to the scriptures, shows them the terrible wounds of his death, but in a glorified body. He comes to them in the familiar rituals of breaking bread and sharing the cup. He is with them in a new way, not just physically there, but also within them, his mind and spirit now active in their minds and spirits.

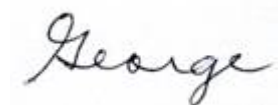
He freely enters locked rooms, eats with them, invites them to touch him. But he is also a totally new mystery that is about not just his own restoration but about a whole new creation that includes us. In the risen Christ, we are shown our own future in God.

To plumb the depths of this mystery is what the fifty days after Easter are all about. Theologian Nathan Mitchell explains it well:

The great fifty days are not an unwelcome, unrealistic obligation to “party on,” even if we don’t feel like it, but an invitation to explore more deeply “the weather of the heart,” to look more closely at all the rich and varied textures of creation. In short, it is a season for learning how to say yes in a culture that wants to keep saying no.

Some of the liturgical observances of this month are attached. As we pray and worship this month, let us pray that we will encounter the risen Christ in new and challenging ways this year!

Affectionately,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "George".

George J. Cerniglia, S.M.
Assistant for Religious Life

