

PASCHAL MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

As many of you know, I am a fan of *The Chosen*, the multi-season show about Jesus and His disciples directed by Dallas Jenkins. In Season 1, Episode 7, while Jesus is calling Matthew to follow Him, Simon (Peter) objects to the calling of this tax collector. Jesus reminds Simon that he called Simon from the midst of his misery and sin leading Simon to retort, "But this is different." Then Jesus delivers my favorite non-biblical line of Season 1: "Get used to different." I cannot help think that this line is an inspired message for all of us.

As I write this, I am sitting before our Lord at the Altar of Repose on Holy Thursday night. It is 9:45pm, and I cannot help but reflect upon the present moment situated in the context of the Sacred Triduum of 2021. In some ways it seems we are in a better place than 2020—we are at least celebrating together in person; however, it is in no way business as usual or that which we have been accustomed to in the past. I am sitting here with an earpiece in my ear and a cell phone tuned to YouTube to monitor our livestream. I am also experiencing a little stress that the camera on the repository is a little blurry, but am consoling myself with the knowledge that it is the best we can do at this time with a small webcam. The chairs in the parish center are six feet apart. We live in a time and place where we are asked to make reservations for church, and the pews must be sanitized after Masses. Who would have ever imagined all of this two years ago? We are getting used to different.

We can imagine also how different things were for the disciples after our Lord rose from the dead—all was different! With God's ancient promises fulfilled, a whole new way of living the covenant had to be not just learned, but discerned! The Bible gives us little snippets of Our Lord's post Resurrection appearances, but as St. John acknowledges, there was so much more that could not be recorded. What did they learn in those 40 days that Jesus appeared to them? After Pentecost there would be dramatic developments and changes to the modes of expression of living the New Covenant. The Fullness of Christ that was passed on to them has been passed on to us. The One deposit of faith has kept Jesus, the Way, and the Truth, and the Life sacramentally present to us as He was to those first witnesses. Yet, the expressions of the faith would be as foreign to the first disciples as their ways would be somewhat foreign to us. Yet, the Truth is the same. Get used to different.

Through the centuries, each new convert, whether Jew or Gentile, brings new and unique blessings to the Body of Christ, but without fundamentally changing the faith and morals that have been revealed and that we have faithfully received. Despite this great mystery, that has borne fruit throughout the ages, even in the midst of sin and human failings, there are in every age those who seek to change unchanging and unchangeable Truth. Those who try are sometimes successful (in the eyes of the world) in bringing about chaos, discord, and desolation, but they ultimately fail. Instead of getting used to different, they sought and seek to make the Body of Christ like them instead of being transformed into the Body of Christ. Anti-Christian bullies are nothing new. The first disciples encountered them. Christians throughout the ages encountered them. We will encounter them. So, let us rejoice!

Christ is Risen! Alleluia! When we, in our own life, experience this as a reality and not some mere fairy tale, EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT. LIFE IS NEVER THE SAME. WE CANNOT HELP BUT BE CHANGED! Happy Resurrection of Our Lord! Something tells me that we will be adapting and rolling with the punches for some time. Let us do it together.

I am sure we will have to get used to different, but let us never confuse different with sin. Jesus died for our sins, but that doesn't give us license to commit sin with impunity. We will have to discover different ways to preserve what we have received and share it with others. We will never be able to take our faith for granted again. We must NEVER get used to sin. We must NEVER become complacent. Let us celebrate these fifty days of Paschal Time, and pray that, as we celebrated Pentecost, the Holy Spirit will open our hearts and set us on fire to proclaim the One who is Ever Ancient, Ever New. Thank you all for your fidelity to Christ and your prayers.

Rev. Fr. Matthew H. Beck, M.A.