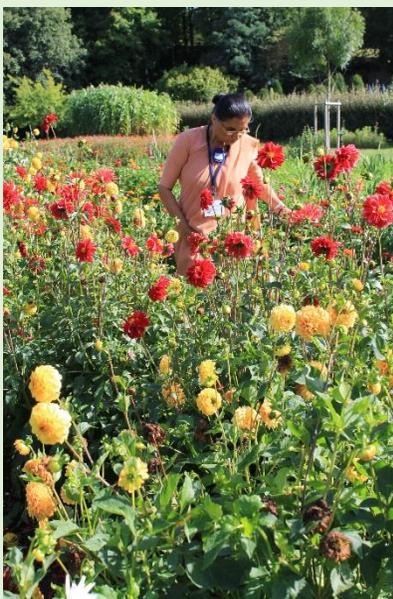


WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN

Sr. Barbara O'Dea, DW

Easter is not over, in fact, it has “only just begun.” Most of us recognize the 40 days of Lent as a time for conversion - a journey inward, into the depths of our hearts through prayer, and a journey outward, towards solidarity with others in need, a time of “giving, not giving up.” The goal is Easter baptism when the community welcomes God’s gift of life as new members are baptized at the Easter Vigil and when all of us, the faithful, together solemnly recommit our lives to Christ.

But do we know that the new life so palpable at the Easter Vigil opens the door to the glorious Easter Season, 50 days of discovering more deeply and *celebrating our life in Christ*? Having deepened our relationship with God and neighbor, we now fix our eyes on the meaning of the Resurrection to discover how Christ is calling us to live our baptismal way of life into the future.



An overview of the Sunday Gospels of the season opens a path. As we follow it, pay attention to the disciples. Remember, we are the disciples of the Risen Christ today. What is he asking of us?

We begin with the octave of Easter, Divine Mercy Sunday. The Risen Christ appears to the disciples who remain hidden behind locked doors. In his merciful love, Jesus reaches out to Thomas who could not believe his resurrection. Jesus invites him to come near to touch his wounds and believe. Thomas responds and amazed, proclaims his faith: *My Lord and my God*. Where are you in your journey of faith? On the 3rd Sunday two disciples from Emmaus return to Jerusalem to tell the disciples of their encounter with the Risen Jesus who they recognized in the breaking of the bread. While they spoke, Jesus appeared

again in their midst, reassuring his disciples. He asks them for something to eat. Gathered at the table, sharing food, Eucharist is the center of the life of the Christian community.

The focus shifts to the relationship of the community with the resurrected Christ. First, Jesus reveals himself as the Good Shepherd who lays down his life so that they may live. He expands their understanding, telling them that he has other sheep not yet of this fold and shares his vision of *one flock and one shepherd* . . . In yet another parable the following Sunday, Jesus says, *I am the vine, my Father is the vine grower, you are the branches*. His expectations are clear: *Remain in me and bear much fruit*. They are to be alive and life-giving. Do you see the movement towards mission? The 6th Sunday continues the focus on the life of Christ’s community-on-mission. *As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you. I call you friends. Remain in my love. I have chosen you . . . and called you to bear fruit that will remain*. We need the gift of his Spirit!

One week before Pentecost, Jesus prays for his disciples and sends them ours into the world. PENTECOST, in wind and fire the Holy Spirit fills the house where the disciples are gathered. Tongues of fire rest on each one, transforming them as Jesus had promised. Throwing open the windows, they proclaim Jesus Christ to the crowd.

This Pentecost, we will be among the crowd of witnesses sent forth to be the presence of Christ and continue his mission, spreading the vision and values of his Reign to the world around us. Imagine the impact, if personally and collectively, the 1.2 billion Catholics across the globe fulfilled their baptismal commitment more fully each year! What a wonderful world it would be!

As the Father has sent me, so I send you. Go.