

For the Last seven weeks, the Easter (Paschal) Candle has been in a prominent position in our churches. It's been lit every time you have celebrated Mass here. The flame of the Easter Candle reminds us that Christ is alive, that He rose from the dead just as the sun rises each morning to put an end to the darkness of the night.

The tall, white candle with a burning flame on top reminds us of God's faithfulness throughout all of history. It symbolizes the two miraculous pillars—smoke by day and fire by night—that had guided the ancient Israelites out of Egypt, through the desert, and to the Promised Land.

Now it is Christ, the Risen Lord, who is our pillar of smoke and pillar of fire, our sure guide out of slavery to sin, through this world of trials and temptations, and into the Promised Land of Heaven.

Today, in Catholic parishes throughout the world, we remove the Easter Candle from the sanctuary. Until next Easter, we will only use it during baptism ceremonies, when Christ's risen life is given for the first time to new members of the Church and during funerals, when its appearance reminds us of the hope we all share for our beloved deceased for the eternal life promised by the Resurrected Christ.

So, does the removal of the Easter candle mean that Christ is no longer among us? No, Christ hasn't gone on vacation. Today is Pentecost, the day when Christ's risen life was entrusted to the Church by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person

of the Holy Trinity Who descended like tongues of fire on the Apostles just a few days after Christ has ascended into heaven.

This new season in the life of the Church is paralleled by our returning to a new liturgical season, Ordinary Time when the Easter Candle is placed back in its normal location and we resume wearing green vestments. In a certain sense, we ourselves become living Easter candles, burning flames of wisdom, pillars of Christian faith and love spreading Christ's new life and hope in the world.

So, how can we follow this call to be Easter candles for the world? Most importantly, we need to be sure that we keep the flame of faith alive in our hearts. If we do, it will give light and warmth to those around us without our even realizing it. Too many Catholic Christians have let the flame die out. Too many of us live mediocre lives. Sometimes we are negligent in tending to Christ's wisdom, courage, and joy so that we might radiate it to others.

But today, Pentecost Sunday, God will renew the flame in each of our souls, and it will be up to us to keep it burning, to feed the flame. An important way in which we do that is by making sure that prayer is our highest priority in life. What oxygen is for a flame, prayer is for our Christian identity. If we take away the oxygen, the flame will sputter and die. If we don't make an effort to pray each day, we will become joyless, mediocre Christians.

As we set out and walk the journey of life, we are gifted with a local family of prayer, a parish of our neighborhood, where we are nourished, supported and challenged to follow Jesus. Over a century ago, this St. Theresa of Avila parish was established ^{Bishop Gabrnels} and has flourished these many years. Many dedicated pastors have led this family of faith. Over the years, many, many volunteers have donated their time, talents, and gifts to St. Theresa. *many sacraments celebrated here.*

As you know, soon the doors of this sacred structure will close as part of our pastoral planning process. But, it's important to remember that the Church has been doing pastoral planning since the First Pentecost as Jesus' first disciples prayed and considered Jesus' mandate: "Go, teach all nations." And so we do. Jesus has placed you and me here, at this time in history, to grow closer to Him, to worship Him, and to share our faith with others by word and deed.

In our own families, as the years go by, we adapt to changes, the kids move out, jobs are found out of the North Country, our needs change, so we adapt for the sake of the family. Sometimes, we move out of the homes that we grew up in, but the family remains intact, even growing. Understandably, we become emotional when we move out of our home, but we move forward because it's the right decision for today. *I know, I had to close the parish where I was baptized in Moscow.* We look through the windshield of possibilities ahead at the future's horizon.

The Church isn't going anywhere. Your pastor, Msgr. Aucoin, Deacon Pat Donahue and staff will continue to minister to your pastoral needs. Masses will continue to be celebrated at St. Mary's in Evans Mills and the Sacraments administered.

We must continue to pray for vocations to the consecrated religious life and ordained ministry. We must continue to create a culture of vocations, strengthen faith formation in family life, and build vibrant parishes. It's so important to remember that the pastoral care of all the parishioners here continues. The Catholic Church has not moved away, the building will be closed, yes, but not the Church which is the ^{living} Body of Christ. This morning, let us thank the Lord for the gift of St. Theresa of Avila Catholic Church and for all who, through the years, have made this a truly sacred home. I give thanks to Almighty God for your faithfulness and support.

As we move into the future, Christ-fed, Christ-led, and Hope-filled, let us pray for each other and support one another in our common journey to the Father. May God be praised...forever may God be praised!