

# **Be Not Afraid**

## **Bishop John M. LeVoir's Monthly Column**

### **for *The Prairie Catholic***

May 2017

#### **MAY: THE MONTH OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY**

Traditionally, the month of May has been dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. I remember learning this when I was a young boy in Catholic grade school. Since May was the month of Mary, we honored her in a special way throughout the month. For example, we prayed the Rosary and we had a crowning of Mary preceded by a procession with her statue. As we processed, we sang hymns. May was always the month of First Communion. Then there are the feasts of the Blessed Virgin during May; namely, May 13, Our Lady of Fatima, and May 31, The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This year the feast of Our Lady of Fatima marks the 100th anniversary of Our Lady's apparitions to the three shepherd children in Portugal. The Blessed Mother appeared six times to the children. She told them that their prayers can help save souls, "Pray, pray very much, and make sacrifices for sinners; for many souls go to hell because there are none to sacrifice themselves and to pray for them."

The apparitions at Fatima also stressed the reception of Holy Communion and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist is the source and summit of the Christian life (CCC, no. 1324). The Fatima apparitions reminded the children that worthily receiving Jesus in Holy Communion gives them the grace of union with God and gives God great consolation.

Pope Francis is scheduled to make a pilgrimage to Fatima May 12-13 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions and to celebrate the canonization of Francisco and Jacinta Marto, two of the children to whom Mary appeared. I am leading a pilgrimage to Fatima to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the apparitions at Fatima this September 11-21. If you would like to make this pilgrimage, please see the diocesan website for more information. Since May is in the Easter season, the prayer *Regina Caeli* (Queen of Heaven) is substituted for the Angelis prayer at noon. As children, we sang the *Regina Caeli* in Latin, and that is how I remember it to this day. Maybe some of you remember it as well. "*Regina Caeli, laetare, alleluia. Quia, quem meruisti portare, alleluia. Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia. Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.*" ("Queen of Heaven rejoice, alleluia. For he whom you did merit to bear, alleluia. Has risen, as he said, alleluia. Pray for us to God, alleluia.")

#### **He is risen!**

The Easter season begins on Easter Sunday and lasts fifty days, ending on Pentecost Sunday. Thus in 2017, it begins on April 16 and ends on June 4. The long Easter season gives us the opportunity to reflect upon the Resurrection of Our Lord. The Resurrection is such a monumental mystery that we cannot fathom its depths in just one short Easter weekend. We need time to meditate and ruminate upon it, and still it amazes us.

About Jesus, Pope Francis said: "He died, was buried, is risen, and has appeared. That is, Jesus is alive! This is the core of the Christian message." In other words, the Resurrection is truly a historical event. It really happened!

There are some who say that only Jesus' memory "rose from the dead" or that the disciples fabricated the story of the Resurrection in order to enhance Jesus' reputation. However, the disciples go to great lengths in the Gospels to

confirm that they are eye witnesses to the Resurrection of Jesus. Many of the disciples gave their lives as martyrs based on the reality of the Resurrection. No one would give their life for a memory or a fabrication, but only for a true, historical event. Furthermore, billions have placed their faith in the reality of the Resurrection over the centuries.

Jesus was capable of rising from the dead because he is truly God and truly human. As God, he has the power to rise from the dead and to make his body glorified. At the end of time, St. Paul tells us that Jesus will do for us what he did for himself. "He will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him also to bring all things into subjection to himself" (Phil 3:21).

Jesus is alive today and he is searching for us in order to save us and unite us to himself, and to bring us to glory. As Pope Francis said: "(Christianity) is not so much our search for God, but rather God's search for us. How beautiful to think that Christianity, essentially, is this!"

"Jesus," the pope said, "has taken us, has seized us, has conquered us in order not to leave us anymore."

During this long Easter season, let us let the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus penetrate our minds and hearts.