

OFFICE FOR ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS  
ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA



NEWSLETTER FOR PARISH ECUMENICAL REPRESENTATIVES

Spring, 2007

*Christós anésti! - Christus resurrexit!- Christ is risen!*  
Easter, 2007

“Christ is Risen!” These words in many ways summarize the essence of our Catholic Faith. Yet they are words that are exclaimed by Christians throughout the world. Easter is a time of celebration of the love of God for His people. It is the love which Jesus showed for us by dying for our sins and raising us up to new life. It celebrates the love that **is** God! Fifty days after Easter we then celebrate the gift of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

While the celebration of Easter is a Christian event, our Jewish brothers and sisters are celebrating their own commemoration of God’s love for His people. The celebration of Passover, which begins this year on the evening of Monday, April 2, is also a celebration of a seminal event in salvation history, the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Fifty days after Passover is the great feast of **Pentecost**. This Jewish Pentecost is the commemoration of the giving of the Law to Moses at Mount Sinai, fifty days after the Passover. On that day God gave Moses the Ten Commandments engraved with fire on stones, the Covenant with the People of God (Ex.19,20, Lev.23). Before the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, the Jews already had a Pentecost Feast, the Feast of the First-Fruits, or the Feast of Harvest, celebrating the harvest, fifty days after the sowing. The feast was transformed at this point from a harvest feast to an embrace of the reception of God’s Law.

We share, therefore, similar feasts with our Jewish brothers and sisters – both Passover/Easter and Pentecost. In each we see a progression from slavery to freedom. In each we see the fulfillment in embracing God’s enduring presence with His people.

During this sacred season, let us commit ourselves ever more to working towards interfaith understanding.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory J. Fairbanks".

Father Gregory J. Fairbanks

## **Information at Your Fingertips**

Almost “everything you need to know” about ecumenical and interreligious affairs can be found on the USCCB web site:

<http://www.usccb.org>

- ▶ Evangelization and Outreach
- ▶ Ecumenical/Interreligious Affairs

The web site has been recently expanded with a wealth of documentary resources and links in every direction. The following brief items can be found in greater detail on the web site.

### **Growing Together in Unity and Mission**

This is an agreed statement by the International Anglican-Roman Catholic Commission for Unity and Mission which is expected to be published early in April. The Commission was established in 2001 to promote activities that would help Catholics and Anglicans demonstrate the results of four decades of ecumenical dialogue and take concrete steps toward full unity. Since then, however, the churches of the Anglican Communion “have entered into a period of dispute” over issues of homosexuality and women bishops. In spite of this, the Catholic co-secretary of the commission, Msgr. Donald Bolen, said, “Members of the commission are deeply convinced that, even in a period of uncertainty, the mission entrusted to us by Christ obliges us and requires us to deepen our brotherhood in life and mission.”

### **Foundation for Interreligious and Intercultural Research and Dialogue**

On February 1, this organization, of which Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was one of the founding members, presented our Holy Father with the first result of their work: a joint edition of the three Sacred Books of the three monotheistic religions in their original language and in chronological order. On this occasion our Holy Father said: “The reinterpretation, and for some people, the discovery of the texts that so many people across the world venerate as sacred, demands mutual respect in trusting dialogue. Our contemporaries expect of us a message of harmony and peace and the practical expression of our common willingness to help them achieve their legitimate aspiration to live in justice and peace.”

### **Christian Churches Together**

February 6-9 marked the official formation of Christian Churches Together in the USA. It consists of thirty-four churches and national Christian organizations, representing over 100 million Americans, and is made up of five Christian “families” - Evangelical/Pentecostal, Historic Protestant, Historic Racial/Ethnic, Orthodox, and Catholic. Its mission is “to enable churches and Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world.” The Catholic bishops of the U.S. voted to participate in CCT at their November 2004 meeting. The importance of evangelism and the elimination of domestic poverty were key themes at the February meeting.

### **What Do We Teach About the Other?**

Muslims and Catholics in the U.S. need to develop educational programs that will give all of their faithful an accurate picture of the beliefs of the other, said two clerics experienced in Muslim-Catholic dialogue, Father Francis Tiso (USCCB) and Imam Mohamad Bashar Arafat (Islamic Affairs Council of Maryland). Understanding each other’s teachings and building on the values they share, while also learning how to “agree to disagree” on certain ideas, Christian and Muslims can show society that faith is a blessing and not a threat to peaceful coexistence.

## On the Local Scene

Our Archdiocesan web site affords us another means of keeping in touch with the clergy and laity of the Archdiocese. You will find much more, and timelier information on what's happening locally in ecumenical and interreligious matters at our office web site which can be found under the Secretariat for Evangelization.

Lent has become increasingly a time for ecumenical sharing, as evidenced in ministerium- sponsored weekly prayer services, Good Friday observances, and even Stations of the Cross. The Wednesdays of Lent are being devoted to ecumenical Lenten series in many areas, including Levittown-Fairless Hills, Bensalem, Hatboro-Warminster, Yardley, Mayfair-Holmesburg and Hatboro. Ecumenical Good Friday services are scheduled in Langhorne, Bristol, Croydon, North and Southampton, and Morrisville.

### MONTGOMERY COUNTY VICARIATE

#### **Plymouth-Whitemarsh Ministerium**

World Day of Prayer Service - Friday, March 9, 1:00 PM  
Episcopal Church of St. Luke and the Nativity, 203 Germantown Pike, Lafayette Hills  
2007 Prayer Service designed by women of Paraguay

#### **North Penn Ministerium**

Susan Brinkman, investigative reporter for the Catholic Standard and Times, spoke at the March meeting about her series on Managed Death and Assisted Suicide, noting the decline since the 1970's in compassionate care for the sick and dying.

#### **Hatfield Ministerium - Lenten Series**

Wednesday evenings at 7:30 PM - *"Turn to Me" - Conversions and Changed Lives*  
March 7 - Hatfield Church of the Brethren - Pastor Albert Walsh  
March 14 - Emmanuel Congregational Church - Pastor Ruby Bean  
March 21 - Grace Lutheran Church - Father Leonard Peterson  
March 28 - Holy Spirit Anglican Church - Pastor Doll

#### **Conshohocken Ministerium**

Ecumenical Good Friday Service - 12:00 - 1:00 P.M.  
Calvary Episcopal Church, 4<sup>th</sup> and Fayette Streets, Conshohocken

#### **Willow Grove Ministerium**

Ecumenical Good Friday Service, 12:00 noon, *The Seven Last Words of Christ*  
St. David's Church, N. Easton Road and Summit Avenue, Willow Grove  
Participants include pastors of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Abington, Reform Church of Willow Grove, and Carmel Presbyterian Church, Glenside.

## BUCKS COUNTY VICARIATE

### **Hatboro-Warminster Ministerium - Community Lenten Series**

Wednesdays through March 28 at 7:30 PM

Theme: *Practical Holiness: Qualities of Soul for Living Faithfully Today*

Good Friday Service at noon at Nativity of Our Lord Church, Warminster

### **Northampton/Southampton/Wrightstown Ministerium**

Stations of the Cross at noon on Good Friday at North and Southampton

Reformed Church, Bristol Road in Churchville

Clergy and lay representatives of the member congregations take part in the service.

### **Lower Bucks Center for Church and Community (LBCCC)**

17<sup>th</sup> Ecumenical Festival of Music - *Wonder, Love and Praise*

Sunday, May 6 at 3:00 P.M.

St. John's United Methodist Church, 820 Almshouse Road in Ivyland

Featuring the Bucks County Quaker Singers and 10 choirs or ensembles from area seven area congregations, including a **signing choir**.

## PHILADELPHIA-NORTH VICARIATE

A meeting for PERs in the Philadelphia North Vicariate was held on February 24 at 10:00AM in St. Matthew Rectory.

### **Mayfair/Holmesburg Ministerium- Lenten Journey**

> Member congregations host a Soup and Salad Supper and a time for prayer on Wednesdays of Lent beginning at 5:45 PM. Study of our Christian Heritage and Faith Traditions at 8:00 PM.

February 28 Baptist Tradition: Rev. Ed Johnson and Rev. Scott Dorsey

March 7 Lutheran Tradition: Rev. David Hinkelman  
Episcopal Tradition: Father John Keefer

March 14 Roman Catholic Tradition: Father John Gabin and Sister Helen Scanlon,  
MSBT

March 21 Presbyterian Tradition: Rev. Marie Cone

March 28 Methodist Tradition: Rev. Richard Andrews and Rev. Carl H. Doerr, JR.

> Good Friday Service 12:00 noon/3:00 PM at Johnson Memorial United Methodist Church

### **Bustleton Ministerium**

Ecumenical Good Friday Service at Memorial Church of St. Luke (Episcopal),  
1:00-2:15 PM

Each of the member ministerium pastors will preach on one of the Seven Last Words. Maternity BVM is a participating congregation.

### **Ecumenical Prayer Service**

April 4, 7:30 PM - Hosted by St. Paul Episcopal Church, Chestnut Hill Avenue

Homilist: Rev. Joseph Serano, Daylesford Abbey (Proceeds for Bethesda Project) Our Mother of Consolation is a participating congregation.

## PHILADELPHIA-SOUTH VICARIATE

### **Old St. Joseph's Church**

The parish Ecumenical and Interfaith Committee invited **Interfaith Couples** who are parishioners to a social gathering in the parish hall after the 5:30 PM Mass on Saturday, February 24. This was to provide an opportunity to meet one another and have some conversation about how the parish can be of ongoing support to these relationships.

### **“Walking God's Paths”**

A successful interfaith experience occurred last year by way of this structured dialogue among clergy and laity from Old St. Joseph's, Old Pine Presbyterian Church and Society Hill Synagogue, which led to many follow-up shared activities, as well as deepened understanding and friendship among the participants. A repeat of the program is being offered this year for those who could not attend last year's sessions. St. Peter's Episcopal Church is joining the endeavor. The dates for this year's dialogue are February 7 and 28, March 14 and 28 from 7:00 to 9:00 pm, rotating locations.

## CHESTER COUNTY VICARIATE

### **Assumption Parish, West Grove**

For the past two years, the Ecumenical Committee, made up of members of the parish, has studied recent papal documents on Eucharist, Reconciliation and the Rosary. This has been a way to deepen understanding and strengthen faith in Catholic beliefs as prelude to reaching out to other faith traditions in the community. Recently an approach was made to a neighboring Lutheran congregation with the hope of initiating a Catholic-Lutheran dialogue between the two congregations.

## DELAWARE COUNTY VICARIATE

The **World Day of Prayer**, held annually on the first Friday of March, was hosted this year by the Chapel of the Good Shepherd. The theme of the service was *United Under God's Tent*, and was prepared by an ecumenical group of women in Paraguay. This celebration for congregations in the Yeadon area has traditionally been a combined Adult-Youth Service, and is coordinated by Jill Smith of St. Louis Parish.

### **Haverford Township Clergy Association**

St. James United Church of Christ in Havertown is hosting an ecumenical prayer service, *The Seven Last Words of Christ*, on Good Friday from 2:00 to 3:00 PM

## **INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS**

The convergence of the springtime feasts of Easter and Passover remind us of our roots in the Jewish tradition - a time to remember and be grateful for "the bonds that unite us."

### **Some Coming Events**

#### **Feast of Passover, April 3**

We suggest that parishes which have a synagogue in their area send Passover greetings to them, as Cardinal Rigali will do for the Jewish community in the Greater Philadelphia area at that time.

The Cardinal's letter will be posted on our web site.

#### **Women of Reform Judaism Interfaith Program**

The women of Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park (8339 Old York Road) welcome all their neighbors in the surrounding community from any religious affiliation to attend their annual interfaith event on Tuesday, April 17 at 11:00 AM. A panel of clergy led by Rabbi Lance Sussman will discuss

*Sacred Times: A Comparative Look at Religious Calendars.*

RSVP to Mickie Levin at 215-698-0314.

#### **Yizkor**

The annual Memorial Ceremony for the Six Million Jewish Martyrs of the Holocaust will take place at 1:00 P.M. on April 15 at 16<sup>th</sup> and the Parkway. In case of rain it will be held at Congregation Rodeph Shalom, 615 North Broad Street Street. The theme of this year's program is *The Urgency of Holocaust Remembrance in the Madness of Our Age.*

#### **"Voices of the Holocaust"**

Philadelphia premiere of a musical program on May 6 at 4:00 PM at the Church of the Holy Trinity, 19<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Streets.

An eloquent tribute to those who gave voice to the terror - and hope- that occurred in Europe before and during World War II. Sheridan Seyfried, a young Philadelphia composer, has arranged their songs and poetry into a memorable program.

For tickets (\$25.00) or information, call Jeremy at Wanamaker Tickets , 215-568-2400.

#### **Empowering Interfaith Encounter**

What? Training sessions for facilitators of the series: "Deepening Faith through Interreligious Engagement"

When? May 19, 2007 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Where? Medical Mission Sisters, Northeast Philadelphia

How? Using a balance of reflection, conversation and study, to explore the world of interreligious engagement, and outline simple plans for facilitating persons in their desire to encounter others.

Cost? Free

For information: Call Sister Maria Hornung, Interfaith Center, 215-222-2012.

## Activities of Office Staff

- February 15 Hosted a visiting Fulbright scholar from Saudi-Arabia, Dr. Mishal al Sulami, to discuss Muslim-Catholic relations in the Philadelphia area.
- February 26 Our Archdiocesan Seminary hosted a delegation of eight Muslim clerics and scholars from Egypt, Jordan and Syria as part of the work of the International Visitors Council of Philadelphia. Their visit was part of a project of the U.S. State Department, *Islam: Scholarship and Practice in the United States*. Following a tour of the Seminary, the delegation engaged in a round-table discussion with members of the Seminary administration which focused on the formation of clergy in both traditions.
- March 6, 7, 14,22 Coordinated annual Youth Symposium on the Holocaust at St. Joseph's, LaSalle and West Chester Universities and Keneseth Israel Synagogue. Cardinal Justin Rigali addressed the group at St. Joseph's University. Students from ten Catholic high schools attended on various days.
- March 13, 15, 21, 29 Conducted classes on ecumenical and interreligious relations in the Church Ministry Institute at five sites.
- March 15 Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue at Palmer Theological Seminary
- March 24 Annual workshop for Parish Ecumenical Representatives  
Topic: *The Sweetness in Islam: The Path of Purification*  
Presenter: Imam Muhammad Abdur-Razzaq Miller, Bawa Muhaiyyadeen Mosque  
At St. Charles Seminary
- April 17-19 Attend annual Mid-Atlantic regional Muslim-Catholic Dialogue sponsored by the USCCB at Immaculate Conception Center, Douglaston, New York. Father Fairbanks will deliver a paper on the *History of Catholic-Muslim Interaction in Light of Religious Education*.
- April 24 Sister Josephine Kase will attend the plenary meeting of the Bishops Committee on Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (of the USCCB) in Chicago. Sister is a consultant to the Subcommittee on Interreligious Dialogue.
- April 26 Seminary Outreach Program, an interfaith dialogue endeavor for Catholic, Protestant and Jewish seminarians  
Topic: *Understanding our Covenant Relationships: Biblical Foundations*  
Presenters: Rev. Christopher Schreck, St. Charles Seminary  
Rabbi Ira Stone, Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel  
Hosted this year by St. Charles Seminary