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### Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist by Bishop Michael Talbot



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

Today I celebrated the Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist. The Prayer over the Offerings for the feast day addresses us with the following words: “As we venerate the glory of Saint Mark, we offer you, Lord, the sacrifice of praise and

humbly beseech you, that your Church may always persevere in the preaching of the Gospel. Through Christ our Lord. Amen”. As I reflected on these words, the question that came to mind was, what does perseverance in preaching the Gospel mean for me?

The essence of evangelization is central to our faith, yet I struggle to understand the full implications of being an evangelist. What are the images of the evangelist that come to mind as we consider the role we assume as proclaimers of the Good News? Littered in our church history are the efforts of those who used might as right to indoctrinate and coerce others. The darker side of our ecclesiastical history left indelible wounds that remain a source of pain today.

As I reflect on the evangelist, drawn to the realization that the evangelist can only be rooted in  
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*Photo by Linda/Phil*

### Easter Letter from Presiding Bishop

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Peace, joy, and Apostolic Blessing

Good Friday has come and gone in the liturgical cycle of the Church, yet in our secular experience, it seems as though we are still in the midst of it. The COVID 19 pandemic continues, climate change is bringing us to the brink of ecological ruin, our political systems have reached a level of dysfunction unparalleled in our nation’s history, and the people of Ukraine endure unspeakable horrors as they are mercilessly invaded and attacked by Russian forces. No, Good Friday is not over, at least not the Good Friday our world is currently experiencing.

It is easy to become discouraged, depressed, despondent even in the face of this current reality. Our world is in crisis, and it is right for us to be concerned about it and to question what any of us can do to stop this downward spiral. It’s tempting to say, “Well, I’m not someone who has any political or social clout. I’m not a mover and a shaker; I’m just an average person. What influence do I have, what difference can I make? What resources do I have that could possibly make a difference?”

As the life of our brother Jesus shows us, we do indeed have a powerful resource at our disposal, one which all too often we overlook. Good Friday was followed by Easter Sunday, and the world was given proof that love, the perfect Love Christ embodied, overcomes all, even the most evil of human behaviors. Every time we worship and come to table with him, we experience that Divine Love. We eat his body and drink his blood and as we do, we are transformed, for as the Apostle Paul tells us, “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me”. (Galatians 2:20) And since Christ is love, divine Love lives within us. What greater resource is there than that?

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### Easter Letter from Presiding Bishop (continued)

But what value is there in having a resource, what value is there in being a resource, if that resource is never drawn on, is never applied, and instead is allowed to simply sit there idle, unused? The understanding that we have been incorporated into the very perfect Love of Christ must be more than simply a comforting theological nicety or a high-sounding ideal; it must become a lived reality if it is to have any meaning at all. The perfect Love that is Christ calls us to reflection, to a change of heart, and ultimately to action.

There are many ways to be Love in action and not all involve political or social activism, though they certainly are ways to demonstrate that. In addition to the awareness of the power of political and social activism, there is a growing awareness of the power of “subtle activism”. Subtle activism may not be a term that many are familiar with, so just what is subtle activism? The 2002 website of SUNY Press describes it as, “...*the use of consciousness-based practices like meditation and prayer to support collective transformation, such as global meditation directed toward peaceful resolution of a conflict. Subtle activism represents a bridge between the consciousness movement and the movements for peace, environmental sustainability, and social justice. It is not a substitute for physical action but rather a potentially crucial component of a more integrated approach to social change.*”

Whenever we gather for worship, do we not reconnect and reexperience that Divine Love that is Christ? Whenever we pray for peace or for any changes in our world, are we not in fact engaged in subtle activism? But our subtle activism should not end there; it can and must be carried over into all aspects of our lives. It must inform how we think about the challenges currently in our world, the way we relate to them emotionally, and how we respond to them in our daily lives. Instead of condemning or thinking negatively of or feeling angry or resentful toward those responsible for those challenging situations, do we instead draw on the Love of Christ that dwells within us and pray for them to become aware of the consequences of their actions and to experience a change of heart? Do we refrain from condemning or mocking them in our public discourse, with friends, or with family? Do we refrain from the negativity that does nothing to improve the situations but only compounds the situations further?

My sisters and brothers, we must do our part to help humanity move beyond our collective global Good Friday to our collective Easter Sunday. It's easy for us to feel that we have nothing of value to contribute to this effort, but that simply isn't true. We have in fact the single most powerful resource for the transformation of the world, Christ's love. Our global Easter Sunday awaits. I invite you to do your part to make it a lived reality for all humanity.

Please accept my sincere wishes for a blessed and joyful Easter. May your celebration of the Resurrection of Christ awaken in you an increased experience of Christ's powerful love. May that experience of Christ's love awaken in you an increased desire to be of service to our hurting world.

### Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist (continued)

the gospel imperative: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”<sup>31</sup> The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”<sup>32</sup> (Mark 12: 30-31).

The evangelist becomes the individual who perseveres in the proclamation of the Good News as founded on love. The communion prayer leads me spiritually to praise and acknowledge in humility a capacity to love in all my relationships as transcendent and immanent. In loving and being loved, I encounter the person of Christ the Word as the very being of Good News. Perhaps, the evangelist is simply the embodiment of such a love that heals, forgives, and renders peace to a troubled world.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Father Tony Carrillo and his wife Bobbi at the residential eldercare center, where they have ministered every Sunday for several years. I could not help but think about them today as I witnessed their love for the residents and the residents' love for Tony and Bobbi. They were sharing the Good News with the residents, but they shared it with me also. Remembering again that the minister's

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### **Feast of St. Mark the Evangelist** (continued)

role is to make known love, an act of grateful praise, I recognized the evangelists in my midst.

Let me end with the Opening Prayer from today's Feast Day for St. Mark:

O God, who raised up Saint Mark, your  
Evangelist,  
and endowed him with the grace to preach the  
Gospel,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may so profit from his teaching  
as to follow faithfully in the footsteps of Christ.

### **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration** by Fr. Ronald Catherson



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

St. John's Catholic Church of Antioch in Las Cruces, New Mexico will celebrate their 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary on July 31, 2022. The actual anniversary is July 30<sup>th</sup>; however July 31<sup>st</sup>, being a Sunday, was more

convenient to celebrate with a special Mass with Bishops Mark Newman, Linda Rounds-Nichols, and Michael Talbot being in attendance.

The events planned so far are to dedicate a time capsule during this Mass and a special dinner after the Mass. This time capsule will contain items from our Mass, messages from others associated with St. John's, and a USB with photos and videos to include our Easter Mass of 2022. A plaque will identify the time capsule and request it to be opened 50 years from now on our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary – hopefully. Anyone wishing to write a message to be entered into our time capsule may provide it to [stjccoa@zianet.com](mailto:stjccoa@zianet.com) by the end of May.

In preparation for this celebration the church under went a minor face lift. July 31 will be a time for celebrating the efforts of everyone involved in the development and the continuing of St. John's being a voice of Christ in the community. Please be mindful of us on our special day. Even if you are not with us physically, you can be with us spiritually.

### **Ecumenical Update** by Father Scott Carter



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

As most of us are aware, the last few years have involved a great deal of ecumenical activity within the Independent Catholic movement—in some ways, an unprecedented amount of activity. In 2019, laypeople, deacons, priests, and bishops representing churches and jurisdictions from across the country met at the invitation of Father Jayme Mathias of Holy Family in Austin, Texas, and the number and quality of ecumenical relationships seemed to increase exponentially after that gathering. Regular meetings of the Catholic Bishops Forum further energized and inspired individuals and jurisdictions in the movement. As your ecumenical officer, I've spent hundreds of hours during the last couple of years reaching out to folks who call themselves "Independent Catholics," "Old Catholics," "Inclusive Catholics," "Convergent Christians," "Ecumenical Christians," "Extraordinary Catholics," and more. Most of those hours were, hard work and challenges included, extremely gratifying. My work to build bridges with so many other people and groups was made easier by a shared desire on the part of most involved to "come together without coming together." As early as 2019, some groups expressed significant interest in long-term efforts to actually "come together" in an organizational sense, and some, especially those in groups publicly emphasizing their "Old Catholic" connections (despite the Union of Utrecht's expressed displeasure that Americans were formally using the name "Old Catholic"), felt that efforts should be made to overcome what they considered a scandalous degree of fragmentation within Independent Catholicism. For some, the long-term goal was to become "respectable enough" to be formally embraced by Utrecht, the historic Old Catholics of Europe, if not yet the Episcopal Church or Rome. This has always seemed, to put it mildly, highly unlikely. In representing Antioch, I have always pushed to do as much good as we can while remaining who we are, treasuring and continuing to share our unique charism. Informing and guided by Presiding Bishop Mark Newman, I have been a supporter and, I hope, exemplar for our sisters and

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## Ecumenical Update (continued)

brothers of how we can grow closer together and help more people more effectively using the “coming together without coming together” model. I remain optimistic that our efforts along those lines will continue to expand and bear even greater fruit. As many of you know, however, an effort to create a super-organization of Independent Catholics in America has emerged and is evolving. The effort is complicated by the variety of functions the new organization is attempting to embody; in addition to describing itself as a national Church, it presents itself as an educational accrediting body for all Independent Catholics. It has formally embraced the demand that validly consecrated bishops voluntarily renounce their episcopal roles when functioning within the new organization. Reactions have varied wildly. Some have expressed anger and betrayal. Some have voiced optimism and gratitude. I have been very proud of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch and its reaction, which has been to enter into a period for personal and Church-wide discernment and conversation on the matter. I am confident that our Church will not only exemplify the best of Independent Catholicism in action, but will also find ways to responsibly love and support our fellow Independent Catholics, our fellow Christians, and indeed our entire human family, no matter how these developments unfold. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and nothing will diminish our desire to share that love. Every Blessing!



*First Attempt!*

## Lessons from a Seal by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



*Photo by Linda/Phil*

Phil and I were blessed to be able to travel to Antarctica recently, and I must say, of all of the beautiful sites we have seen, God did an especially good job on this one! But then, that may be because it, like Galapagos, has been protected from the likes of us. Galapagos has some permanent residents; the Antarctica does not. In both places, the animals are curious about the funny looking beings who are oohing and awing over them, but not frightened.

And, as often occurs when we observe nature, the animals can teach us lessons. This was the case of a seal. As we were sailing around in a zodiac, which is sort of like blow-up boat-raft kind of thing (about which I have another story to tell someday), we noticed a seal attempting to get to the level top of a small iceberg. It appeared this was a favorite spot for the seals, because there was an indentation that looked like a slide. He was trying to slither his way up that slide, but each time he tried he slid right back down when he was almost at the top. He tried, again and again. It didn't seem to matter that there was another iceberg close by, one that appeared to be a little lower, and perhaps not as slippery.

As we watched, he finally swam off, and we thought he had given up, but no. His next plan was to circle the iceberg, to gain some speed before trying again. And try again he did. And again. And again. And yet again! After several attempts, he made it. We all cheered and clapped – he had succeeded!

But then, after looking around, he went over to the slide-like indentation and slid right back off into the sea. Off he went, over to the shore, where we assumed he had been before we arrived.

**Really?! Really!**

It made me ponder. If he hadn't been so picky, he could have gone to the other iceberg. How often do we have such tunnel vision about something, we miss seeing that other possibilities are within reach?

Of course, maybe there was a good reason for selecting this particular iceberg, so his tenacity is another possible lesson for us. He had set a goal and he didn't give up. (Sort of reminds me of seminary!) He didn't swim away when things didn't go the way he planned, and those of us who have succeeded at a goal didn't walk away just because things

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### Lessons from a Seal (continued)

were more difficult or time-consuming than we expected.



*Another Attempt...*



*Made it!!*



*Just slid back into the water!*

But then, the seal didn't seem satisfied when he reached his goal, but rather rushed on to something else. How often do we work hard for something without taking time to determine if it is really our dream or our call? How often do we neglect to sit with it, as they say, when we have reached a goal, rather than checking it off the list and hurrying to something else?

And that question leads us to another of his lessons for us. Sometimes it is important to take a time out, to swim to the shore and relax and reflect!

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