

Pastor's Column

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Transforming Congregations for the Future

Today we begin the celebration of the “Great 50 Days” of the Feast of the Resurrection. As we do so, we are mindful that we, who believe in the Resurrection of Jesus, must witness to this belief in and through the way we go about our daily lives.

The priorities we set, the ways in which we spend our time through work and leisure, the use of our financial resources, the ways in which we handle conflict, and the ways in which we interact with each other become the external signs of our internal beliefs. The Resurrection of Jesus has transforming power that radically changes our own lives and the world in which we live.

A special responsibility falls upon Faith Communities, Parishes, which intentionally come together in the name of Jesus. We must live in this “new way” not only for ourselves but also for the world. Our society needs what Faith Communities have the potential of giving.

Loren Mead in his study, *Transforming Congregations for the Future*, suggests that society needs the church and the community graces that the church generates. He also lists several characteristics of the church community that are necessary for a healthy and wholesome public life:

1. *The church is a place where befriending strangers is not only appropriate, it is expected.*
2. *The prejudices and stereotypes that foster fear and hatred and cripple the order of the secular world can be processed within a community of mutually respectful persons.*
3. *Resources are not hoarded but shared in a community that has transformed the fear of “not enough for me” into the joy of giving.*
4. *Resolution of conflict situations in congregations goes beyond just stopping them for a time, to ending them altogether, with reconciliation and forgiveness.*

5. *Religious communities create liturgies, drama, music, and festivals to celebrate life together and to give as much “hype” to community as the general public gives to conflict.*
6. *Society has conditioned people to lock themselves in for safety whereas believing communities are places where the insecure and the isolated will feel secure and wanted.*
7. *People in communities take responsibility for the well being of others.*
8. *Congregations bring hope and persistence to the political table, witnessing to a world torn apart by gangs, drugs, violence and hatred that the lion and the lamb can truly dwell together.*
9. *People in congregations are given the power to share their leadership talents.*

As we, the Church of St. Thomas More, begin to journey through this Easter Season may we be strengthened to live in “the new way.” May we allow the transforming power of the Resurrection to touch us and heal us and in turn, through us, heal our society and our world!

May these “Great Fifty Days of Easter” be a time of new beginnings, new hope, and new life for you and your loved ones. Share those new beginnings, that new hope, and that new life with the world around you! Help to make St. Thomas More a “transforming” community that makes the world a better place.

Happy Easter!

F. Mike