

Pastor's Column

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Oberammergau Passion Play 2010

In September 2010, I will be leading a pilgrimage to see the Passion Play in Oberammergau, Germany. The pilgrimage will take us to a number of European cities.

The details of the pilgrimage can be found in today's Bulletin on page 9.

Detailed brochures are available at the front desk in the Parish Office.

There will be an informational meeting next Sunday, June 28, at Noon, here at St. Thomas More on the lower level. Vicki Voll, our tour agent, will be present to give details about the trip and the Passion Play.

There is no cost or obligation for attending this meeting. So if you may be interested in being a part of this "once-in-a-lifetime" event, I would encourage you to attend.

The history of the Oberammergau Passion Play dates back to the middle of the Thirty Years' War. In 1633, after months of suffering from the Bubonic Plague, the people of Oberammergau took a vow to perform the "Play of Suffering, Dying and Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ" every ten years if they were spared.

Miraculously from that point on they all survived and true to their promise, the first performance was in 1634. This simple performance was held in a meadow and acted by the villagers. After 1674 they decided to change the date, so as to fall every ten years beginning in 1680. The only time it was not performed, was during World War II. This time the play will open on May 15, 2010, and ends on October 3, 2010.

The entire cast consists of villagers who have lived in Oberammergau for at least 20 years. They must be amateurs and people of high moral and ethical principles. Villagers also make the outstanding costumes. As no wigs are used, participants must grow their hair and beards for several months prior to the performances, beginning on Ash Wednesday 2009, according to the "Hair Decree."

By glorifying the Lord for saving their village during the plague, they are fulfilling Psalm 145:4-6: *"One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your acts. They will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works, and I will proclaim your great deeds."*

Over 2000 participants bring the story of Jesus of Nazareth to the ears and eyes of the audience in a five-hour production on the imposing open-air stage. Almost half of the inhabitants of Oberammergau enact with great devotion the story of Jesus whose message gives billions of people hope and strength. The play covers the period of Jesus entering Jerusalem and continues up to his death on the Cross and his Resurrection. For ten months the villagers playing the roles of Jesus, Mary, Pontius Pilate and the Apostles, of the children, soldiers, and priest will be rehearsing the newly revised text, while the orchestra and the singers will be studying the exceptional music created for the performance.

The Passion Play begins at 2:30pm and stops at 5:00pm. There is a three hour break for dinner and the Play resumes at 8:00pm and ends at 10:30pm. The Play is performed in German with an English text provided.

Oberammergau is located just south of Munich and close to the many European Cities that we will visit.

For further information go to: www.passionplay-oberammergau.com

Hope to see you at the meeting next Sunday!

F. n. Mike