

EASTER: THE HOLIDAY OF GIVING!

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Another holiday is fast approaching us, namely Easter. If we step back and take a look at this holiday with the eyes of an outsider, then it would seem that if we would prioritise these holidays, Easter would be lined up behind Christmas.

Christmas is a holiday that everybody looks forward to. The lights, the decorations, the music and the gifts give Christmas a warm atmosphere that most people like. This is why people call it the time for giving. We go to great extent to prepare ourselves for this holiday of giving. We take weeks to clean, cook, bake and shop, so that everything will be perfect for Christmas. However, if we compare Easter to Christmas, we get a very different picture. We don't experience the same sort of frenzy as we do at Christmas. We don't do the same sort of preparations as we do for Christmas. We prepare to a degree at Easter, but it is nothing compared to what we do at Christmas. This is why it seems, and not just to an outsider, that Easter is the lesser of the two holidays, but this is simply not true.

If we look at Easter more closely, then Easter is the "time for giving". There is a reason why we don't like Easter. The Easter holiday places a mirror in front of us, and makes us look deep into our soul, and makes us realise that Christ was crucified because of our sins. Our sins were the nails, which were driven into his hands and feet. Easter opens our eyes to the fact, that we are small and helpless without God. However, no matter how difficult and dark this image seems to be, Easter's message is far greater. In the gospel of John we find the following: **"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15, 13)**. Christ not only spoke these words of wisdom, but he lived them. By his own self-sacrifice, Christ proved that indeed, there is no greater love, then when one sacrifices his life for another. By his sacrifice, our sins have been forgiven; he reconciled the world with himself, and has given us eternal life. It is our duty that we keep, treasure and pass on this free gift, given to us by Jesus.

This is the Year of Reconciliation. This is a perfect opportunity for us to practice that message which is given to us at Easter. The sacrament of reconciliation allows us to experience over and over again that great love which he manifested on the cross. After experiencing and receiving this great Easter love, it is our obligation and duty, to pass this love on to others, by being as forgiving and merciful as God the Father is merciful with us. This is the real gift of giving; passing on the Easter love of Christ, his sacrificial love to others. This is the reason why Easter is the "time for giving" for Christ gave himself to us, and we must give ourselves to others, so that they may experience God's eternal love. Let us then prepare ourselves for Easter with these thoughts in mind, so that our lives and our community's life may be renewed in the sacrificial love of Christ.

We wish everybody a happy and blessed Easter.

Montreal, March, 2009.

Sincerely in Christ,

Thomas Androvich
Rector