

Fr. Bob Thames Newsletter  
April 2020

All of you there, my best Prayer for a Blessed Easter to all of you. Just thought as I haven't much to do, with the quarantine, that I would write to all of you telling about here.

Greetings to all of you there who are interested in what happens here in our place in Bolivia. I will call this letter our Mid-April letter. And why? Because of the importance of Holy Week and Easter for you all and for us.

Our Holy Week began with the Saturday before Palm Sunday. We read the Gospel of John 12, 1-11, Mary anointing the feet of Jesus in their house after the resurrection of Lazaro, her brother. Because of just a reading and listening by the kids, as it seemed me to be of less an impact that would be remembered, we acted out the readings along with the readings for all of the Holy Week services. We then began this method with this celebration. I would explain afterwards then the importance of the reading and how it should affect our living of this Gospel in our house, school, and beyond. We then did the same for Palm Sunday without the long passion reading, only the entry into Jerusalem along with the cleansing of the temple.

If any of you haven't read Bargil Pixner's book "Paths of the Messiah: Jesus and Jewish Christianity in light of Archeological Discoveries" I highly recommend it if you have interest in early Christian history (Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 2010). It will give you a lot of insight and extra history about why Jesus did some things that might seem less important to us today not knowing the situation He was in. Bargil Pixner was a Benedictine monk who lived in Israel more than 40 years, dying in 2002. He was a specialist in Holy Land archeology, and a specialist in literature of extra-biblical writings at the time of Christ (before and after) that puts a lot of the Gospels in context of the time, professor in several schools of biblical theology in the Holy Land, not only Catholic, but Orthodox seminaries, as well as other groups. His particular interest was also the importance of Jewish/Christian relations now,

and the early Jewish Christians, especially the relatives of Jesus and the place of Mary among them. I am now reading this book (just over 440 pages) for the third time. (My commercial, no paid advertisement)

Now on to the rest of Holy Week. On Holy Thursday we did the regular Holy Thursday celebration again with the readings and acting out the washing of the feet, having all participate as servants of one another. It was fun for them, but also, they did get the message, nothing is too humble or embarrassing when another needs some service from us. To be a true follower of Jesus we are here to serve as Jesus served, nothing less.

With Good Friday we went further yet, getting a program from the internet with music and words on tape, we acted out the Stations of the Cross in detail pretending that our kids were speaking, ending each station by reading the scripture and prayer from the Bishops' Conference stations. Again effective. Here almost all the kids participated in some part or other.

Then we jumped to Sunday morning for the Resurrection, again with all on tape with music. We have a young woman, Betzabet, now a university graduate in agriculture, (and graduate of our high school) who works with us. She was Mary and did a superb job herself and prepared the kids for all they did. Again, most of our kids were involved in this presentation. Her husband, also university graduate in Agriculture, helped except in the Resurrection. Why? I will explain now.

With all of us quarantine here as all of you there, to help us protect our kids better two of our agricultural workers (husband of Betzabet) with another young man in agriculture did all the research on the internet to find the programs that we used in our Holy Week services, also did research in passages or walk-through for dis-infection to protect us from the virus. They built two for us, one that is for entering our living quarters, and another for all who enter our school. The day after they built it, the military regiment sent folks here to ask if we would help them to do the same, actually asking for 4 there (built on Easter Sunday in emergency, so

Ronald, Betzabet's husband, was doing that. They also built one for all who enter the hospital. We had equipment for this, for the same walk-through is done for entering the hidroponia.

We have been involved more yet in this time, with our trucks, all three used to bring food from Santa Cruz, not only for us but for all the municipality. The national government has provided food for all the villages, through request from our mayor. Then the food was distributed to all the communities in our municipality, some 50 plus towns and villages, again our trucks and drivers used.

Now for the big surprise! It was about 1 PM on Good Friday I received a phone call from the mayor saying that the vice-minister of agriculture for the national government was here and had interest in seeing our school, especially our hidroponia. They would be at our place in 10 minutes. I hurriedly all the two heads of our agriculture work, then 3 vehicles from the visitors arrived. We went over to the school to see our work there, with some 956 square meters actually working. They were impressed and took a lot of photos. Also, with them were our state (department) representative, and someone from the governor's office (department level), plus almost all the municipal councilors (elected people for local gov.) So, we are on our way for some help from the national government, we pray, you pray, we hope!!! The mayor came yesterday AM and spent about an hour with me and another person who works with us, telling us of his interest and desire to help us. Apart from all of this, we have helped get food for some families who live in an area outside of our municipality whose local government is not doing anything to help the people with food.

This is a time of much prayer for us, hopefully you are using some of your time at home doing that (praying) for us.

Thank you for all, your brother in Jesus Christ,  
Fr. Bob Thames