For The Bulletin Of
January 26, 2020

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN WINTER’S ORDINARY TIME
Although it is The Third Sunday in Winter’s Ordinary Time, we now begin reading from the Gospel of Matthew. Last week we read from the Gospel of John. But liturgically, we are in Cycle A, when we read mostly from Matthew, also known as “the church’s Gospel.” Matthew gives us so many familiar passages, and critical passages as well, that it might be difficult to imagine the church without the influence of this gospel. In fact, this gospel is the only one even to use the word “church.” Even more, the version of the Lord’s Prayer that we pray comes from Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount with the eight Beatitudes is in Matthew. Jesus’ promise to build the church on the rock of Peter’s profession of faith, is in Matthew.

And as Matthew used Mark as a source, he seems to have reproduced nearly all of his gospel, about 600 of the 661 verses by the count of most scholars. Because nearly all of Mark is found in Matthew, Matthew became the favored gospel between the two.

Why read the shorter version (Mark) when the longer one essentially included Mark and much more?

Today, in the story of the call of the first disciples, we see an example of Matthew lengthening the stories that he inherited from Mark. He introduces the story by explaining that Jesus withdrew to Galilee upon learning that John had been arrested. Matthew further tells us that this fulfilled Scripture. Mark says no such thing. Further, Matthew tells us that Jesus went to live in Capernaum, as though He might have had a house there. This seems to be a story of a young man striking out on his own after leaving the small town he called home.

The remainder of the story, with the calling of the two sets of brothers, generally follows Mark. But this example demonstrates how Matthew has made the story “better.” He gives a rationale for Jesus’ withdrawal into Galilee, into Capernaum. And this move actually fulfills Scripture in the eyes of Matthew. As we continue to read from Matthew this liturgical year, we will pay close attention to some unique elements of his theological insight.
Jesus called the disciples near the beginning of His ministry. And He called them two by two, the brothers Simon and Andrew, and James and John. These were fishermen, in some ways the ancient equivalent of today’s highly skilled blue-collar workers. They worked with their hands, as even the “mending their nets” indicates. At the invitation of Jesus, they all leave behind their way of life to follow Him.

Modern calls to discipleship are scarcely so dramatic. But the imagery presented in Matthew speaks to us when we imagine putting away prior commitments that tend to disintegrate in the face of an invitation from Jesus. We may hear the same call to put aside the tedious, monotonous, daily activities that mark our lives and enter into a new relationship with Him. This relationship will ultimately lead to a putting away of our entire selves, a dying to ourselves, so that we might rise with Him. And that is the Paschal Mystery. At this, the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, we hear the call to follow Him to the point of forsaking our very selves. In so doing, we will be raised to new life with Him.

Some questions to help you reflect on today’s scripture:

- The psalm for today proclaims, “The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom should I fear?”
- Where does fear most often creep into your life? How might you hand that fear over to God?
- In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul chides the community for the rivalries and dissensions that threaten to tear it apart. How does our parish deal with divisions and disagreements? How might God be calling us to grow in this area?
- The symbolism of light and darkness is highlighted in today’s first reading and gospel passage, and indeed, all throughout the Sacred Scripture. When you consider light and darkness, what images spring to mind? How do these images help you to understand Jesus and salvation history?
- Jesus begins His preaching with the words, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Where do you find the kingdom of heaven in the here and now?

About Liturgy: Discerning One’s Call to Ministry
Last Sunday John the Baptist testified to Jesus’ election by the Holy Spirit to do the Father’s will. This Sunday, that appointment to mission is given by Jesus to the first disciples and, by extension, to us. We see a pattern: in the work of announcing the reign of God, we do not
volunteer our service; we are chosen for it, and then we respond. Our participation in the church’s liturgy is the way God transforms and strengthens those He has chosen – us, the baptized – so that we may announce God’s reign to the world. Liturgical Ministry is always at the service of the people of God and our mission in Christ. It’s goal is never for one’s glorification or personal satisfaction.

As we invite and train new liturgical ministers for service, keep in mind that we are not asking for volunteers or simply filling gaps with anyone willing to help. Rather, we are calling forth fellow disciples to take on a great responsibility in the work of Jesus. All invitations to ministry are done with discerning hearts and the seriousness it requires. Let us all pray for wisdom. Then let us show that we are ready to respond with total commitment to do God’s will.

First Communions, Confirmations, weddings, Sick Calls, and Funerals. And finally, it presents the goals and objectives for the coming new year. This year’s Annual Pastoral and Financial Report has been printed in hard copy and is being distributed at each liturgy this weekend. I hope you will take it home, read it over, and reflect on all the ways we have responded to the call of Jesus to follow Him over the past year. And then, pray quietly within your heart in thanksgiving for all that has been accomplished and that we will continue to be responsive to God’s will in all that we will do this year.

This weekend we welcome acclaimed Liturgical Musician and Composer Dan Schutte. He performed and led us in singing some of his compositions that are sung here regularly in a concert on Friday evening, led a workshop for Liturgical Musicians, Choir Members, and Instrumentalists yesterday afternoon, and is joining us for each of our Liturgies. Please join me in warmly welcoming him and hopefully you will have the opportunity to speak to him personally and thank him not only for his presence with us but also for the gift he has been to the church and his major contribution to composing liturgical music.
Thank you to everyone who donated. We apologize if anyone was inadvertently left off these lists.

SUPPLIES DONORS
(transcribed from the sign-up sheets - please excuse any typos due to legibility - some folks used their first name only):
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OASIS SITE LAUNDRY
Since October, parishioners partnering with members of East County Shared Ministries have also been performing a valuable service for Winter Nights. Shelter guests are able to utilize the shower facilities at St. Vincent de Paul in Pittsburg. Volunteers pick up, launder and return bath towels each week. Thank you to Liz Carnero, Sue & Rick Howell, Susan Fleming, Lorraine Lohmeier and Vicki & Brian McCoy.

Funerals This Week
There are two Funeral Liturgies being celebrated in our church this coming week.

Tomorrow morning, Monday, January 27, we will celebrate the Memorial Funeral Liturgy for Gaeton Lococo at 11:00 a.m. He is the grandfather of one of my firefighters with East Contra Costa Fire Protection District, Tom Lococo. Mr. Lococo was 99 years old.

On Thursday, January 30th, we will celebrate the Memorial Funeral Liturgy for Judi Heckendorn, the mother of Rob and Julie, at 2:00 p.m. Judi was a member of our Art & Environment Committee as well as a member of our YLI. She was 75 years old.

Eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord; and let perpetual light shine upon them.

Letter of Introduction from Paul Abenoja
My Name is Paul F. Abenoja. I am currently a Permanent Deacon Candidate for the Diocese of Oakland. I am in my 5th year of formation and in the stage of Pastoral and Liturgical Internship. My current residence is at Antioch California and I have been here since 2002. My family migrated here from the Philippines. I am currently working as a Data Analytic Consultant at Wells Fargo Bank. I am married to Cristina and blessed with 3 wonderful daughters, twins that recently graduated from college and a sophomore in high school.

One of my passions in life is to help those who are in need especially the youth and those who are marginalized in society. In my younger years in the Philippines, I was a seminarian in a local religious community of the Prelature of Infanta Quezon Province. As a seminarian, I stayed up to Novitiate and did missionary work, lead retreats and classes for the youth and young adults. These youths were mostly children of the local farmers and fishermen of the town where I was assigned. After my seminary life, I became an active member and President of the Philippine Red Cross- Lyceum of the Phil. Chapter, I participated and lead medical missions in various parts of the city of Manila, help trained students and young adults in First aid and basic survival skills, became an active member and President of Lyceum Student
Catholic Action, I lead and participated in various retreats, seminars and formation programs for young adults in the campus setup. I also became a part of the core group of the Archdiocese Student Catholic Action of the Archdiocese of Manila. As a core group member, I participated in the Formulation and implementation of different programs that will be used by all Student Catholic Action chapters in different schools inside the archdiocese. I was blessed to be a part of the teams that prepared the youth in the Archdiocese of Manila and the surrounding dioceses for the World Youth Day 1995 at Manila Philippines.

When we moved to the US, my family joined a family ministry called Couples For Christ where I served in different capacities. I served from a local household servant to a Chapter Servant, serving members from different parishes in San Ramon, Pittsburg, Antioch and Brentwood Ca. My children are still very active members of this community. Before I joined the Permanent Deacon Formation Program, I was a certified catechist in our Diocese and was teaching confirmation class at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church at Brentwood, Ca where my family is currently registered as parishioners. I am also a 4th degree member of the Knight of Columbus at the same parish.

For my last 6 months of formation, I am assigned to do my Liturgical Internship here at St. Ignatius of Antioch Church in Antioch Ca. I am excited and looking forward to learning how to better serve especially through the liturgy and sacraments and to become a part of this wonderful and blessed community. Thank you and God bless.

I am overwhelmed at the progress we have made with our Expansion Project Fundraising Effort and the gifts and pledges which 185 families have made to help us close the shortfall regarding the funding necessary to go forward with the expansion of the parish hall and the building of a health department compliant kitchen. In 5 weeks, we have raised 70% of the goal: $392,787. This coming Friday, January 31st, the members of the Expansion Committee will join me for a meeting at the Diocese to present our project and seek approval to begin construction. Our presentation will include an overview of the project, the history leading up to this moment, documentation from our architect and contractor, and the plan for going forward. I ask for your prayers for the success of this meeting. After we have met with the Diocesan Officers, they will present our request to the Bishop and the Consultors for their approval. Once they have approved the project, we will then be able to go forward with construction which will take approximately 6 months. There is still time for anyone who has not yet made a gift or pledge to our project to do so. Pledge/Gift Forms are available from the parish office or are available on the Credenza at the rear of the church. Thank you again to all those who have participated thus far.
Our thanks to all those who come faithfully each Saturday morning to clean and prepare the church for the weekend: Adaugo Nnaji, Jun Bajet, Carole Miller, Al Cosce, Angela Bueno, Mency Osborne, Jean Rogers, and Reno & Thelma Benasfret.
...to those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall throughout the week: Steve Rojek, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Fr. Robert.
...to Dilecia Aparicio who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.
...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:
Peter Degl’Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Adora Pesapane, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.
...to our counting teams who are here every week to count the weekly collections.
...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week:
Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Estrella Rusk, Alicia Perez, Bev Iacona, and Paul Rioski.
...to our St. Vincent de Paul volunteer who transported last week’s donations: Frank Zamora.
...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Kathy Augusta and Vince Augusta.
...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keep watch over our vehicles during the
weekend Liturgies: Don Benson, Dave Simpson, and Tony Gumina.

Christ has no body on earth but yours
Jan 21, 2020
by Mark Etling

Spirituality

One of the traditional rituals of the Catholic Church is the practice of genuflecting before the tabernacle as we enter and leave church. Genuflection is an acknowledgement of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament — the real presence of Christ — in the tabernacle.

In recent years, we have been encouraged to perform a similar ritual before taking Communion. We bow just before we receive the consecrated bread and wine to express our belief that they are the body and blood of Christ.

These gestures are signs of reverence for the sacramental presence of Christ. They remind us also to reflect on the real presence of Christ in ourselves and in everyone, because we are all created in God's image and likeness.

My faith tells me that God is really present in me. I am created out of the same "stuff"
as God: perfect love and wisdom and peace. The Godliness of Christ resides in me whether I am aware of it or not. Jesus tells us, "I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:20).

God is likewise really present in every person on earth. Every man, woman and child are created in God's image, aglow with the spark of divinity. We should, therefore, revere the presence of God in everyone we meet — the same reverence we show to the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. There is no place for hatred or prejudice or indifference if we believe that every person is an incarnate presence of God in the world.

St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82), the mystical doctor of the church who saw all things with the eye of her soul, famously wrote: "Christ has no body on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes with which he looks compassionately on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands with which he blesses all the world. Christ has no body now on earth but yours!"

This powerful truth of our oneness extends even to those we think of as enemies. We love our neighbor as ourself not just because Jesus taught us to do so but because our neighbor is us, and so we "bless those who curse us and pray for those who mistreat us" (Luke 6:28). There is no exception. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Several years ago, my wife and I were privileged to attend a talk given by another Teresa — St. Teresa of Calcutta. I confess I don't remember anything she said — but I do remember well the simple gesture she extended to us at the beginning and the end of her presentation. She put her hands together at her forehead and bowed to us. Reverence for the presence of God.

God is also really present in "Sister, Mother Earth," as St. Francis of Assisi referred to her. "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse" (Romans 1:20).

Sister, Mother Earth feeds us, provides the air we breathe, shares her beauty with us. And Sister, Mother Earth needs us to care for her as her children. We show reverence for the Earth by caring for her, by working in harmony with her. "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away" (Revelation 21:1).

The Eucharist spurs us to respect and revere everything — ourselves, our neighbor, the Earth. The real presence is in us and through us and all around us.

This attitude of reverence flows from the fundamental belief that is found in one form or another in all the major religions — the affirmation that we are "all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), and "God is all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Be still then, and know the quiet presence of God.

[Mark Etling is coordinator of adult faith formation at St. Nicholas Parish in O'Fallon, Illinois. He is also an adjunct assistant professor of theology at the School for Professional Studies at St. Louis University.]
It’s late morning on the Tuesday of Holy Week. I’m fumbling around my desk when an email flashes across the computer screen. “Homily partner?” reads the subject line.

My heart skips a beat. I click on the message. The presiding minister of the Easter Vigil wants to know if I would consider working on the homily with him. The Gospel of Luke is up this year—the story of the women at the tomb.

The story of women who show up. The story of women who persist through pain. The story of women who testify the truth and get waved off as nonsense. The story of women who preach anyway. I reply immediately, giddy and grateful for this most mysterious invitation.

“How can this be?” I wonder while lugging a wheelbarrow full of gospel commentaries out of the library.

By Jessie Bazan, who helps Christians explore their life callings in her work with the Collegeville Institute for Ecumenical and Cultural Research. She is the editor and coauthor of Dear Joan Chittister: Conversations with Women in the Church (Twenty-Third Publications).
The answer plays out in the days that follow, days thick with prayer and possibility. I dive headfirst into the text, Lectio divina becomes my lifeblood. The women at the tomb become my sisters.

On Good Friday the presiding minister and I meet to compare notes.

Then we preach the homily.

At the end of the vigil gospel, he leaves his presider's chair. I walk up from my pew. We meet by the altar. Back and forth we tell the story of Jesus' triumph over death. Side by side we preach the Good News first preached by women 2,000 years ago: Jesus Christ has been raised!

Indeed, the holy building shakes with joy. It feels electric.

As a child I used to sit in the front pew and mimic the priest during the homily. I imagined myself standing by the altar telling stories about Jesus. I never saw girls behind the pulpit.

But I always looked.

Years later I would carry the same interest in homilies to seminary. There I fell in love with preaching, with the whole process—chewing over sacred texts, listening to God's prompts, bringing the words to life with my voice. The pulpit tapped a deep spirit in me. I felt so alive preaching at midday prayers and on retreats. The community affirmed my gifts too.

Perhaps that’s what caused the hot tears to flow anytime anyone asked about women giving homilies. I sensed a call from God and the community to serve the church in this particular way, but I felt stuck. The norm of who can preach the homily seemed like a tightly wound fist. It just wouldn’t expand.

And then, on the holiest of nights, it did.

Whose role is it to preach the homily at Mass?

The bishops give a clear answer in Fulfilled in Your Hearing: the presiding minister.

Their reasoning emphasizes the integral tie between proclaiming the gospel and celebrating the Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council's "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests" notes: "There is an indivisible unity within the celebration of Mass between the proclamation of the Lord's death and resurrection, the response of the hearers, and the [eucharistic] offering itself by which Christ confirmed the new covenant in his blood."

Given his particular liturgical leadership role, the presiding minister—and only the presiding minister—is in a position to unite both Word and Sacrament in the homily.

Yet worshipping assemblies hear homilies from men other than the presiding minister all the time.

The General Instruction to the Roman Missal #66 says the presiding minister can entrust the homily to a concelebrating priest "or from time to time and, if appropriate, to the deacon."

This clause expands the norm.

The church ordains deacons with special liturgical responsibilities. Even so, deacons cannot fulfill the particular role of the primary celebrant. Presiding ministers expand the norm any time they invite deacons to preach the homily—a common occurrence that happens (for good reasons) in congregations across the world.

Why isn't a similar expansion of the norm being made more often for women, like what happened with me at the Easter Vigil?

Is scripture devoid of stories of women carrying the Word inside them and preaching the resurrection?

Does our tradition claim that only men are made in the image of God?

Have no women ever experienced theological formation?

Is there some sort of lesser Spirit that claims women in baptism and commissions us in confirmation, but doesn't fully arrive until ordination?

The answer to all of these questions is, of course, a resounding no.

Like many issues in the Catholic Church, the exclusion of women from the pulpit is a patriarchy problem. It's rooted in an unwillingness from many in the hierarchy to consider even the possibility that women could be equal conduits of God's Word.

The question of women preaching homilies at Mass begs much more fundamental questions: Do women's stories matter? Do women's experiences matter? Do women themselves matter?
and the survey says

1. Women should be allowed to preach at Mass.
   Agree 64%
   Disagree 36%

2. I have been to a Mass where my parish priest was not the one to deliver the homily.
   Agree 84%
   Disagree 16%

3. I would not attend a parish that allows women to preach at Mass.
   Agree 33%
   Disagree 67%

4. Women preaching at Mass is a slippery slope to women becoming ordained as deacons or priests.
   Agree 43%
   Disagree 57%

5. I think women could bring a broader perspective to weekly homilies.
   Agree 64%
   Disagree 36%

6. The exclusion of women from preaching or serving at Mass has been a topic at my parish.
   Agree 26%
   Disagree 74%

7. Allowing women to preach at Mass would make Catholic services too much like Protestant church services and distort the Catholic Church's identity.
   Agree 33%
   Disagree 67%

8. Allowing women to preach at Mass is a necessary change for the future of the Catholic Church.
   Agree 62%
   Disagree 38%

9. I think the church should allow women to become ordained as deacons.
   Agree 64%
   Disagree 36%

10. I think the church should allow women to become ordained as priests.
    Agree 58%
    Disagree 42%

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Results are based on survey responses from 1,715 USCatholic.org visitors. A representative selection of their comments follows in Feedback.

Sounding Board is one person's take on a many-sided subject and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of U.S. Catholic, its editors, or the Claretians.

The presiding minister answered yes with his creative invitation at the Easter Vigil. He followed the norm by preaching the homily. He also expanded the norm by inviting a woman to preach alongside him.

This is the church we should strive to be: inclusive, collaborative, bold.

A church that cannot answer a resounding "yes, women do matter" is no church of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who expanded the norms of engaging women throughout his ministry. Jesus chats with a Samaritan woman as she draws water from a well and even asks her for a drink. His actions horrify the disciples. Male leaders were not to talk with women in public—the scandal Jesus talks anyway.

He allows a woman who sinned to anoint his feet. This move risks breaking cleanliness laws. Not only does Jesus not stop the woman, he draws attention to her faithfulness and humanity when he tells Simon, "Wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, something she has done will be told in memory of her."

Jesus affirms Mary's decision to forgo the typical female hostess role and sit at his feet, a place normally reserved for male disciples. "Mary has chosen the better place," Jesus says, much to Martha's chagrin. Another norm disrupted.

And, in one of the most stunning encounters in human history, the newly risen Christ appears first to Mary Magdalene. He trusts her, a woman, with the primary task given to homilists ever since: Go. Tell the Good News of my resurrection. Let my disciples know I am very much alive.

Jesus does not let norms or rules box him in. He also doesn't disregard them. As he tells the crowds, "I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill." Jesus' actions expand norms and shift priorities for the good of the community, especially the marginalized. He comes to put the ultimate norm in place: love God and love neighbor.

This is the Son of God we worship in the eucharistic liturgy, whose life, death, and resurrection get broken open in the homily.

Can norms be expanded?
Current liturgical practice and Christ's actions in scripture affirm yes.

What might it look like for the church to expand its norms to include women among those entrusted with preaching the homily?

It isn't so hard to imagine. USC
Women should be allowed to preach at Mass because...  

Gender has nothing to do with the ability to preach. Letting women preach would shake things up in a good way.  
Jim Dehringspor
San Diego, Calif.

Women are just as gifted as men in preaching, reflecting, and relating to the readings and the tone of the Word.  
Luvimin Cuevas
Oakland, Calif.

It sets a bad example for children when they see women being excluded.  
Maureen Doyle
Columbus, Ohio

I believe that many people, regardless of their sex or place in the church, have the education and experiences to give provoking thoughts and insights on the message of the gospels and our lives as Catholics living in the modern world.  
Mary Joost
Chicago, Ill.

I would attend a parish that allows women to preach at Mass because...

It would allow for greater diversity in discussion, new perspectives, and some God-given equality.  
Faith Woods
Port Allen, La.

I want to encourage the full participation of women in all aspects of the church.  
James Hanlon
Sandia Park, N.M.

I would have an easier time relating to the sermons.  
Molly Blouin
Baton Rouge, La.

It demonstrates an attitude of inclusion and the absence of fear of change.  
Pet Fox
Huntington Station, N.Y.

Women are just as mentally, emotionally, and faithfully equipped as men are. Plus, as recent history shows with the sex abuse scandal, possibly more trustworthy.  
Tom Madden
Middleville, Mich.

Women have a lot to add to the welfare of the church, and it is about time for the church to recognize it.  
Laura Clerici
Alexandria, Va.

We are all the people of God, called to discipleship, called to the role of priest, prophet, and king.  
Susan McIntosh
Carmel, Ind.

I would like to see women become ordained as deacons or priests because...

We are all equal in Christ. Jesus did not exclude women. When he had Mary sit at his feet, he actually placed her above the male disciples who were in the room.  
Patricia Hanham
Port Jefferson Station, N.Y.

To start, there is a priest shortage. When you automatically cut off half of the population for a job, it makes it harder to fill. Secondly, women are more compassionate leaders. I would rather go to confession with a woman who understands the fears and problems as a woman like myself. Jesus valued Mary and Martha as well as Mary Magdalene. Jesus sent women to preach about him. Why can't women now?  
Chryssy Joski
Green Bay, Wis.

Women had a greater role in the early church communities until men decided it was exclusively their domain to be priests.  
William Smith, Jr.
St. Louis, Mo.

It is only right. It's 2020, and in every other facet of our lives women have leadership roles. The world is a better place because they have a place at the table.  
Polly Holmes
Olathe, Kan.

The church impoverishes itself by narrowing the pool of ordained ministers.  
Michael Swan
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Women already do a lot of the work of a deacon; we need to model to the world that we believe the Holy Spirit speaks to us through women too. Women are smart, interested in parish life, and some feel called to preside.  
Karen Geneat
Mount Vernon, Wash.

Their experience is different from men's, and that experience needs to be honored.  
Phyllis Jaszkowia
Portland, Ore.
General comments

The bishops and priests need to live in the 21st century and respond as Jesus would. He would ordain women. He would be inclusive.
Barbara Reder
Brownsburg, Ind.

If the church is not ready for female ordination, then we should limit male priestly duties to only the eucharistic celebration and every other part of pastoral life should be opened to properly prepared Catholics no matter their gender.
RM Berger
Washington, D.C.

I love being Catholic, but the church is not credible in its stance on the role of women.
Matt Goodwin
Prairie City, Ore.

Many years ago a pastor at my parish invited three women to give their reflection during the Good Friday service. I have never forgotten their sharing of losing a child and how they relate to Mary's loss of her son.
Marilyn Hummel
St. Louis, Mo.

Changing who we allow to preach in church will not bring more people into it. Protestant churches are losing attendance, and they have women preachers. Don't change Catholic tradition.
Janet Holub
El Campo, Texas

I've heard excellent sermons in parishes outside my own by women with a more humane touch than many priests.
Jim Lein
Minot, N.D.

This conversation should expand beyond the male-female binary to include people of all genders participating as equals in the church.
Robert Shine
Boston, Mass.

I often feel that I am hanging by a thread with my Catholic faith, and having more inclusion of women in big decision-making roles would make me be all in.
Caroline Ellis
Abington, Mass.

What is your favorite Easter tradition?

LET US KNOW AT USCATHOLIC.ORG/SURVEY.