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# Encountering the risen Christ

"We are witnesses to all he did... (cf Acts 10: 34ff). The shame and despair of that day we now call "Good" Friday is replaced by the joy and brightness of Easter Sunday morning. **"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!"**

Christ is risen — and his resurrection from the dead casts a decisive light on all that preceded it. Now, in the light of the Resurrection, Jesus' words and the words of the prophets who preceded him are understood with a new clarity; his miracles, through which he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind and even raised the dead, even his boldness in forgiving sins, acquire an even greater significance. The Cross, once rightly regarded as an instrument of cruel torture and shame, is now revealed as the Tree of Life: From now on we understand that in embracing the cross we are not robbed of life, but instead we find true life. Life is redeemed —

for all its sorrows, pains and disappointments, life has meaning. For Easter convinces us not only that Jesus is risen — but that we would rise as well. Our Christian faith is born not so much from the acceptance of a doctrine, but from an encounter with a person — with Christ, once dead but now risen. The same Christ who encountered the women who came to the tomb is the same Christ who encounters us today in his Word and Sacrament. Jesus is not just a character from a far distant past. He is



**Bishop  
Thomas  
Wenski**

not remembered in the same way as the great men and heroes who lived long ago are remembered. We might talk about them — and about their deeds. But we cannot talk to them or befriend them. Jesus, however, is the same yesterday, today and forever. He lives. Having broken the chains of death, he walks before us as one who is alive — and he calls us to follow him, the living one, and to enter into a relationship of friendship with

him. In this way we discover the path of life, a life that is always new because it will never die.

Through our baptism into his death and Resurrection, we have become alive in Christ and are called to witness to all he has done. But our witness must be a joyful one. As Christians still living in the world, we will experience all manner of trials and tribulations. The sufferings of Christ do not exempt us from suffering ourselves; but his sufferings seen in the light of his Resurrection give meaning and hope to our own. And so, even suffering does not take away our joy in the future promise of our own Resurrection.

In the gift of Easter lays the demands of Easter: "If you were raised with Christ, seek what is above." Jesus' whole life was shaped by his obedience to his Father. For us, to be alive in Christ means that we will never allow the things of this world to distract us from the true purpose and goal of our existence. We must seek to do God's will in all things — even in the seemingly most mundane things. But, doing God's will

and following the commandments does not deprive us of joy, it is what makes true joy possible.

Indeed, joy is a sign that we have been with the Lord. And this joy comes not only following God's law, but from knowing God in his son Jesus Christ. It comes from experiencing his mercy and grace and sharing in his divine life. Our witness will be that much more credible if it is joyful — our joy allows God to smile through us and thus bring renewed hope to the world. **"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad!"** ■

*Remember to attend the Festival of Faith — May 8-10, Orange County Convention Center, South Concourse, International Drive, off I-4, Orlando — celebrating the Diocese of Orlando's 40th anniversary and the "Year of Evangelization." For more information, visit the Web site: [www.festivaloffaith.org](http://www.festivaloffaith.org).*

*Easter Sunday TV Mass will air on my65 from 10-11 a.m. Bishop Thomas Wenski is the celebrant.*

## Church of the Nativity parishioner honored for helping community

**BETTY ANN WEBER**  
Florida Catholic correspondent

**LONGWOOD** — Angie Romagosa just picked up \$15,000 for nearly 23 years of doing what she loves.

Honoring the Church of the Nativity parishioner for "extraordinary dedication to helping others and inspiring change within her community," Safeco Insurance Co. chose Romagosa, 57, for one of its first Community Hero Awards.

The check is already in the coffers of the Sharing Center in Longwood, where Romagosa, a grandmother of four, has served as president since 1985.

A Sister of Mercy put the service bug in Romagosa's ear. "I was a sophomore at St. Vincent's Academy in Savannah (Ga.)," she recalled, "when Sister Joseph Mary said, 'You'd make a great social worker.' That got me thinking."

Eventually, Romagosa earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Armstrong State College in Savannah.

"I worked in a bank, tried my own business," she said, "until

my husband, Mark's, employer, M&M-Mars, offered a transfer to Florida." In 1982, the Georgia natives headed south. Three years later, her life changed.

"When we were at St. Augustine in Casselberry, Catholic Charities held a social services forum, and I sat in representing our parish council. The idea was to unite Seminole County social services in one location. That necessitated hiring a leader. Everybody said, 'Go for that job.' But, I thought, our kids (Mark and Cathy) are in school. I should be home. The truth is I didn't believe in myself," she said.

But Romagosa ended up applying, and landed the job. She was handed a list of responsibilities. "It was executive director," she gasped. "I thought it was executive secretary!"

She prayed, "God, I think you tricked me. You wanted me here."

Thus, the Sharing Center was born to ease stressed families in financial crisis and thwart homelessness. Mark Romagosa signed on two years ago as development director.

As executive director, Angie

Romagosa immediately started her advocacy for the underserved. It was a natural response, she said, recalling her youth: "I was the oldest of seven — a hard-headed Irish Catholic — so I had to take charge," she said.

The center began in a small room, assisting 500 families with food, clothing and shelter expenses. Today 24 employees and 250 volunteers operate from a 13,200-square-foot facility in a shopping center. Last year, 8,100 families received assistance.

The center is experiencing a dire need to replace its freezer and cooler at a cost of \$25,000. Nativity Church is contributing from its Lenten alms collection.

"I told God I'd stay as long as I can offer compassion," said Romagosa. "I may not always have material things to share, but I can give love and compassion." ■

*The Sharing Center is in Fairmont Plaza, 600 N. U.S. Highway 17-92, Longwood, about one mile north of State Road 434. The center's telephone number is 407-260-9155, ext. 13.*

## EASTER TRADITIONS

### Pretzels: little arms 'crossed in prayer'

*Did you know that spring cleaning was associated with Holy Week? How about pretzels, did you know these snacks originated as part of early Lenten practices? Here is a glimpse at the origin of some popular Lent and Easter customs and traditions.*

#### PRETZELS

Pretzels, a popular snack, had their origin in early Christian Lenten practices. Because fat, eggs and milk were forbidden during Lent, a special bread was made with dough consisting of only flour, salt and water. These little breads were shaped in the form of arms crossed in prayer and were called *bracellae* (Latin for "little arms"). Among the Germans, the Latin word be-

PLEASE SEE EASTER, A15

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