

Letter from bulletin of April 21, 2002

THE FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER

Dear Parishioners,

Would you believe that this Sunday has been designated “World Vocations Day”, a time to pray for and encourage vocations to religious life and the priesthood. The Diocese has even prepared posters and cards with the banner headline “Imagine . . .being a priest!” Obviously the date and material were selected ages ago and far away, but talk about lousy timing! Given the other banner headlines about abuse of minors, denial and cover up, “Imagine” takes on a sarcastic and cynical tone that can only make us either laugh, cry or cringe. Just as most good Catholics recognize that what is at stake is not the faith but Church management, so too, I would hope, we recognize that there is a huge distinction between the life and service of the vast majority of parish priests and the small minority of abusive personalities and some irresponsible church leaders. In the last week I’ve been interviewed by the L.A. Times, the Contra Costa Times, KQED radio and KGO TV;

I met with our school faculty to discuss the impact of scandals on children and classroom; we developed brief suggestions for parent child discussions; we held another of our public forums on abuse of minors and the Church this past Friday evening; we are developing a petition to forward to our U.S. Bishop prior to their June meeting; we await expectantly some word from the meeting between Cardinals and Pope, with fervent prayer that focus on the crimes but not the cover up, secrecy, and status quo not be the order of the day. What a time! “Imagine . . . being a priest!”

In the midst of all this, I look for hopeful signs and whispers of resurrection and life. First, comes all of you – worshipping together, witnessing to

personal faith, hurting over scandals but suggesting in so many ways “keep the faith and wherever necessary change the Church.” Secondly, is all the publicity; secrecy, silence and denial got us into this mess –open and well publicized policies, apologies, public discussion and action may yet redeem us. Third, and very locally, our own Diocese of Oakland has been strongly proactive in reaching out to victims and encouraging them to step forward, in cooperating fully with authorities, and in dealing aggressively with scandals. Finally there is what we, all of us as a “priestly people”, are all about- helping the hurting and bereaved, forming and challenging one another with faith, finding compassionate ways of service, teaching, administrating, counseling, standing by one another with conviction about Jesus and his wisdom and celebrating lifegiving sacraments of God’s loving presence. Not bad, not bad at all. “Imagine being a priest . . . Imagine being a priestly people . . .

Your Pastor,
Brian T. Joyce