

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION | LANSING, MICHIGAN

# RESURRECTION MAGAZINE

EASTER 2025 VOL 6:1



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# RESURRECTION MAGAZINE

EASTER 2025  
VOL 6:1

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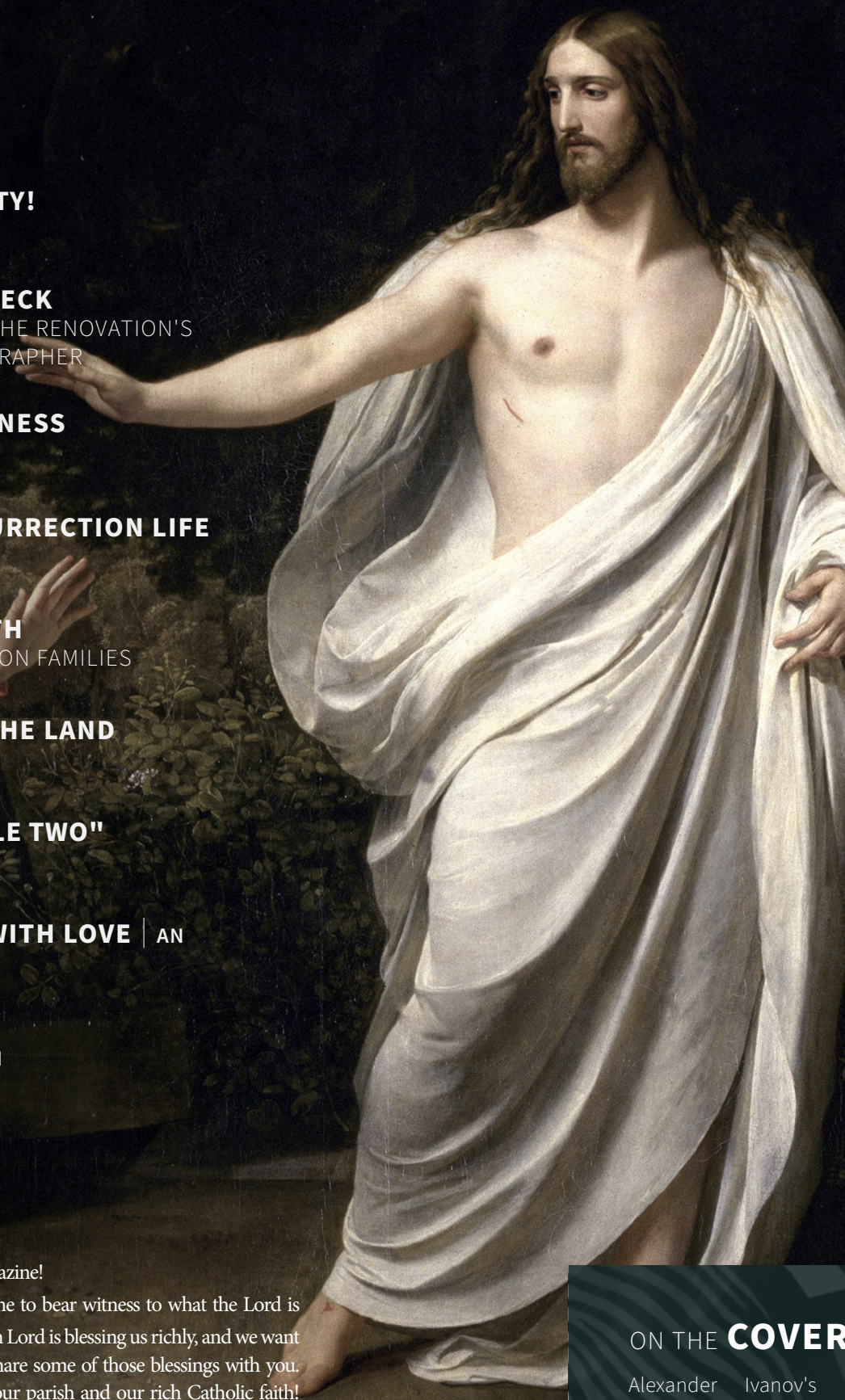
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Welcome to Resurrection Magazine!

We have created this magazine to bear witness to what the Lord is doing in our midst. Our Risen Lord is blessing us richly, and we want to take this opportunity to share some of those blessings with you. Read and learn more about our parish and our rich Catholic faith! Please visit our website to read our past issues.

*Father Steve*



## FROM THE EDITOR



Spring is a time of renewal, a time of rebirth and reawakening hope. The renovation of the sanctuary of the Church of the Resurrection is a sign of that hope. It began as a yearning for a deeper encounter with the Lord through our liturgies and culminated in the beauty of a worship space rendered in marble, wood, and stone, and the dedication of the altar by Bishop Earl Boyea (pages 6-8). We interviewed architect, Phillip Breckler, and iconographer, Joseph Macklin, to discover what motivated them in the realization of the finished work (page 5).

A renewal of sorts has also begun with the initiatives coming out of the Resurrection Life group. A number of highly enjoyable and life-giving events have taken place and will continue to take place as we reach out to those not connected to the parish, as well as nurture the formation of our existing parishioners (page 9).

As we celebrate Easter this year, we took some time to delve into the traditions of various parishioners and how they mark the central season of our liturgical year (pages 10-11).

Speaking of seasons, on pages 12-13, we read how Kate Iocco and her family experience the rolling cycles of the farming year in their own hobby farm, near Eaton Rapids. As Kate says, "witnessing this cycle has deepened my

understanding of how God speaks to us through nature."

And regeneration is also the theme of Tom Small's article on page 14, since his discussion group emerged from his group assigned during the Resurrection Life Course in 2022. Entitled "Table Two," the group meets every two weeks to discuss whichever book is the topic for discussion. But more than this, the relationships in the group have deepened as time has gone on, and that provides help for the members along the road to holiness.

We, all of us, know that this is not our homeland, that our final destination is in heaven, and that the sufferings that we experience now in this life are bearable only if we keep our eyes fixed on that heavenly prize. Father Steve enlarges on this message in his column on page 4, when he holds up Easter as a foretaste of our own resurrection. The renewal and rebirth that we all long for can be ours, even now, if we can resist the tawdry baubles of the world and throw in our lot with the savior who died for us.

On page 15, Liz O'Neill's meditation on our cover art, Alexander Ivanov's "Appearance of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene," highlights the fact that it was a humble woman with a dubious past who was the first person to see Jesus after the resurrection. Jesus chooses us too, through no merit of our own, to participate in the joy of his rising.

Let's seize this opportunity to thank him for inviting us into the ranks of the redeemed. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

## ON THE COVER

Alexander Ivanov's "Christ's Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection" (1835), oil on canvas. For a meditation on the painting, see page 15.

FR. STEVE MATTSON

## GLORIOUS LIBERTY!

HOW WE CAN ENDURE SUFFERING AND GAIN FREEDOM



As I have mentioned quite often at Mass, most pointedly this past Christmas, this is not heaven. That fact is daily brought to my mind and heart. I see it with painful clarity, as I'm sure you do. As a priest and your pastor, I see and hear and experience myself what often seems remarkable, even inexplicable, suffering. Prayer and scripture confirm me in my belief that this is all about the Lord steadily, relentlessly, lovingly forming us in his image. St. Paul in Colossians 1, speaks of "rejoicing" in his sufferings, and he speaks of the mystery being "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:27)

In another place, St. Paul offers us this lens through which to view our sufferings (as well as the sufferings of others):

*I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us ... because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning with labor pains together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:18, 22-23)*

In this powerful passage, St. Paul offers us a way to endure suffering. But that's easier said than done! We can only take it seriously, if we spend time with the Lord, praying from our heart and reading the scripture. Thereby we "put on the mind of Christ," which allows us to see our own suffering and that of those we love from the

aspect of eternity. Indeed, the Spirit can help us see it as part of a grand plan whose end is the glorious liberty of the children of God. Not liberty in the sense of doing whatever we might want, but with confidence that we will become what we really are, beloved sons and daughters of God.

We are headed for a "happy ending," brothers and sisters, just as Easter followed Good Friday. St. Paul makes it clear later in that great chapter. Take heart. Take heart!

*"We are headed for a 'happy ending,' brothers and sisters, just as Easter followed Good Friday."*

*We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, so that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined he also called; and those he called he also justified; and those he justified he also glorified. (Romans 8:28-30)*

That's what Jesus began when he died and rose. He's called us, through our baptism, to follow him through our own sufferings and pain, sustained by grace and sacrament, to become who we really are: glorified (beloved!) sons and daughters of God.

Our hope was born through the resurrection, so rejoice! He is risen; he is risen indeed!

AN INTERVIEW BY MARY GATES

## BACKGROUND CHECK

HOW THE NEW REREDOS FORMS AN ARRESTING BACKGROUND TO THE SANCTUARY

Architect Phillip Breckler (PB) and iconographer Joseph Macklin (JM) played principal roles in the Resurrection Church renovation. Resurrection Magazine (RM) asked the men to share their training and background, inspiration, and practices in bringing such beauty to life.

**RM:** What's your background? How did you end up in your current role?

**PB:** I grew up in a great Catholic family and was an altar server nearly every Sunday at our parish church. My faith has always been important to me so during high school when I began thinking about the sort of career I wanted, the idea of becoming an architect so that I could design and restore churches took root. After serving for two years as a FOCUS missionary after undergrad, I went back to grad school and got my masters in Architecture at the University of Notre Dame.

For years, when I would mention to people I wanted to work on churches, the typical response was one of concern. Everyone meant well. They were just concerned there wouldn't be enough work for me. After all, how many new churches are being built in today's world? Even after all the words of caution, I've decided that if I am willing to commit my whole life to serving Christ, I'm willing to bet my career on Him as well. So far, He has blessed me with plenty of opportunities.

**JM:** From my earliest memories, I remember drawing. I tend to think of my mother's womb being decorated like a painted church. I've drawn and or painted my whole life. I have a Bachelor of Fine Art from the Columbus College of Art and Design. I then entered a High School Art and Graphic Design teaching position in Jackson, which I held for thirteen years. In 2020 I felt a real nudge to switch gears and focus more on pursuing sacred art full-time, painting devotional works for the domestic home setting or liturgical works of art for the church space. During my final year of teaching, I spent many months connecting with a stained-glass artist from the west side of the state. He mentored

me and allowed me to work on various projects for some time, offering invaluable insights. During this time, I had also enrolled in an Iconography Writing (painting) workshop at the Dormition of the Mother of God Orthodox Monastery.

My wife and I took the leap of faith of pursuing sacred art full-time in the summer of 2021, which immediately saw the completion of three paintings for a domestic setting in Grand Rapids, followed by multiple other devotional works for homes, including a triptych painting of the Archangels delivered to San Antonio, TX. Church of the Resurrection was the most significant project before my current involvement in painting the Church apse for St. John the Evangelist.

**RM:** How would you describe the role of beauty, and therefore your work, in faith and worship?

**PB:** God has saved the world. Dostoevsky famously wrote "beauty will save the world." God is the source of all beauty. Putting it simply, beauty is an invitation. Beauty arouses curiosity and wonder and helps an individual recognize goodness outside of oneself. For the faithful gathering to worship, beauty helps them reflect on His goodness.

**JM:** I believe that beauty is one way God communicates to us. I can stand in awe when I hear a particular polyphonic vocal arrangement in church or see a well-organized church where the visual elements and materials are thoughtfully and skillfully arranged, fundamentally citing the scripture passages from the book of Exodus regarding the building of the Tabernacle. This means that the generosity of the people to procure the various materials, specific skills, and labor to complete these tasks for the greater glory of God comes with great faith, commitment, and in of itself can be a prayer to the Most Holy - a testimony of faith and worship.



MARY GATES

# THE OIL OF GLADNESS

DEDICATING OUR CHURCH'S NEW ALTAR

*Resurrection parishioners present at the January altar dedication Mass were struck by the beauty of ritual, the symbolism and meaning behind each act, and, no doubt, the abundance of incense and oil. Resurrection Magazine touched base with a few parishioners who had unique roles in the Mass to hear how God's grace touched them that day.*

“I've been a part of eight different altar dedication Masses,” Jeremy Priest notes. As the Director of the Office of Worship for the diocese, Jeremy counts altar dedications as, “one of the most beautiful liturgies in the life of the church.” Being present for the dedication at Resurrection, his own parish, was especially moving for Jeremy. “A few things stood out to me. Number one is just the beauty of our sanctuary now. From the gold leaf to the glorious white marble, to beautiful woodwork and painting, it feels like a place to pray.”

In addition to a beautiful space, Jeremy says the rituals during the Mass were touching. “Bishop Boyea so carefully and lovingly anointing the altar with sacred chrism oil was deeply moving,” he remembers. “And, the ladies from the Altar Society who purified the altar of the oil did so with such tenderness, it was really quite beautiful. Also, the column of incense streaming out of the brazier really struck me as a breathtaking sight.” AJ Gates who served as thurifer for the dedication Mass agrees. “I am the thurifer at a lot of Sunday Masses but this time was special because the Bishop was there and it was an altar dedication. When the brazier was put on the altar and the bishop scooped the incense into it, I was pretty amazed. I think I'll always remember those white clouds of incense just rising.” Grateful to have been a part of the Mass, AJ says serving this Mass was an honor. “Most of the time when a bishop is celebrating Mass a deacon will incense the bishop, but I was able to do that for this Mass, which was really cool. Then I incensed Fr. Steve and the priests who were there concelebrating. I think that's really special because that incense is part of their preparation for what they are about to do on the altar, for the sacrifice that's about to be re-presented at their hands.”

Altar Society members Dee Webb and Sharon Christopherson were two of the women who, during the Mass, wiped the chrism oil off of the altar after Bishop Boyea blessed it. A powerful experience for both women, Dee says the Lord reminded her of His sacrifice made out of love for her. “As I was wiping the oil I was reminded of the scene in The Passion of Our Lady wiping Our Lord's blood from the area around



*"Bishop Boyea so carefully and lovingly anointing the altar with sacred chrism was deeply moving..."*

the scourging pillar. As tears flowed from my eyes I gently heard Him whisper to me 'your sins are forgiven.' I had a mental picture of my sins causing the shedding of His blood.” Dee describes the encounter as a, “glorious experience. Truly amazing.”

Sharon Christopherson, nervous to have a role in the Mass, also experienced unexpected graces. “Walking up to the altar I was so overwhelmed with how very holy it felt,” Sharon remembers, “it was like I was entering a very holy place and I was at the very feet of Jesus! It felt that way the whole time we were wiping the altar. Then, while walking back to my



Clockwise from top left: the incensation of the altar; anointing the new altar with oil of chrism; Father Vince Richardson lights the candles; the Sisters of Mary, the Mother of the Eucharist, bring up the gifts; lighting the brazier.



seat, the words "I am not worthy, I am not worthy" were going through my mind." Experiencing her own unworthiness, Sharon says God broke into the moment. "Suddenly the Lord brought to my mind the final words of the prayer before holy communion... "but only say the word my soul shall be healed!" Sharon says the grace from the Mass is one she will not soon forget. "I am so blessed to have had this experience and I will always, always remember it." Summing up the gratitude of so many who were at the dedication Mass, Sharon says, "every time I think about it, I feel the Lord's blessing all over again."



Top: installing the sacred relics in the altar; bottom: the elevation of the host during the sacrifice of the Mass.



### Relics Residing in the Altar

The relics of St. Andrew (Apostle), Ss. Matthew & Mark (Evangelists), Ss. Blaise, Januarius, and Sebastian (Martyrs); Ss. Agatha and Agnes (Virgin Martyrs)



MAUREEN BUDD

## LIVING OUR RESURRECTION LIFE

HOW RELATIONSHIP-BASED EVENTS ARE DRAWING US DEEPER



"Life changing." My eyes stopped scanning the page. I was exhausted from helping to plan and run a two day course on dating, but reading this anonymous feedback from a participant made it all worth it. These two simple words breathed fresh life into my tired body and reminded me why we started Resurrection Life.

Resurrection Life is a relationship ministry dedicated to strengthening families and marriages by building up relationships at every stage – single, dating, engaged, married, and beyond. We are creating a culture where it's normal for everyone to work on their relationships, whether it's with a spouse, a dating partner, with friends, or family.

This ministry will host targeted events that are a combination of fun, fellowship, and relationship-based content. In January, Resurrection Life hosted a Trivia Night for adults, which was a smashing success. With over 120 participants, it was an animated evening of friendly competition. In an effort to help participants meet new people and break out of their normal circle, we assigned seats, mixing singles and couples, and often crossing generations. One couple who recently converted to the Catholic Faith said, "We got to connect with both people we know and met a bunch of people we haven't met before. It was really nice and has caused my wife and I to create more connections."

Key to many young parents attending Trivia Night was the

free childcare. Preschool staff and LCHS students watched over 30 kids, most of whom were under the age of eight. Removing barriers, such as by offering childcare for young families, is a critical focus of Resurrection Life. The best feedback from Trivia Night? "Let's do it again." Indeed, we will.

In February and March, the Resurrection Life team hosted a seven week formation course called "Building a Eucharistic Marriage." 30 couples enjoyed a weekly date night including dinner at a nicely decorated table, a video course, around 30 minutes of private discussion time, and free childcare. 34 children delighted in the kid-friendly meals and play time in the preschool and JPPII rooms. Like all Resurrection Life events, this course relied heavily on volunteers, pulling in around 30 folks each week to help with decorating, food prep, kitchen clean up, facilitating, childcare, and post-event clean up.

Moving forward, look for monthly Resurrection Life events. Whether it's a "Jesus and Jameson" night for singles, a wine and painting night for couples, a chili cook-off competition for adults, a drive through date night where couples drop off kids at the parish for a few hours and just go out together, or additional formation – each of these events will be strategically planned to attract a specific group of people, and the audience will vary. We want to positively impact every soul at our parish, and even pull in souls from the area neighborhoods. Every person who responded to the Trivia Night survey said, "I felt like I had a place and was included." That is our desire – that you will know that you are seen, loved, wanted, and desired, and that you have a place here at Resurrection.

## RESURRECTION FAMILIES

# A LEGACY OF FAITH

### EASTER TRADITIONS AMONG OUR PARISHIONERS

The most important event in the liturgical year has been celebrated through the years by our parishioners in many different ways. If you're looking for some new ideas for how to celebrate this Easter, look no further than the following fascinating suggestions!

**The McDowell Family** | Easter is the highlight of my year. There is nothing more sublime than celebrating our Lord's gift of self in His dying and rising. Over the years our Easter traditions have morphed as I became more knowledgeable about the truths of our Mystery of Faith and as my family grew and expanded to include grandchildren. As a child I remember my mouth watering as I helped my mom to prepare our Easter baskets to take to church to be blessed. Later, as an adult I would sometimes look for a church that blessed easter baskets. At the time, I did not fully understand how the blessed food had turned into a sacramental for the family to share in on Easter. My family began our Easter celebration by attending the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday due to my increased understanding of our mystery of faith which is summed up by the Tridium and points to the resurrection of Jesus.

**The Krause Family** | We have two Easter traditions as a family that have continued throughout the years of the kids growing up. One is making resurrection rolls. I discovered this tradition when my kids were young. To make the rolls, you take a marshmallow, dip it in melted butter and roll it in cinnamon and sugar. You then wrap it in a crescent roll and bake it for 10 mins. Each of the ingredients symbolizes something: the marshmallow represents Jesus' body, the melted butter and sugar and cinnamon represent the oil and spices, and the crescent roll is the shroud. It is a great object lesson when the marshmallow is no longer in the roll...and it tastes yummy! The other tradition is that we go to the Meijer butterfly gardens. Seeing the whole range from the caterpillar eggs feeding on the milkweed to seeing many different kinds of butterflies flying about you in all their vibrant colors all in one

place, is an excellent reminder of the power of the Resurrection. We are reminded that Jesus can transform us, too.

**The Black Family** | Growing up, Michael and I were both blessed by homes with a strong sense of tradition and a touch of whimsy. Easter baskets rivaled Christmas stockings, and in Michael's home Jesus' empty paper-mache tomb literally exploded with jelly beans! As parents, we've found ourselves exploring many practices to fit the stage: a dried bean jar for sacrifices made (that turn into jelly beans Easter morning), coloring-page Stations of the Cross displayed around our dining room, feet-washing on Maundy Thursday, shrouding religious art and statues on Good Friday, and pysanky-egg-making with grandma. Family read-alouds and rotating books for the liturgical seasons help guide our conversations, while rotating the art on the wall inspires small moments of reflection throughout the day. In the kitchen, I particularly love my cookbook for the liturgical year: *A Continual Feast*. Lent brings everyday pretzels, the feasts of Saints Patrick and Joseph, a Middle-Eastern meal from Jerusalem Market after the mass of the Last Supper, and hot cross buns to share with neighbors.

**The Hennig Family** | There are two parts to the traditions of Easter in the Hennig Haus. Part one: Arnold, and I are church musicians at different parishes (Cristo Rey, St. Joseph, and Resurrection) so we divide up the kids and spend the end of Holy Week, Easter Vigil, and Easter Sunday mornings participating in music for the liturgies. It is a lot of work, but I really enjoy the music for this time of year! Part two: Arnold's family members live in different parts of the country, so we join in with the Easter dinner at my grandparent's house in Dimondale. My aunts, uncles, cousins, mom, and sister gather there for a meal, TV, family time, and an outdoor egg hunt for the kids. My Uncle Ernie and cousin, Alex, go out to the backyard and hide the candy and small toy-filled eggs for the younger kids to find. It is so much fun to have four generations of family members gathering together to make these memories.

Clockwise from top: the Hennig family; the Black family; the Krause family; the Black family fills their home with reminders of Jesus's life, death and resurrection.



KATE IOCCO

# LESSONS FROM THE LAND

HOW ONE FARM IS SPREADING THE GOSPEL



In 2020, Dominic and I decided to return to Michigan and change our lifestyle. At the time, we were living in Hillsborough, North Carolina, and neither of us was satisfied with our family's way of life.

On the surface, everything appeared fine: Dominic managed a high-performance coating company, and I was homeschooling our children in a secluded house in the woods with a river running through our side yard. Yet, despite these outward appearances, we both felt unfulfilled. Although Dominic's job paid well, it lacked the deeper meaning he craved, and our location—while beautiful—was isolating. The local parish and homeschooling community were small, leaving our children and me without enough peers to interact with.

Recognizing that change was necessary, we decided to uproot once again. Dominic longed for work that provided more meaning and purpose, and I wanted to be closer to family. We also envisioned

after, Dominic set up the farm as an LLC, and I immediately suggested we call it The Sower's Farm.

The parable of the sower (Matthew 13:1-23) has always resonated with me throughout my faith journey, and its meaning felt especially pertinent to our new venture. We adopted an approach known as regenerative farming—a method we learned about from Virginia farmer Joel Salatin. We devoured his books, blogs, and videos, and even toured his farm. The basic premise is that every action should enrich the soil; healthier soil produces better food for livestock, which in turn benefits everyone along the food chain. As the parable illustrates, we are the soil, and our goal is to be fertile ground that produces abundant fruit.



Clockwise from top left: Agatha, John and Leo Iocco; a curious cow on the Sower's Farm; Vivian Iocco welcoming new life on the farm; cows at pasture on the Sower's Farm.



*"The message is clear: God makes all things new, especially when we confront life's challenges."*

owning property that would allow us to pursue homesteading. Although we weren't entirely sure what that would entail, we knew we wanted a country home with ample land.

Provisionally, we discovered a property for sale in the Eaton Rapids area that offered 30 acres of mixed woods and pasture. Our hope was to raise as much of our own food as possible and sell any surplus. True to his head-first approach, Dominic wasted no time—before we knew it, he and the boys had built a barn, and we were raising laying hens, meat chickens, a couple of goats, Angus and Wagyu cows, and even a Wagyu bull. Soon

One of the most striking lessons homesteading has taught our family is how animals improve the soil exactly as God designed them to. Cows first graze in one section of pasture, naturally fertilizing and lightly tilling the land with their hooves. Once they move to a new area, we bring in our mobile chicken coop. Our laying hens then forage for bugs and work through the cow manure—a critical step, since manure that isn't incorporated into the soil can be too potent, ultimately killing grass growth. Now, I know it might seem odd—even a bit hilarious—to write about manure as a key element of God's design, but if

manure didn't make the garden grow, where would all these green pastures come from? It turns out that nature's process, as unconventional as it may seem, works perfectly. Although it may sound unappealing, this natural cycle is exactly how chickens are meant to function. When moved to a new space, the hens eagerly scratch and spread the manure, then feed on the bugs, and finally consume any additional feed if needed. This simple process enriches the soil with each pass of the livestock, creating greener, more fertile pastures.

Over the past few years, witnessing this cycle has deepened my

understanding of how God speaks to us through nature. The message is clear: God makes all things new, especially when we confront life's challenges. I often compare the cow manure scattered across the pasture to the hardships we experience. If these wounds are not acknowledged and worked through, they prevent new growth. But when we address them, they yield richer soil, greater growth, and abundance. Father Chad Ripperger cites St. Thomas Aquinas by noting, "a thing can only be wounded when there is resistance to the thing causing the damage." We often cling to our pain, mistakenly believing it brings comfort, when in reality it holds us back. By facing our wounds, God walks alongside us, bringing healing and forgiveness, and transforming our pain into fertile ground for personal growth and for helping others.

Dr. Mary Healy once said, "Don't despair over your wounds. Jesus desires to bring glory through them." I witness this principle every season on our farm—in the literal renewal of the soil and in our personal lives. I am profoundly grateful as God reveals His ways to me through our simple homestead. Despite the work involved, the lessons homesteading provides our family, along with the incredibly delicious and clean food, have been a true blessing from God.

TOM SMALL

# THE JOY OF "TABLE TWO"

HOW LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS GREW OUT OF A PARISH FORMATION COURSE



One of the advantages of being a member at Church of the Resurrection is having numerous opportunities for further developing and enriching our faith lives. In October and November of 2022 I attended a Resurrection Life Course that has continued to bear fruit in my life. The Resurrection Life Course was designed to grasp the idea of God and His unwavering love for us and His desire for us to be in relationship with Him. My wife, Mary Ellen, and I both attended the course and were assigned to be Assistant Leaders at different tables. I was assigned to "Table Two".

that in the new year we would continue to meet. By the beginning of 2023 we were meeting on a regular basis at our house. We settled on naming ourselves after our original placement, and are called simply "Table Two".

Our group is composed of 10 people from varying backgrounds. Our original 8 members increased to 10 with the addition of two spouses. There are young marrieds, married with children, singles, and grandparents. There are cradle Catholics, converts, reverts, and a person who is entering the Church this year. From the beginning, we agreed to use a Catholic book as a guide to our discussions. Sometimes we stay on topic the whole evening and other times we will wander into discussing a faith issue which is on someone's mind.



L to R: Bryce Fisher, Laura Richardson, Kellen Richardson, Emma Rose Fisher, LouAnn Dowsett, Tony Hagopian, Dan Dowsett, Anthony Kempisty, Mary Ellen Small, Tom Small

*"By the end of the course we had a relationship that we all wanted to continue."*

During each of four sessions, the participants sat with the same folks, about 6-8 at a table, and shared a meal and social time for the first thirty minutes. Then we all gathered together and listened to a speaker on the subject matter. The topics include God, the Father, Jesus Christ, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and Healing and Forgiveness, which were presented in dynamic and understandable talks.

After the talks, we returned to our small groups for an opportunity to share. It was done in an atmosphere of respect and camaraderie. The Table Leader, with help from the assistant, guided the discussion with pertinent questions. Everyone was encouraged to share. By the end of the first session my table had established a comfortable and easy relationship. By the end of the course we had a relationship that we all wanted to continue. So, we agreed

Our subject matter has gone from serious study, such as Jesus, and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist by Brandt Pitre, to something more lighthearted like our current book Humility Rules, St Benedict's Guide to Genuine Self-Esteem by J Augustine Wetta O.S.B. We seem to alternate between a serious read and a more relaxed read. However, what was supposed to be a relaxed book, Immortal Combat, by Fr. Dwight Longenecker proved to be a bit of a challenge, especially for me.

We have settled into an every-other-Thursday schedule. We meet from 6:30 pm until around 8:00pm, unless we really get enthusiastic and exceed the time limit. We all look forward to getting together and finding out what is going on in each of our lives, then we open with a prayer and then continue on to the book discussion. We always close with a prayer.

*"He...has already demonstrated the depths of mercy he has for those trapped in sin."*

LIZ O'NEILL

## AN ENCOUNTER WITH LOVE

A MEDITATION ON ALEXANDER IVANOV'S CHRIST'S APPEARANCE TO MARY MAGDALENE

The scene of Christ's meeting with Mary Magdalene in the garden has exercised the imagination of Christians throughout the ages. In Alexander Ivanov's Appearance of Jesus Christ to Mary Magdalene, we see Mary stretching her arms out in longing towards the risen Jesus, almost as if to frame him in an unforgettable picture that she would carry in her mind for the rest of her life.

Who would have expected that Jesus would choose her to be the first of his followers to see him after the Resurrection? Perhaps if it was left up to us we would have chosen differently. Maybe we would have chosen Peter, the leader of the apostles, who at this moment was languishing in self-disgust at his betrayal of Jesus? Or might we have considered John worthy of this gift? John, the one who stood with Jesus' mother at the foot of the cross. Maybe we would have loved to see Thomas the doubter stopped in his tracks.

But no, Christ, who does all things perfectly, chooses the Magdalene. He chooses this woman whose story has already

demonstrated the depths of mercy he has for those trapped in sin.

Then, we see what Mary has become as she has journeyed with Jesus. Think of the courage it took to rise up early on that most depressing and dark day, to walk through abandoned streets, determined to minister to her Lord's last need, the anointing of his broken body for final burial. Think of the strength it took to overcome a fear of the authorities, to confront a gardener about Jesus' body.

And now think of her deep sigh as she hears his unforgettable speaking of her name. He tells her not to cling to him as he has not yet ascended to his Father. Would he have needed to give that instruction if she had not leaped forward intent on embracing Him?

We too, like Mary, cannot yet cling to him in physical reality. But like her we know that one day we will see him face to face. And on that day we will not need to hold back.



BRIAN FINK

## BUILDING

*I look but do not see;  
Hear, but do not understand. (cf. Mt. 13:13)*

My sons tackle each other down like brutes  
From legioned battalions, pulling at roots  
To hurl hand grenades of brown mounded dirt  
While Edith commands the troops in a skirt  
And Bene watches as a beetle bug shoots  
From the grass to the sleeve of his shirt.  
They're building a treehouse, too (on the ground),  
Pounding down scrounged up nails into wood  
With big rocks or what else, lying around.  
*(I took the hammer. "It's not for digging,"  
But use that old baler twine for rigging.)*  
They salvaged other building scrap like good  
Apprentices from the building crew's trailer:  
Thomas hauls the load; Gabe's the best nailer,  
Though he was the first to blacken his thumb.  
I marvel at times where their grit comes from,  
And their wonderlust at every low thing:  
A hillock of dirt becomes their massif;  
A twig aground, their scepter of power.  
A vassal clan runs our tiny green fief,  
Defending our lands from the playset tower.  
Their wild beating hearts make eternity ring,  
And waken my soul, and make it to sing.



CHURCH OF THE  
RESURRECTION

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