



He is Risen...



Easter Greetings from Catholic Engaged Encounter of Trinidad & Tobago

As the Easter celebration draws closer to the transition from suffering, to death, and to the ultimate resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, so should we journey towards a similar transition in our lives and our marriages.

We wish all couples contemplating marriage, a renewed resurrection in their journey towards the ultimate matrimonial celebration with each other and with the Risen Lord.

Ricardo & Cintra Joachim



As we make our way to another Easter season, we pray that all will be renewed in heart, soul and spirit, and that the risen Lord Jesus will be more visible and active in our daily lives. May the healing and life giving presence of our Lord be accomplished in our ministry, our marriages and our families.

Anthony and Angela Mitchell
Coordinators
Catholic Engaged Encounter
English Speaking Caribbean





The Room

by Joshua Harris

In that place between wakefulness and dreams, I found myself in the room. There were no distinguishing features save for the one wall covered with small index-card files. They were like the ones in libraries that list titles by author or subject in alphabetical order. But these files, which stretched from floor to ceiling and seemingly endlessly in either direction, had very different headings. As I drew near the wall of files, the first to catch my attention was one that read "Girls I Have Liked." I opened it and began flipping through the cards. I quickly shut it, shocked to realize that I recognized the names written on each one.

And then without being told, I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life. Here were written the actions of my every moment, big and small, in a detail my memory couldn't match.

A sense of wonder and curiosity, coupled with horror, stirred within me as I began randomly opening files and exploring their content. Some brought joy and sweet memories; others a sense of shame and regret so intense that I would look over my shoulder to see if anyone was watching. A file named "Friends" was next to one marked "Friends I Have Betrayed."

The titles ranged from the mundane to the outright weird. "Books I Have Read," "Lies I Have Told," "Comfort I Have Given," "Jokes I Have

Laughed At." Some were almost hilarious in their exactness: "Things I've Yelled at My Brothers." Others I couldn't laugh at: "Things I Have Done in My Anger," "Things I Have Muttered Under My Breath at My Parents." I never ceased to be surprised by the contents. Often there were many more cards than I expected. Sometimes fewer than I hoped.

I was overwhelmed by the sheer volume of the life I had lived. Could it be possible that I had the time in my 20 years to write each of these thousands or even millions of cards? But each card confirmed this truth. Each was written in my own handwriting. Each signed with

my signature.

When I pulled out the file marked "Songs I Have Listened To," I realized the files grew to contain their contents. The cards were packed tightly, and yet after two or three yards, I hadn't found the end of the file. I shut it, shamed, not so much by the quality of music, but more by the vast amount of time I knew that file represented.

When I came to a file marked "Lustful

Thoughts," I felt a chill run through my body. I pulled the file out only an inch, not willing to test its size, and drew out a card. I shuddered at its detailed content. I felt sick to think that such a moment had

been recorded.

An almost animal rage broke on me. One thought dominated my mind: "No one must ever see these cards! No one must ever see this room! I have to destroy them!" In an insane frenzy I yanked the file out. Its size didn't matter now. I had to empty it and burn the cards. But as I took it at one end and began pounding it on the floor, I could not dislodge a single card. I became desperate and pulled out a card, only to find it as strong as steel when I tried to tear it.

Defeated and utterly helpless, I returned the file to its slot. Leaning my forehead against the wall, I let out a long, self-pitying sigh. And then I saw it. The title bore "People I Have Shared the Gospel With." The handle was brighter than those around it, newer, almost unused. I pulled on its handle and a small box not more than three inches long fell into my hands. I could count the cards it contained on one hand.

And then the tears came. I began to weep. Sobs so deep that they hurt started in my stomach and shook through me. I

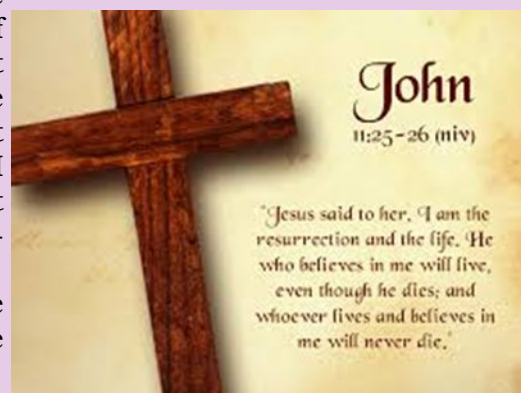
fell on my knees and cried. I cried out of shame, from the overwhelming shame of it all. The rows of file shelves swirled in my tear-filled eyes. No one must ever, ev-

er know of this room. I must lock it up and hide the key.

But then as I pushed away the tears, I saw Him. No, please not Him. Not here. Oh, anyone but Jesus.

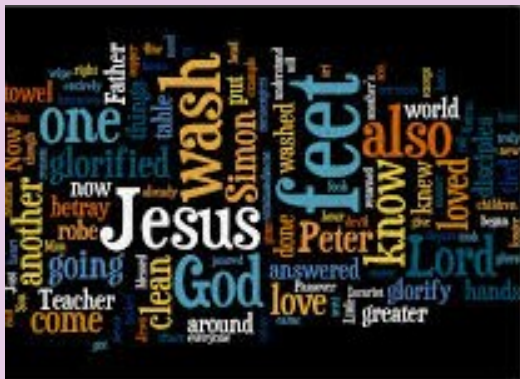
I watched helplessly as He be-

I knew exactly where I was. This lifeless room with its small files was a crude catalog system for my life.



He took out a file and, one by one, began to sign His name over mine on each card.

By Joshua Harris. Originally published in New Attitude Magazine. Copyright New Attitude, 1995.



A black and white illustration of the Resurrection. Jesus, with a halo and arms outstretched, stands before an open tomb. A banner at the bottom reads "HE IS RISEN ALLELUIA". The illustration is done in a simple, graphic style with bold lines. The background features stylized rays emanating from behind Jesus, and the tomb is depicted as a simple structure with a rolled-away stone. The text "HE IS RISEN" is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font, with "ALLELUIA" in a slightly smaller font below it. The entire illustration is framed by a simple border.

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WHEN NOTHING ELSE WOULD WORK

R. G. Lee tells a beautiful story about a mountain school that had a hard time keeping a teacher, because there was a group of big, rough boys who took pride in running the teacher off. The biggest and roughest of them all was named Tom.

A new young teacher won over the boys, however, by letting them write the rules for the school--which were very strictly enforced with a rod. For example, cheating would be punished with five strokes of the rod, and stealing with ten strokes, both to be given with the offender's coat off.

Everything went well until one day Tom's lunch was stolen. A frail little boy in hand-me-down clothes that were too big for him, admitted his guilt. The school demanded that he be whipped. When the teacher called the little fellow up front, he came whimpering and begging to leave his coat on. The pupils insisted he obey the rules and take off his coat. When he did, a deathly silence settled over the room, for he had no shirt on and his emaciated body looked like skin stretched over bones. The teacher gasped and dropped the rod. He knew he could never whip that little boy. Suddenly, big Tom strode up and stood between the two. "I'll take it for him, Teacher, for after all it was my lunch he stole." He shrugged out of his coat. At the third blow the rod broke, and the teacher threw it in the corner and said, "That's all, school dismissed."

The frail little boy laid his hand on big Tom's arm and through his tears said, "Thank you, Tom, it would have killed me."

Who could help but be moved to gratitude by someone willing to take your place--take your punishment--suffer your consequences?

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" Does that move you to gratitude? Does that cause you to re-think the meaning of your own life? Have we heard those words so often that they no longer have any impact?

Excerpt from

<http://www.sermons.com/sss.html>

Easter is the demonstration of God
that life is essentially spiritual and timeless.

~Charles M. Crowe ~





3 Powerful Marriage Lessons From Easter

By Scott Means

As someone who is passionate about the intersection of faith and family, I am always looking for ways my spiritual life can teach me truths about my marriage.

We will soon be celebrating Easter. Many of us will be gathering with family and friends to remember Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, and the good news of Sunday morning. Leading up to that day, though, I'd like to reexamine the lessons. There is always something new to learn about Easter, especially when it comes to love. I see several practical marriage lessons in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

1. Give until it costs you something. In the cruel crucifixion of Jesus we see the ultimate expression of sacrificial love. "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13, NIV).

Giving selflessly to your husband or wife is one of the best ways I know to keep your marriage strong. The University of Virginia's National Marriage Project, in their "The State of Our Unions: Marriage in America 2011" report, says of generosity in marriage, "Married fathers and mothers who make a regular practice of being generous to one another enjoy markedly higher levels of marital quality and stability." The study found that above average daily generosity, resulted in couples being 32 percent more likely to report being very happily married.

It's not all that likely that any of us will be called on to actually give our lives for our spouse, but when was the last time you gave of yourself in a way that it really cost you something? Asked a different way, how often do you react negatively when you are called on to sacrifice your time, energy, emotions or finances for the sake of your spouse? If you can't recall a time, then it's time to change your attitude. Generosity is great, but generosity that requires sacrifice is an even greater act of love.

The story of Easter is the story of God's wonderful window of divine surprise.

~Carl Knudsen~

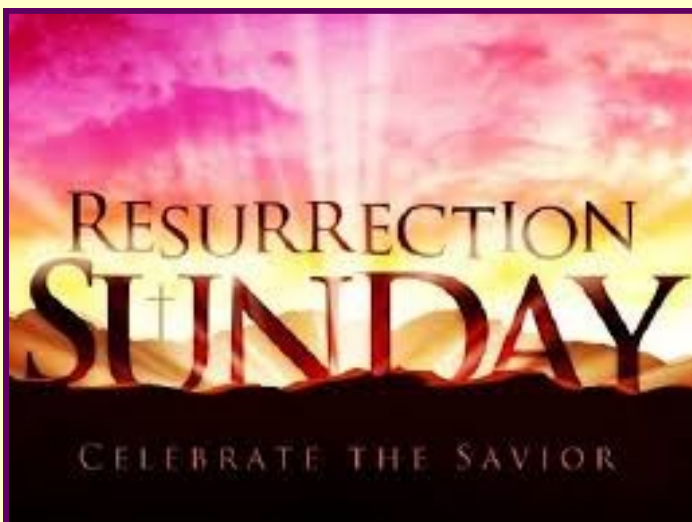
2. Relationships matters more than rules and rights. What was the reason for the cross? Salvation? Forgiveness? Peace? I can make a pretty strong case that it was for intimacy. The Bible makes it pretty clear that Jesus came in order to have us as his bride for all eternity. He not only made a way for us to have intimacy with God forever, but also made it so we can be close to God right now while we walk the Earth. Jesus came not for what we could *do for him*, but so that we could *be with him*.

In Jesus, we see a life of radical love. He turned a lot of the "laws of religion" upside down and inside out. Time and time again, we see how he placed a higher value on people and relationships than on the legalistic rules of the day.

We all have lot of unwritten rules in our marriages. You could call them expectations, pre-conditions or traditions. And there's nothing wrong with those things in and of themselves. The problem comes when we put them ahead of our actual relationship. Sometimes, for the sake of your marriage, you have to set these things aside. Just like Jesus did, I encourage you to put your relationship ahead of your rules.

Standing up for your rights is part of the western world's fabric of life. But in marriage, if you want a deeper level of intimacy, sometimes you have to set your rights aside for the sake of your relationship. Sometimes you have to give up on *being* right and focus instead on *doing* right.

Do you have it in you to give grace when your husband makes a bone-headed mistake? Can you respond with calm kindness when your wife is blatantly disrespectful to you? It's not easy. It's against our self-protective and self-centered human nature. But the bottom line is that we have to want intimacy





more than we want perfection.

3. There is hope and promise for tomorrow. Did you ever consider Easter Sunday from the perspective of the Saturday between the cross and the resurrection? The disciples had given up their lives to follow Jesus. It had cost them everything. Then, in the course of one week, they watch as Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday collapses into his arrest and crucifixion. Even though he had told them all this would happen, they still did not believe. And how hopeless the Saturday after Jesus' death must have been.

Maybe that's not so different from a troubled marriage. When you marry, you chose to become one with your beloved, entering hopefully into the covenant of marriage. In a sense, it's a life commitment not unlike the disciples had made. You are saying, "I'm all in. All I am is yours. I'm with you to the end."

Sooner or later, though, the early exuberance and tingly feelings run into real life. Times get hard. Jobs are lost. Parents and kids get sick. Seemingly insurmountable troubles and conflicts arise. Stuff happens to your marriage, and sometimes it feels hopeless.

The beauty of the cross is in the promise of Easter, where God shows His nature as a redeemer and restorer. If your marriage is in a time of stress and pain, put your hope in the one who sees past the immediate circumstances of your life and into a hopeful and wonderful future. It is very possible that God could use the current difficulty in your marriage to create something even more beautiful and enduring than you could ever imagine.

As you celebrate Easter with your family this year, take some time to reflect on the meaning for your marriage. Allow the wonderful and powerful spiritual truths of Easter breathe new life into your relationship, and your bond will be stronger for it.

What does Easter's message of supreme love mean to you?



**THE GREAT GIFT OF EASTER
IS HOPE - CHRISTIAN HOPE
WHICH MAKES US HAVE
THAT CONFIDENCE IN GOD,
IN HIS ULTIMATE TRIUMPH,
AND IN HIS GOODNESS AND
LOVE, WHICH NOTHING CAN
SHAKE.**

- Basil C. Hume

Spouses are therefore the permanent reminder to the church of what happened on the cross

*~Bl. John Paul II~
Familiaris Consortio*





IMPROVING YOUR MARRIAGE DURING LENT AND BEYOND....

I used to think that happy couples didn't have to work on their marriages. True love is free and easy, right?

Actually, wrong.

The happiest of couples are those who make their marriage a priority and are committed to improving their relationship, in big and small ways, day in and day out. A happy marriage takes work. Lots of work. And a healthy dose of sacrifice too.

Pope Francis recently tweeted:

"How to live a good marriage? United to the Lord, who always renews our love and strengthens it to overcome every difficulty."

That sounds very nice, but how exactly are we to unite ourselves and our marriages to the Lord? Well, Lent is all about uniting ourselves to the Lord, growing closer to Christ, and, in some small ways, sharing in our Lord's redemptive suffering. Why not make a commitment to unite yourself to the Lord by making some changes and small sacrifices to improve your marriage this Lent? Here are some ideas to get you started.

1. Give up negativity.

Do you whine and complain to your spouse? Do you criticize and judge too harshly and too quickly? It's okay to admit. Many of us do become comfortable in long-term, committed relationships and fall into the easy habit of venting regular negativity to our spouse. Some of this kind of venting can be a normal part of a healthy relationship, but negative words and attitudes tend to feed, grow, spiral downward, and rob you of joy.

For Lent, resolve: *I will avoid making negative comments and observations to my spouse. I will seek out positive things to say and foster encouraging conversations we can enjoy together.*



2. Be active together.

What do you and your spouse do after the kids have gone to bed or whenever you have downtime together? Do you silently stare at a flickering television screen? Do you retreat to separate corners of the house, each pursuing your own activities?

There is nothing inherently wrong with television or inde-

pendent projects, but Lent offers a unique opportunity to replace these things with shared activity that will feed your marriage and nurture your relationship.

Shared goals and common activities bring you closer and foster a cooperative spirit in your marriage. Think of something the two of you can actively participate in together. You might exercise together—taking a daily walk is an easy way to connect and engage. You might play board games, plan a garden, tackle a home improvement project, or take a class together. The key is to find something you will both enjoy doing together.

For Lent, resolve: *I will replace some of our daily passivity and separation with an activity my spouse and I both enjoy. I will commit to spending regular time together, focused on common goals, and enjoying one another's company.*

3. Do more than your share.

Do you nitpick and keep track of who does what around the house and how often? Do you feel like you are the only one who ever changes the toilet paper roll/empties the dishwasher/takes out the trash/fill in this blank with your own pet peeve?

When you share living space with another grown up, it's only human to feel unappreciated on occasion and get annoyed with what sometimes feels like an unfair division of household chores. But this Lent offers a challenge for you to be better than that. Stop nitpicking. Stop keeping score. *Cheerfully* aim to do "more than your share" of household tasks and daily drudgery. Looking for small ways to do "more than your share" is a small sacrifice you can offer up as a Lenten sacrifice, but also a practical means of letting go of the pettiness, selfishness, and bitterness that threaten to poison your married relationship.

For Lent, resolve: *I will stop keeping track of my spouse's daily contributions to household chores. Instead, I will look for ways to do extra work myself and take on tasks that are "not my job" with a spirit of cheerful generosity and out of love for our Lord.*

4. Pay more compliments.

Can you think of a time when someone said something critical of you and it cut you to the core? Can you think of a time when someone complimented you and you felt over the moon? Words have real power and are an important tool we can use build up those we love ... or tear them down.

Lent presents a challenge for you to use the positive marriage-building power of words. Find something complimentary to say to your spouse every day. Is she worried about her aging appearance? What can you say to make her know just how beautiful you think she is? Is he stressed about work? What words can you say to let him know how much you notice and appreciate his dedication and hard work on behalf of your family?

For Lent, resolve: *I will pay my spouse a sincere and specific compliment at least once every day. I will look for ways to affirm my spouse as a parent, as a friend, as a worker, and as the most important person in my life.*



5. Pray together.

Some couples avoid praying together because it makes them feel awkward or embarrassed. Others see it as too much of a time commitment. But there is no better way to unite yourself and your marriage to the Lord than by putting yourselves in his presence, together. It doesn't have to be complicated. You might like to pray spontaneously together, but if that's not your style, simply praying a Hail Mary together before going to sleep at night, or praying the Angelus in the morning can be beautiful ways to unite your hearts in prayer. You might also try reading scripture together. Choose a Psalm or a Gospel passage to read aloud and then share what is on your hearts with each other and with God. Just this one small practice can help you not only grow closer to God, but it can help you get to know your spouse on a whole new—spiritual—level. Shared spirituality is an intimacy every couple deserves to experience.

For Lent, resolve: *I will set aside time to pray with my spouse every day. I will overcome any personal reluctance I might have and commit to praying with and for my spouse on a daily basis.*

6. Soak up the sacraments.

We Catholics have such a great gift in the sacraments! Because he loves us, Jesus gave us the sacraments as a means of attaining the grace we need to do God's will every day. The sacraments feed our souls, heal us, and fill us with God's own life.

This all sounds wonderful, but how often do we take the sacraments for granted? Do we remember that our marriages themselves are a sacrament and ask God to give us the graces we need to grow in love together? Do we receive the Eucharist unthinkingly and avoid confession? This Lent, challenge yourself to find new ways to partake in the sacraments with your spouse. You might make time for a weekly Holy Hour together, attend an extra Mass per week, or have a "confession" date followed by dinner out. Find a way to put yourself and your spouse in God's presence more often, and you will find yourselves growing closer to one another as you grow in love for God.

For Lent, resolve: *I will find new ways to receive and appreciate the sacraments with my spouse. I will pray daily for the sacramental grace from our marriage and look for more opportunities to receive the Eucharist and sacrament of Penance together.*

A kindergarten teacher was walking around observing her classroom of children while they were drawing pictures. As she got to one girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

7. Speak healing words.

Pope Francis recently encouraged engaged couples to use the healing words "please," "thank you," and "I'm sorry."

These are everyday words we

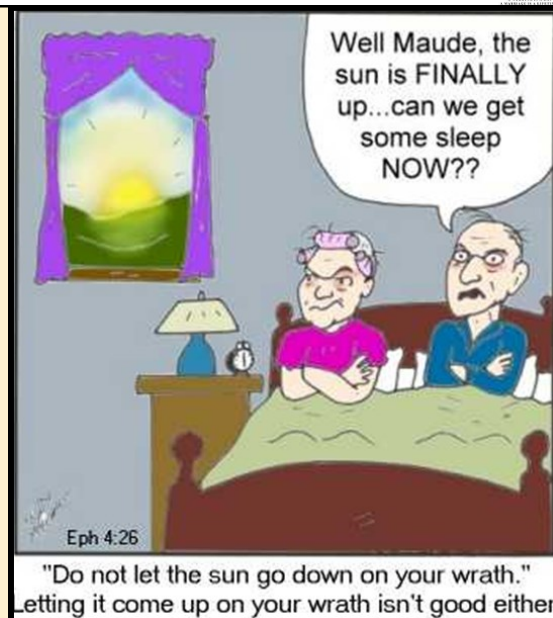
often use with others, but sometimes neglect to use enough with those we love most. Lent offers us an opportunity to think about the healing power of everyday words and use them to build our marriages and communicate love, appreciation, and humility to our spouses.

Use the word "please" to soften the everyday demands of life and the ongoing requests we all make of each other in marriage. Think of some thankless task your spouse does for you on a regular basis (making dinner? emptying the trash? doing laundry? going to work? cleaning the gutters?) and look for a way to say "thank you" for their gift of service. Be quick to notice even small offenses you may be guilty of in your relationship, and offer a genuine apology for them. We all long to hear healing words, and yet sometimes fall into the bad habit of neglecting to say them or thinking our spouse "knows that already."

For Lent, resolve: *I will use healing words (please, thank you, I'm sorry, and I love you) every day. I will look for new opportunities to love, appreciate, thank, heal, and build up my spouse through small words and phrases.*

Pope Francis reminds us that, like the wedding at Cana, our marriages are meant to be a celebration of love. By making some small changes, sacrifices, and commitments to improve your marriage this Lent, you and your spouse can enjoy a celebration of love that will reward you with a stronger, happier, more satisfying, and Christ-centered marriage for Easter.

<http://institute.catholicmatch.com/2014/03/7-ways-to-improve-your-marriage-this-lent/>





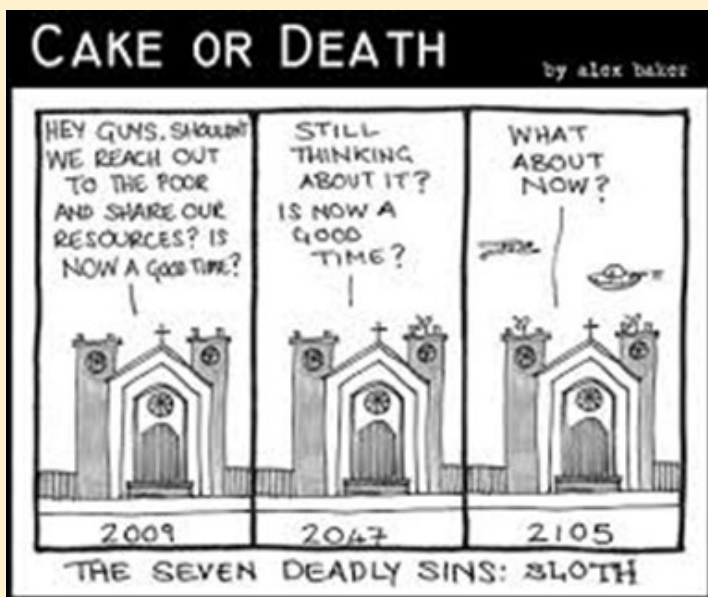
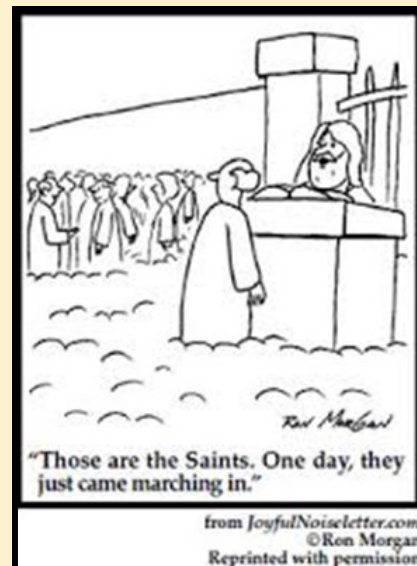
Dennis Bratcher said,
Good Friday is not (seen as) a day of celebration but of mourning, both for the death of Jesus and for the sins of the world that his death represents. Yet, although Friday is a solemn time, it is not without its own joy. For while it is important to place the Resurrection against the darkness of Good Friday, likewise the somberness of Good Friday should always be seen with the hope of Resurrection Sunday. As the well-known sermon title vividly illustrates: "It's Friday. But Sunday's a'comin'!"

Bettering yourself during Lent and afterwards

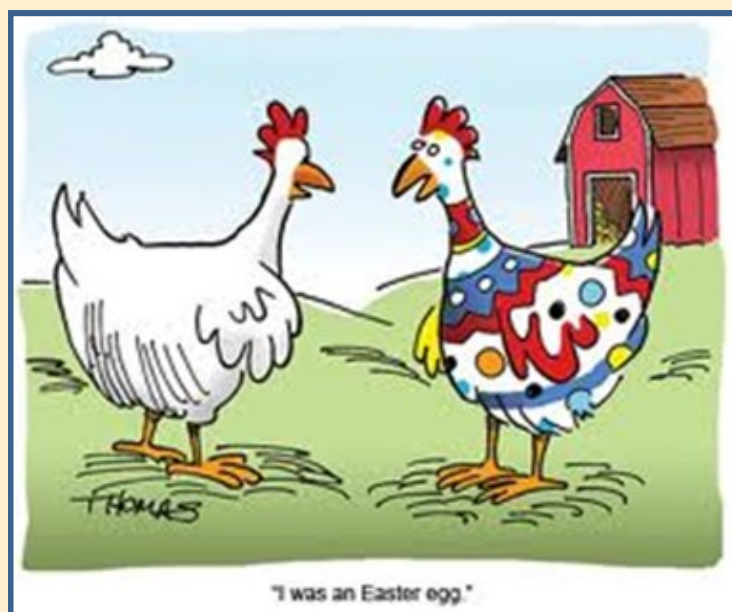
Pray the Rosary every day.
Go to Mass as often as possible.
Go to Confession every Friday.
Pray the Family Rosary every day or once a week.
Pray in silence 20 minutes a day.
Make a Eucharistic visit every day.
Pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet (at 3:00 PM) every day.

Fast on bread and water.
Read a spiritual book.
Give a painfully large donation to charity.
Give a donation to charity instead of buying something for you.
Pray "Jesus, I love you!" in the first waking seconds of the day.

Listen to Catholic CDs.
Do something major to improve your marriage.
Volunteer anywhere: at your kid's school, homeless shelter
Give up something you absolutely love, crave or spend time on, or that annoys people
Visit a home for the elderly.

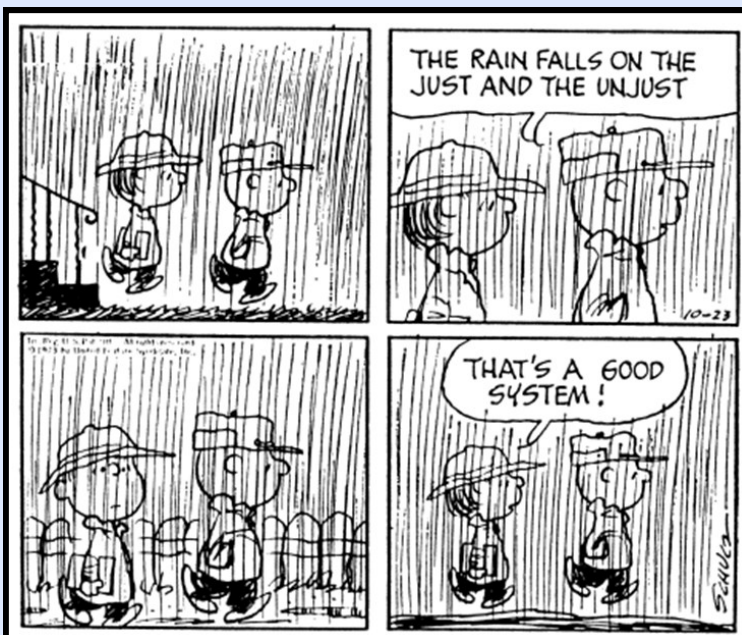


Could life so end, half told; its school so fail?
Soul, soul, there is a sequel to thy tale!
~Robert Mowry Bell~





Happy Easter to All!



INFO NOTE:

Ricardo and Cintra Joachim (see front cover) are the present Coordinators of Catholic Engaged Encounter of Trinidad and Tobago CEETT). They have been married for 20 years and have been involved in Engaged Encounter for almost as long as they have been married.

Anthony and Angela Mitchell (see front cover) are the present Coordinators of Catholic Engaged Encounter English Speaking Caribbean. They have been married for 13 years and have been involved in Engaged Encounter for 14 years.