

Principal's Letter March 12, 2010

Dear Family,

Confirmation is one of the seven sacraments of the Catholic Church. "By the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit. Hence they are, as true witnesses of Christ, more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed." It is the active acceptance of one's commitment to their faith, and the confirmed person accepts his/her responsibility to actively live their faith. This is why the Church does not administer the sacrament until a youth is 16 or older.

Congratulations to the following St. Francis alumni who received Confirmation in February:

Ashlee Chard	Annalise Johnson
Marina Davis	Jesus Madrid
Nick DeRitis	Fabrizia Payombari
Vince DeRitis	Brenagh Sanford
Sarah Gansz	Sarah Schmidt

There is a reflection on the next page that focuses on Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador whose active commitment to peace cost him his life. I think sometimes that we think of Christians as people who are "nice", but that's too simplistic a picture. Oftentimes it takes courage to "do the right thing." Courage, like other important values, is taught through modeling and example.

In an article written by William Damon, Professor of Education at Stanford University and the Director of the Stanford Center on Adolescence, "Every child begins with the rudimentary building blocks of character- empathy, fairness, self-control and obligation. Empathy, the capacity to experience another's pleasure or pain, provides the foundation for caring and compassion. A concern for fairness emerges as soon as children begin playing with friends. "That's not fair!" is a frequently heard response from young children, because they understand that they have an obligation to share with others. The child's desire for self-control can be seen in an infant's eagerness to regularize behavior through repetition, rituals and rules. Obligation expresses itself in children's wishes to follow the directive and expectations of their caregivers. We as adults guide the students as they form the bridge from their natural moral sense to the student's established moral character as they journey towards adulthood.

Moral and character education must consist of more than skin-deep efforts that ask students to merely recite virtuous words such as honest and tolerance. This education needs to engage students in activities that help them acquire regular habits of virtuous behavior.

In a Catholic school, the teaching of morality is an essential component of our faith and of our curriculum. As the Confirmation candidates walked up the aisle, I was gratified to realize that what we are teaching has an enduring impact on our students.

Have a Great Weekend,

Sheila

Reflection for March 28, 2010 – Palm Sunday

Prepared by Linda Unger, *Maryknoll Magazine* and
Maryknoll Revista 1993-2010

Source: Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns: Peace, Social Justice & Integrity of Creation; www.maryknollogc.org.

Artwork by Lee Miller.

Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24;
Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56



The days swirling around this Palm Sunday 2010 mark the 30th anniversary of the death of San Salvador Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. It was always striking to me that Romero should have been killed by an assassin's bullet the Monday before Palm Sunday and that his funeral, which was interrupted by more bloodshed, should have occurred the Monday following – the doorway to Holy Week, in 1980. Romero's commitment to peace was unmoved by the violence that

continually threatened him in the last three years of his life. Instead, he echoed Christ's own response to violence, "Stop! No more of this!"

Oscar Romero was a quiet, soft-spoken man, "except when he was in the pulpit," recalls Franciscan Brother Octavio Durán, who was a seminarian in El Salvador at the time Romero was consecrated archbishop. Romero's homilies were long, bold, detailed teachings, rooted in Scripture and in the life of the "church of God" in El Salvador.

Week after week, he recalled by name the victims of the growing violence in the country. Though I did not know Romero, nor those who were killed, tortured or disappeared in the late 1970s, I used to listen to tapes of his homilies and pray with the litany of victims, until the tapes finally wore out. I understood this holy man to say that if we forget those who suffer violence at the hands of others, we run the risk of dismissing their humanity, our own, and that even of the perpetrators.

Having passed through his own mighty conversion, Romero constantly called the church to a change of heart. Shortly before his death, he told a reporter, "You can tell the people that if they succeed in killing me, I forgive and bless those who do it." Romero thus put into words the action of Jesus in the garden of his capture when Jesus raised his hand to heal and restore the ear of the high priest's servant, cut off by an overzealous disciple, whom Jesus

corrected in that same motion.

In our day, we remain tempted by violence, whether as self-defense, self-indulgence or revenge. Today, armed conflict or all-out war rages in 20 countries around the world. There is violence in our homes, our neighborhoods and in our church and other houses of worship. There is violence in our language, music and art. The meek are considered weak and the brash bold.

Yet how much more courage and boldness does it take to both name the violence and victims in our lives, society and world and to forgive the perpetrators? Even in small, day-to-day conflicts we find this difficult. It is much easier to ignore or justify the event, sweep it under the emotional rug, or cathartically lash out at the wrongdoer with no real intention of evoking change.

Jesus models for us the way of peace when he identifies himself with the poor and those who suffer and calls persecutors to conversion through forgiveness. In Luke's gospel Jesus' lament over his abandonment by God is replaced by words of forgiveness for those who mock, beat and crucify him: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" (23:34).

The path he walks is made of love, humility and the healing grace of forgiveness. In the letter to the Philippians, Paul underscores this when, reciting a well-known hymn, tells how Jesus "emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross" (2:7-8).

Oscar Romero chose to follow Jesus and to accept the consequences of a life of service to the poor, a life that could be violently unpopular with the powers of the time. Yet, he did not respond to violence with a call for more violence but, rather, trusted in love. "My face I did not shield from buffets and spitting. The Lord God is my help, therefore I am not disgraced," as the prophet Isaiah says (50:6-7).

This same choice confronts us today.

