

## **Sisters and Brothers Through Ordinary Times (Column 31: April 6, 2020)**

By Lucia A. Silecchia

I am a middle child. Among other things, that means that many years ago I waited to welcome a new sibling to my family. I was very young at the time, so I do not recall the eager anticipation I must have felt knowing that my sister and I would soon have our lives enriched by the addition of another to the embrace of our family. Now, decades later, we are a trio – and I cannot imagine life any other way.

These past weeks, I have thought about the eager anticipation of new siblings because this is usually the time of year to welcome our new sisters and brothers in Christ at the joyful embrace of our Easter vigil. Each spring, the powerful witness of all those who say a confident adult “yes,” celebrate their Baptisms, receive their first Eucharists, and rejoice in their Confirmations is a source of joyful hope to me. Particularly in years that are difficult in any way, the faith-filled example of others inspires me in a way unlike anything else.

This year, when Lent began, dioceses worldwide celebrated the Rites of Election. By the hundreds, or even thousands, those in the final stages of preparation were joyfully gathered together. They shared eager anticipation of the new bonds that would make us all family once our common journey through Lent was completed.

Then, our journey through Lent took its cruel, unexpected turn.

As the world, paradoxically, both spun into a frenzy and ground to a halt at the same time, many things we all took for granted changed. One of those changes is that we all have to wait a little bit longer to welcome our new sisters and brothers.

So, a note to my new siblings: I don’t know you yet – but I miss you. I also wait in joyful hope for the celebrations and embraces to come.

The solemn intercessions of Good Friday – especially solemn this year – hold prayers for you this year, as they do every year. Those prayers ask God to “increase the faith and understanding of our catechumens, that, reborn in the font of Baptism, they may be added to the number of your adopted children.” Knowing that we have to wait a bit longer for this prayer to be fulfilled gives it an extra poignancy and urgency as we wait to stop waiting.

For now, we have to wait a bit longer to hear the beautiful words baptizing you in the name of our common Father, and the Son, and Holy Spirit. But when that day comes, we will know that we will be, for all time to come, sisters and brothers.

For now, we have to wait a bit longer to hear those beautiful words of reception, “you will be one with us for the first time at the Eucharistic table of the Lord Jesus.” But

when that day comes, we will know that, like all sisters and brothers, we will gather together at our family table.

For now, we have to wait a bit longer to hear the prayer at your Confirmation that the Holy Spirit “will strengthen you to be active members of the Church and to build up the Body of Christ.” But, when that day comes, we will know that, like all sisters and brothers, we all have something unique to contribute to strengthening our common family.

But, in these days when we wait, know that you are all in my prayers. I do not remember what it felt like so long ago to wait in eager anticipation to meet a new member of my family. But, I know now what it is like to wait in eager anticipation to meet you. May God bless you abundantly as we welcome this sacred Easter season – and as we prepare to end our wait and walk together, as sisters and brothers, through much longed-for ordinary times.

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