

**EASTER MEDITATION:  
THE EMPTY TOMB AND THE  
QUESTION THAT CHANGES EVERYTHING**



*By Fr. Agustino Torres, OFR*

**My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,**

The Resurrection of our Lord is not only a story from the past. It is a deeply personal encounter with the living Christ. On Easter Sunday, the Gospel of John gives us four responses to the empty tomb, and each one reflects the ways we respond when God enters our lives in surprising ways.

Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb while it is still dark. She loves Jesus, but when she sees the stone rolled away, fear takes over: "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb" (Jn 20:2). **Her wounded heart interprets the sign as loss.** How often do we do the same? Our pain, disappointments, and old wounds can make us assume the worst when God is actually inviting us into hope.

Peter runs to the tomb and sees the burial cloths lying there, yet the Gospel tells us he still does not fully believe. He sees the facts, but trust does not come easily. Past failures, skepticism, and self-reliance can keep even sincere disciples from surrendering to what God is doing right in front of them.

When John arrives, he looks into the tomb, sees the same clothes, and "he saw and believed" (Jn 20:8). John does not need a long explanation. **His heart already knows Jesus.** Because he had leaned on the Lord before, he is ready to trust now. His quiet faith stands in contrast to fear and doubt.

Finally, the risen Jesus appears to Mary and speaks only one word: "Mary." That personal call changes everything. The woman who came weeping leaves as a witness. The one who feared loss is sent to proclaim the greatest joy in history. Christ meets her in her grief and transforms her into the first messenger of the Resurrection.

That is what the Risen Lord still does. He does not wait for perfect people or perfect faith. **He meets us in our woundedness, our hesitation, our doubts, and our trust,** and He calls each of us by name.

This Easter, I am also filled with gratitude for the work of the Missionary Formation Institute. Last December, we gathered for Advanced Preaching I, and the fruit has been abundant. Many participants returned home with practical tools to prepare talks more quickly, preach with confidence, and share the faith more naturally in daily life.

One participant shared that the workshop helped her organize talks faster and gave her greater confidence in

ministry. Another now gives weekly exhortations to school children from ages 5 to 18. Others have stepped forward to give talks without hesitation, share testimonies at retreats, teach OCIA, speak about faith in workplaces and universities, and begin new apostolates. Many have grown in trust in the Holy Spirit, in courage to serve, and in joy in building community.

**More than 82% said the formation encouraged them to serve more actively in their parishes.** These stories remind us that the empty tomb is not just an event we remember; it is a reality still bearing fruit in lives changed by grace.

The empty tomb asks each of us: How will you respond when you see that the stone has been rolled away? No matter where you begin, Jesus still calls you by name.

The Resurrection does not deny our wounds. It declares that our wounds do not have the final word-- Jesus does. He has conquered death. **He has left the tomb empty so that our hearts do not need to remain trapped in fear,** resentment, blame, or self-pity.

This Easter, let the risen Jesus speak your name. Let Him draw you out of anxiety into trust, out of hesitation into courage, and out of silence into witness. Dare to believe. Dare to hope. Dare to let Him heal what you thought could never be healed.

**ALLELUIA! HE IS TRULY RISEN!**





## RENEWING THE FIRE IN PURE HEART

This Easter season, we are filled with hope and gratitude as we reflect on the incredible growth and renewed energy of Pure Heart in Cebu. A recent visit by Fr. Agustino revealed a community that is not only thriving but also ready for significant expansion in the coming years.

Thanks to the generosity of supporters, over \$8,000 was raised to strengthen Pure Heart's outreach efforts. **We are especially grateful to Day One Group LLC**, the official sponsor of the mission, for their generous support. If your business would be interested in sponsoring a CP mission, please contact us at [Padreagustino@corazonpuro.org](mailto:Padreagustino@corazonpuro.org).

This sponsorship provided essential media equipment – including a camera, phone, and microphone – empowering the Pure Heart team to evangelize more effectively through creative digital content such as podcasts and social media.

Under the leadership of Executive Director Jasper Gae Salomeo, Pure Heart has taken important steps to strengthen its foundation. In 2025, they carried out missions reaching over **500 young people through formation programs rooted in Theology of the Body**. Strong partnerships with organizations like Enfants du Mekong and the Community of St. John are opening new doors for expansion.

Looking ahead, Pure Heart has an ambitious and inspiring program for 2026, including retreats, youth formation initiatives, and outreach to underserved communities. We are deeply grateful for your ongoing prayers and generosity. Together, we are helping form hearts and minds for Christ, bringing the light of the Resurrection to young people around the world.



## JAMAICA MISSION

Our focus on mission in Jamaica was to teach the basics of the faith to school children in order to help them continually encounter the heart of God long after we left. It was such a blast! The first school we visited was tucked deep in the rainforest, yet I was surprised to find it teeming with joyful children!

**Most parishes in this area of Jamaica only receive Mass once every month**, so the kids were so excited to see missionaries coming to bring them more of Jesus. They loved learning and singing worship songs - often adding their own amazing, hilarious dance moves to go along with the music. The children at all four of the schools we visited **seemed hungrier for love than anything else**, even though they were evidently lacking many material necessities.

In response to their hunger, our team of missionaries unanimously stepped up to teach the faith in creative ways that really engaged the children. The most treasured encounters for us were the moments we simply got to play with, comfort and encourage the kids. We were also blessed to give a retreat for the local parish, St. Theresa's, who so kindly hosted us during our stay. **It was touching to see them flock to the church wearing their Sunday best** and excited to spend all morning after Mass hearing talks and singing songs with us!

All of us finished this mission truly humbled by the joy the Jamaicans had despite their struggles. It is a needed reminder for us to be truly grateful for what we have and to be generous toward others with our joy, love and possessions!

– Abbey M.

## MISSIONARY FORMATION - ADVANCED PREACHING 1: PREACHING WITH THE FIRE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Last December, more than 35 Corazón Puro missionaries from NY, NJ, CA, IN, and Costa Rica gathered in New York City for a transformative weekend of formation. Throughout the weekend, missionaries practiced in front of a live audience, shared personal testimonies, and developed talks on meaningful topics, all **while deepening their sense of mission**. Rooted in prayer, responded to the invitation to return home ready to inspire, lead, and bring the light of Christ to others.



Andrea W

At API, learned how to structure a talk, engage an audience, and communicate with clarity. For the first time, I felt equipped with concrete tools to apply the knowledge I already had. Returning home, I **prepared and delivered a two-talk series for youth groups with greater clarity and intentionality**. This growth was evident not only in how I structured my talks, but also in how I engaged the audience and carried myself as a leader.

Before attending Advanced Preaching, I had a desire to give talks. I expected to learn strategies to be a better speaker, but it was much more. Embers were blown by the Holy Spirit into full fires. It was another Missionary Formation where I was caught off guard by being called—compelled to go out and use what I learned. The lessons were powerful but being surrounded by Corazón Puro familia changes things. **When we gather to learn, pray, and rejoice as the body of Christ, the heart of Jesus is living and active**. We cease to be people motivated by our own self-interest and come alive—always in the Eucharist.



Linden K

Attending AP1 before our mission trip to Jamaica was a true blessing! In Jamaica, we had opportunities to talk about the faith to school children. I was grateful for Advanced Preaching because it prepared me to give my talk even on short notice. The training gave me structure and confidence in a way I could easily pivot my talk, even if it was at the last minute. **To be able to put into practice what I learned at AP1 in Jamaica was a true blessing**, and it has not just helped me on mission but even in my daily life.



Johnathan H



The R.E.A.L. Formation team has been busy these past months. From coast to coast, we have been traveling, presenting, and working closely with parishes to support Confirmation programs and youth ministry efforts. We are grateful to see the continued growth of the program. The books are reaching more parishes across the country, and the R.E.A.L. Formation app, developed and supported by our team, is now being used in **13 dioceses**, with even more growth projected for the upcoming school year. We are also excited to share that we are hosting a webinar — **a free class demo where you**, or anyone who could benefit from R.E.A.L. Formation, can explore the program and see how it works. Flyer on the next page!

One of the most exciting developments is the upcoming launch of our **fully bilingual program**. We'll be able to support bilingual parishes by allowing students and catechists to see English and Spanish **side-by-side**, making it easier to teach and learn in the language they are most comfortable with. Along with the books, **the app will also become fully bilingual**, allowing users to select their preferred language within the platform. Please keep our developers in your prayers as they continue building and improving the app.

We are also grateful for the work happening through **CPNJ**, where local parish missions for young people have been taking place. Catechists and youth leaders have been using R.E.A.L. Formation lessons and videos to prepare talks on topics such as the Merciful Father, Conversion, Confession, and Chastity. The program continues to help leaders pass on Church Teaching with clarity, creativity, and confidence.

We are excited for what God has in store for this coming year and grateful to continue serving parishes, catechists, and families through **R.E.A.L. Formation**.





# FREE CLASS DEMO: EXPERIENCE R.E.A.L. FORMATION

Get your own exclusive access to the R.E.A.L. Formation app, explore a full sample lesson and hear from the team!

**TWO SESSIONS OFFERED:**  
 Wednesday, May 6th  
 7:00 PM EST  
 Thursday, May 7th  
 1:00 PM EST

**FULL DEMO OF A CLASS**  
**LIVE Q&A**

Everyone who signs up will receive the webinar recording!




### ENCOUNTERING CHRIST AT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

Catholic Campus Ministry at Prince of Peace Chapel has been truly fruitful this year. We are especially grateful to the CFRs for their generous presence on campus. They join us every other Tuesday during common hours and lead our Wednesday Bible study, helping students grow in their understanding of Scripture and their relationship with God.

We continue to grow our community by inviting students to deepen their relationship with Jesus and reminding them that they are not alone in their faith. **We attended the March for Life (both local and national)**, which were meaningful experiences for those involved. We also welcomed guest speakers to William Paterson University, enriching our community through their faith and witness.

As interest in the faith has grown, this year we are offering two OCIA classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays. **We have nine students preparing to receive their sacraments at the Easter Vigil.** Please keep them in your prayers!



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### APRIL

**10th - 12th:** First Stage Retreat CP Cargago  
**24th - 26th:** Missionary Formation Conference Cincinnati  
**27th:** R.E.A.L. Formation Training, Haledon, NJ  
**28th:** R.E.A.L. Formation Training, Randolph, NJ

### JULY

**10th - 12:** 2nd Stage CP Matagalpa  
**17th - 19th:** 1st Stage Retreat CP NorCal

### SEPTEMBER

**3rd - 7th:** Mission to Nicaragua

### MAY

**6th & 7th:** R.E.A.L. Formation Webinar

### JUNE

**28th - July 5th:** Missionary Formation Week in New York City

### AUGUST

**5th - 11th:** CFRs Young Adult Rome and Assisi Pilgrimage  
**23rd:** Corazón Puro Anniversary in New York City

### OCTOBER

**16 - 18:** 2nd Stage CP Cartago  
**31st - Nov. 1st:** Advanced Preaching 1, New York City

## THE WORLD IS THIRSTING FOR AUTHENTIC LOVE, HELP US QUENCH THE THIRST!



To donate, please scan the QR Code  
 or mail a check to:  
 Corazon Puro  
 190 Butler St.  
 Paterson, NJ 07524