

Medal In Orbit

Priests have been heard to remark after blessing a St. Christopher car medal, "The blessing doesn't work over 60 miles an hour."

Their humorous theology received a double set back in recent days.

A St. Christopher medal on the Vanguard satellite is currently orbiting around the world at a speed of 18,000 miles an hour, and a Washington Episcopal rector thundered his anathema against this blatant superstition.

Whether or not St. Christopher's powerful prayers actually lifted the Vanguard satellite to its globe girdling course after two previous medal-less attempts had failed is a question we will wait for judgment day to answer.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE RECORD it might be well to remind our readers that the orbiting medal depicts the famous St. Christopher bearing the Christ Child across a turbulent stream. The name Christopher in its Greek original means "Christ-bearer."

And also for the sake of the record it might be well to remind our readers that the orbiting medal depicts the famous St. Christopher bearing the Christ Child across a turbulent stream. The name Christopher in its Greek original means "Christ-bearer."

The intrepid voyager was also devout and had the cross of Christ raised on the shores of the New World on that eventful October 12th afternoon in 1492.

We saw no newspaper reports about the sermon in Washington on the Sunday after the Russian's launched their dog-bearing Sputnik. We doubt, however, that the rector voiced any objection to that.

IT SEEMS STRANGE, doesn't it, that the reverend gentlemen gives the obvious impression that he prefers a dog-bearer to a Christ-bearer?

We're sure he didn't mean to give that impression but it shows the people get into when this separation of church and state fetish gets into your system.

Meantime, despite the rector's pulpit blast, St. Christopher and the Christ Child medal is still in orbit at super-sonic speed.

And the priests' advice is still true for us earth bound creatures, so do drive carefully—and stay out of the rector's way, he might object to your St. Christopher car medal. That's union of church and driving you know.

Late Show

We sympathize with editors of Catholic magazines who must search for interesting material to fill their pages. It is easy to see that some of the brightest copy, not to mention some of the prettiest pictures, lies out in Hollywood or on Broadway or Las Vegas.

But playing up the "Catholic angle" in articles and features on the personalities of the entertainment world is tricky business. More than one editor has had his "model Catholic" blow up right in his ink-stained face. Subsequent embarrassment all around.

The idea that the Church is somehow glorified because it claims the allegiance of a top-ranking bazooka player or a leading mambo dancer is really rather feeble apologetics anyway. We doubt if it sells many catechisms.

Let's leave the poor entertainers peacefully in the pews, taking their chances on canonization with the rest of us — after the final curtain.

—Indianapolis Catholic and Record

SERMONETTE

By REV. JAMES D. MURPHY

"Where There Is Despair—Hope"

Despair is a frightening word. Ordinarily we use the word only in the extreme. It doesn't come easily into our conversation. We shy away from it because of its finality.

The word conjures up fatal images in our mind... the smoking pistol clutched in the lifeless hand at the side of the still bleeding corpse... the doctor at the bedside regretfully shaking his head as he holds the empty sleeping pill bottle in his hand... the scene of a crazed traitor swinging from a tree with a halter tight about his neck. He had betrayed the Son of God for thirty pieces of silver.

Yes, despair is final in its implications. It is synonymous with suicidal.

Hope is the virtue and despair is the vice. As the virtue admits of varying degrees, so the vice, St. Francis was not talking of despair in the extreme.

His insight into human nature warned him the devil would be ever busy driving his wedge of despair into the pattern of our daily lives. Despair, he knew, could best be countered by the cross word, the harsh look, the uncharitable innuendo.

A headache or a hangover... a ruffled temper allowed to be projected can multiply itself a thousand times in the course of a day. Conversely a smile, a pat on the back, the expressed recognition of a job well done can become contagious and ripple itself out in every direction until it meets the hard rock ridges of non-acceptance.

All too often do we sit back and wait for the opportunity of doing the big things. St. Francis knew that most of us would never have the opportunity of doing big things. It would be the accumulation of the every day little acts that would add up to the big things in the average life.

Will you do anything to dispel the despair sown by the devil? Certainly you have had opportunities. Don't wait for the big opportunity.

Say the prayer of St. Francis and mean it: "O Lord, where there is despair, help me let me sow a little seed of hope."

Courier Journal
OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER OF THE ROCHESTER DIOCESE

Vol. 69 No. 27 Friday, April 4, 1958

MOST REV. JAMES E. KEARNEY, D.D., President

Published every Friday by the Rochester Catholic Press Association.
MAIN OFFICE: 115 E. Main St., Rochester 4, N.Y.
ADDITIONAL OFFICES: 125 E. Main St., Albany 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Buffalo 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Syracuse 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Utica 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Watertown 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Oswego 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Plattsburgh 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Poughkeepsie 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Port Jervis 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Randolph 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Rensselaer 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Rotterdam 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Troy 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., West Coxsack 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Westerlo 4, N.Y.
112 E. Main St., Yonkers 4, N.Y.

COURIER-JOURNAL

Friday, April 4, 1958

Why We Believe

JOSEPH BREIG

Holy Week

Jesus Rose From The Dead

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the keystone truth of Christianity.

St. Paul admits this consequence, "If Christ has not risen, vain then is our preaching, vain too is your faith... If with this life only in view we have had hope in Christ, we are of all men the most to be pitied." (1 Corinthians 15: 14 and 19.)

IF CHRIST stayed dead after His crucifixion He would have been the world's most spectacular failure.

His claims to divinity, His preaching and miracles, His life of virtue would all have been betrayed by His final defeat in death.

Our Lord Himself staked everything He said or did on the fact that He would return from the grave.

"An evil and adulterous generation demands a sign," Jesus once told the Scribes and Pharisees, "and no sign shall be given to it but the sign of the prophet. For even as Jonas was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matthew 12: 39, 40.)

If this predicted sign did not take place, the whole Gospel message would collapse.

So Jesus had to rise from the dead—to prove His claims, as also to continue His work.

What are the facts which convince Christians that Jesus did come back to life?

On the first Easter Sunday, at the first glimmer of dawn, a violent earthquake rocked the sepulcher where the dead Christ had been buried. He came from the tomb without breaking the seals set there at Pilate's order. An angel, dazzling white, rolled the wheel-like stone from the hip high entrance, way leading to the burial vault of the cave.

The trembling earth and resplendent angel would have been enough to terrify even the boldest of Roman soldiers, but when they saw the tomb was empty they were frozen with fear and became "as dead men." (Matthew 28:4.)

As they recovered from shock they fled to the city, found the Jewish priests and told their incredible story. At a hastily summoned session of the Council—the chief priests decided to bribe the guards to say that while they slept—a crime punishable by death according to Roman law—Jesus' disciples stole the body.

The excuse was a ridiculous lie for if the guards were asleep how could they know who carried off the body, and if they were not asleep why did they fail to stop the robbery? Bad as it was, the excuse was the best that could be invented in the urgent haste of the moment and a glib crowd mob will believe anything.

The guards were still not satisfied. What about Pilate and the Roman penalty for sleeping on duty? The chief priests had the answer to that problem too and it was the same as for the guards—cash, cold cash. Pilate had his price and the priests would make the payment.

The absurd tale spread but backed. The patent lie is one of the best proofs that the dead Christ came back to life.

It is true the guards did not see Christ Himself.

All they saw was the empty tomb. The risen Saviour did not show Himself to eyes unworthy of the vision. St. Peter later said, "God who raised Jesus from the dead on the third day did not give Him to manifest Himself to all the people, but to witnesses forechosen by God." (Acts 10: 40, 41.)

Quite obviously, the Blessed Virgin Mary was first to receive this favor. Scripture, it is true, makes no mention of such an episode but St. Ignatius, one of the earliest Christian writers, says the Gospels suppose we are endowed with intelligence.

Certainly the Virgin Mary was closest to the heart of her Son at the incarnation, nativity, and in the bitter hours of His passion. If Mary did not choose to reveal the apparition on Easter for the Gospel writers to record it is because as at Christmas she kept this mystery to ponder it in her heart. (Luke 2: 51.)

The coming and going of the holy women at the sepulcher, their bewilderment and



He has risen even as He said. (Matthew 28:6)

cher, their bewilderment, and quite matter of fact conversations with the angels indicate Easter morning was a day utterly unlike every other day.

All four Gospel writers report the fact that "certain women" were at the tomb but details as to the number of women, the time they came, and who they were are not clear. Even a casual reading of the four accounts shows that there were several women who came in separate groups at different hours but they all saw one undeniable and unexplainable fact—the tomb was empty.

MARY MAGDALENE was one of the first to arrive, just as the first light of dawn began to banish the darkness of night. She saw the stone rolled back and the vacant grave.

Guards were gone, and the angel apparently gone too for no mention is made of him.

The Magdalene shot back to the city to report to "the apostles Peter and John." They have taken the Lord out of the tomb and we know not where they have laid Him." (John 20:2.) She thus far did not suspect the tremendous fact of the resurrection but suspected that the guards or warding thieves had broken into the tomb to desecrate the dead.

PETER AND JOHN ran through the still sleepy city along the fifteen minute route to the sepulcher.

Peter was the first to enter, followed by John.

They noted that the shroud and winding bands and the napkin used to cover the face were neatly folded and placed aside in the corner. They knew Mary Magdalene was mistaken. This was not the work of desecration. This was the work of God. And John, we are told, was the first to believe his Master was risen.

Then in quick succession came the apparitions to those "forechosen by God." Mary Magdalene back at the tomb sat there weeping still not believing. Through her tears she saw our Lord but did not recognize Him until He spoke her name, "Mary." The familiar voice woke her to the reality that He was alive.

AT APPROXIMATELY this same moment, two disciples of our Lord who were in Jerusalem for the Passover feast set out on their homeward journey toward Emmaus. They already heard the rumors buzzing through the city that the tomb was empty and they discussed the possibilities on their trek back home.

Many other pilgrims to the Holy City were on the road to their homes too and one traveler joined the pair for companionship. They did not recognize that their companion was Jesus. They told Him of the news, as if He were a total stranger, and their hopes that this Jesus of Nazareth was the promised Saviour.

"O unfeeling spirits and hearts—show to believe what the prophets have spoken!" Jesus said to them. "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:25.)

And then He placed together the prophecies from Moses



By FATHER HENRY ATWELL

VIII—Table And Tomb

The altar of every Catholic Church is a table and a tomb.

It is a table because the ceremony of the Mass done at the altar enacts the Last Supper of our Lord.

The altar is also a tomb because it contains the relics of saints.

In the near twenty centuries since Jesus Christ said the first Mass at the Last Supper the size and style of altars have varied but every altar has retained this double role of table and tomb.

CHURCH LAWS today require that an altar used for Mass must have some essential furnishings. Additional decorations are left to the taste and preference of the priest and people.

First and foremost, every altar must be made of stone.

When the whole altar cannot be stone, at least a small stone slab about a foot square and an inch thick—called the altar stone—is inserted in the wooden table top just in front of the tabernacle.

Hollowed out in the stone is an inch round cavity in which are placed the relics of saints.

THE TABERNACLE occupies a central position on the altar. It is the House of God where Christ dwells to welcome His faithful not only at the time of Mass but throughout the other hours of the day as well. Church laws are very detailed and specific concerning the safe custody of the Blessed Sacrament.

There are no prescribed dimensions for the tabernacle except it is to be covered on all sides with a veil.

The altar is to be covered with three linen cloths, a reminder that the Mass is a banquet and also to recall the linen bands in which our Lord was wrapped for His burial.

A frontal cloth, called an antependium, is required by ritual laws but few American churches observe the custom. Ordinarily the frontal should match the priest's vestments.

The main altar of a cathedral and all altars where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved must also have a canopy, either supported by four posts or extending out from the back wall.

The altar is to be elevated by one or more steps, usually three. There is no symbolism meant in this. The steps just put the altar up higher so the people can see the Mass ritual better.

Every altar must also have a cross, either standing on the altar or hanging on the wall behind. This, of course, is a constant reminder that the sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice our Saviour offered on the Cross.

Although we today take the crucifix for granted it is one of the most recent additions to the altar's furnishings. Even in the sixteenth century there were still altars without crosses. And today the law requires a cross, not a crucifix.

Early Christians, often eye witnesses of the horrible torture of crucifixion, made their crosses symbols of life rather than death. Crosses were jeweled, decorated with emblems or with our Lord's initials IHS or XP. Greek letters representing the first letters of the name Jesus Christ.

About the sixth century, figures of our Lord were added to these crosses but He was represented as alive, not dead. He was shown robed and wearing a crown as a King.

When the Crusaders came back from their battles in the Holy Land they brought the memory of the sacred places where our Lord suffered and died. Artists then began to design crosses showing the crucified and agonizing Christ—and that is the style we know so well today.

An altar must also have candlesticks with beeswax candles. The candles represent Christ who said, "I am the light of the world." The candles also represent the Christian

LITURGICAL FEATURE
This is the last in a series of articles explaining the history and ceremonies of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

people who serve Christ with the spiritual flame of true devotion.

Two candles are used for low Mass; four may be used if the low Mass is attended by a large number of people. Six candles burn for High Mass, twelve for Benediction, twenty for Forty Hours.

Cards containing prayers from the missal are also placed on the altar when a priest (not a bishop) says Mass. Only one card, the center one, is required, although the side cards are used just about everywhere.

The Missal is the large book which has all the prayers and ritual directions for the Mass ceremony.

Flowers are permitted and even encouraged on feast days, but they should not turn the altar into a flower show. They are to decorate, not drown the altar. Flowers may not be placed before the tabernacle door where the Blessed Sacrament is kept.

THE HISTORY of the altar through the centuries shows that it has been round, square, oblong, wood, metal, and stone.

For nearly a thousand years the altar stood out from the wall of the church so the priest said Mass facing the people, just as the Pope still does at St. Peter's in Rome.

The reason for the opposite practice today dates back to the tenth century when shrine churches began attracting large numbers of pilgrims like Canterbury in England, Cologne in Germany.

The bodies of saints were taken from their burial places and put in ornate reliquaries above and behind the shrine church's altar. Devotion to the saint swelled into prominence and the relics became the focus of attention—even to the extent that the priest faced the relics instead of the people during Mass.

Other churches which could not boast of some famous relic substituted pictures and statues of the saints in elaborate backdrops—again calling attention away from the altar.

This trend reached its climax during the Renaissance period when the altar was dwarfed by the monumental decorations behind it. Also added to the altar about this time were the gradines or steps on the altar to hold more candlesticks and sumptuous flower arrangements.

During the last fifty years there has been a trend back to the simpler altar.

Architects are again designing churches to focus attention on the altar. The Church is a wise Mother and does not push in either direction. There is room for those who prefer an ornate altar and room for those who prefer a plain altar.

The important thing to remember is that the Catholic altar is the table of the Lord and the tomb of His saints.

At every altar at every Mass the people of God accomplish that tremendous mystery of giving worship to God and receiving His grace for their souls.

The altar is the symbol that God is with His people and they are with Him. The altar is proof that Christians after twenty centuries have not forgotten our Lord's most sacred command: He said the first Mass, "Do this in memory of Me."