

The Easter Vigil Defused

Part I
By FATHER BENEDICT EHMANN

The new Easter Vigil is now 25 years old, the first and most radical of all the modern changes in the Church's liturgy. It would be great if the Alleluias of 1976 could vibrate with the joy of hope fulfilled — the ardent hope voiced by Pope Pius XII when he proclaimed the new Vigil in 1951, that it might be instrumental in raising the Easter consciousness of the Christian people.

But, after 25 years, the most we can say about it is that "we've only just begun." The full potential of the Vigil liturgy is waiting to be tapped. "We've only just begun." Until the parishes, all of them, give top priority to the Easter Vigil celebration, such as it honestly deserves, the Catholic folk will be only outsiders to the paschal riches of Jesus. They will not be the Easter people which by right of the Christian estate they ought to be.

The primary pastoral task of today is to restore our people to the fullness of their baptismal heritage; to recover for them the center of Christian living, which is the actual participation in the "dying and rising" of Christ the Lord; to imbue them with the realization of how their baptism has made them "a new creation" and that they are what St. Peter called the baptized, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9).

In his fine book *The New Man*, Thomas Merton writes: "It is vitally important for Christians to understand something of the central mystery of their faith, and to build their lives not only on a hope of avoiding sin, of carrying out the practices of their religion, of dying on the right side of the law, but above all upon a knowledge of God and His love" (p. 195). It is with this central mystery of our faith that the Easter Vigil is engaged. And this is why it is

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terribly disappointing when it is treated as just another service, more tiring than all others because of its length, and attended by a meagre minority in most places.

Bishops and pastoral staffs must (repeat: must) get together on how to rejuvenate the Christian people with the Easter Vigil, and with all that leads up to it in Lenten faith and order. To prepare for this awesome work, they themselves need to be invigorated with the strong Easter spirit of the first Christian centuries. They would do well to make a retreat with the Epistle to the Romans, especially chapters 6 and 8, and with the Fathers of the Church, especially Cyril of Jerusalem, Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, and the stunningly beautiful sermon of Melito of Sardis on *The Paschal Mystery*. Fired with enthusiasm by their immersion in these heady sources, they could not help being charismatic in their influence upon the Christian people, to lead them into the depths of Christian consciousness, instead of leaving them where too many of them now are, wading or floundering in the shallows.

Easter should mean revolution. It meant revolution when it first happened. It turned apostles inside out and upside down. It smote the Roman world, proud, hard, cynical, lustful, appallingly cruel. Through nineteen centuries, over and over again, this revolution overturned pride, greed and selfishness. It changed hundreds of thousands into living Christs, gentle, merciful, pure, brave, devoted to the spiritual.

Each Christian must find in Easter a crucible of conversion. The fact that so many are "cradle Catholics" does not mean that they have automatically experienced this crucible. A Catholic may undergo in a lifetime a dozen conversions — each of them a further healing of blindness and constriction — a new awareness of the meaning of Christ and the Church — a new strengthening of Christian responsibility — a deeper entry into the faith-community.

No room for smugness here! Easter by Easter we should continue to grow. How can we imagine that the divine Son should become one of us and be riven with nails on a criminal's cross, only to produce the mediocre specimens so many of us are? Each Lent should bring us to become more humble and contrite, more open and hungry for God's will. Then, yes then, the Easter Resurrection, so powerfully dramatized in the Vigil, would invade us with overwhelming power. Then indeed we would become the dangerous people the Lord wants to make us. We would be the real revolution of our times, fearing nothing from any other kind of revolution.

The early Church had the secret of bringing up genuine Easter Christians. The Church today still has the Easter power. But she needs to find again the secret of how to awaken the Easter consciousness in her people. The odds of modern life may seem overwhelmingly greater than in ancient Rome; but only if you do not know the history of ancient Rome.

[To be continued]



Aquinas Alumni

Aquinas graduates organizing the ninth annual Alumni Appeal include Don Miller, left, vice chairman; Jack McDonald, chairman, and Father Albert Gaelens, CSB, principal. The phonathon workers' dinner is scheduled for May 10.

AQ Athletes Honored At Boosters' Dinner

Nearly 100 varsity athletes, and their parents, gathered at Aquinas on Palm Sunday for the Athletic Boosters Club banquet.

Father Edward Doser, CSB, who will not be back next year, was cited by the swimming team for the many years he has coached Aquinas swimmers. Father Doser has been transferred to Gary, Ind.

Varsity letters were distributed and outstanding performances recognized in the five major sports. The hockey team was congratulated for being Monroe County co-champion with Pittsford.

In basketball, John Montgomery received the most improved player award, Bill Magee was declared the most outstanding player and Mike Kelly was named the most valuable player. In swimming, Karl Weekes was named the most improved, Eric

Rule received the outstanding swimmer award and Joe Thomson took home the M.V.

The most improved runner in winter track was Tom Buerkle. Dan Mastrella, a senior, was named the most outstanding track member and Bob Birecree was declared the most valuable team member.

In hockey, Pat O'Donnell, a junior, was named the most improved; Terry Rood, most outstanding; Mark Herzog, most valuable. The Coaches Award for all out effort went to Dan Horn and Roy Higgins.

In wrestling, Larry Teta won the award for the most outstanding, and Michael Mulcahy, most improved. Mike Zimmer and his freshman brother, Dave, took boxing honors.

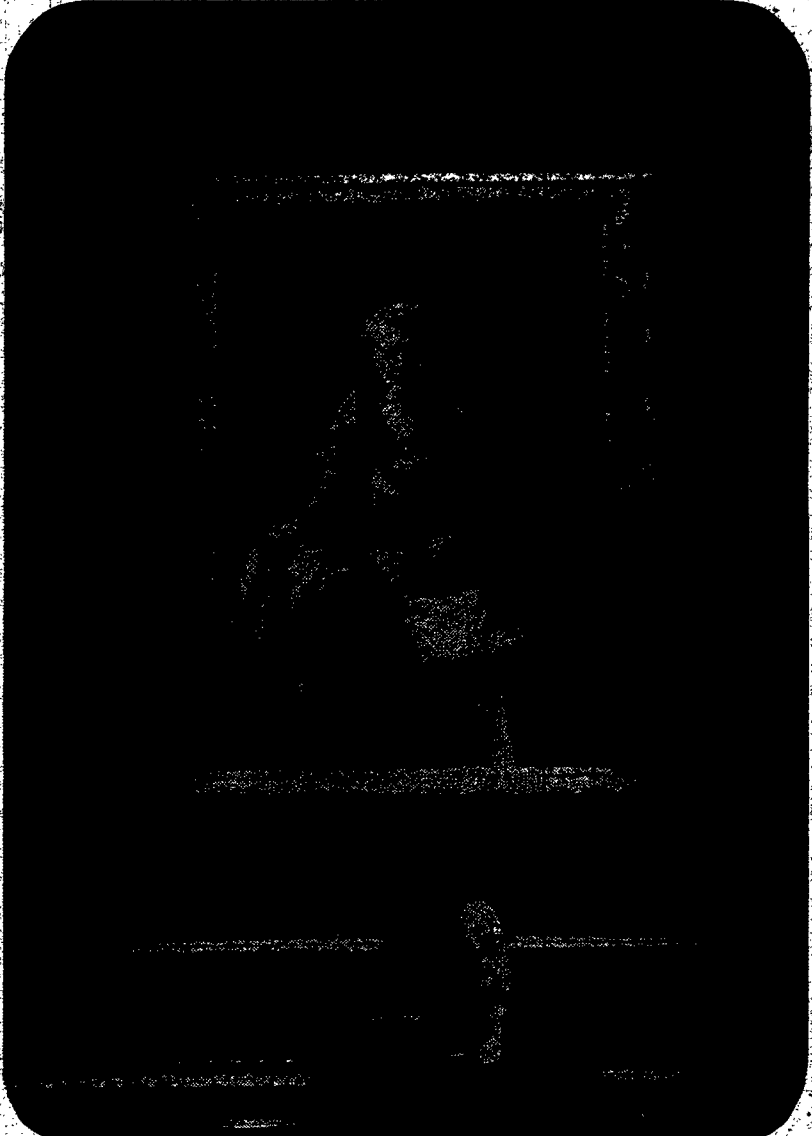


Photo by Ben Susso

Coincidence? Father McBrien talked about women's role in the Church while standing in front of a picture of Anabel Taylor, for whom the building was named in which the special Holy Week observance took place.

Theologian

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white males. If no one could possibly have a right to ordination, then no one can unjustly be excluded from ordination.

"Do we know for certain that God is not calling any women to ordination in the Catholic Church? If God were, in fact, calling women to ordination, and if, at the same time, the Church were preventing them from heeding God's call, then would there not be a question of justice involved?"

Commenting on the irregular ordination of women in the Episcopal Church that occurred in Philadelphia in July, 1974, he said that he felt that the ordination was a mistake, especially in that the women were not called to a ministry. Noting that one of the women was 79 years old, he emphasized that he felt that to be

ordained a person "should be in a position to be of service to the community" and that persons are "not ordained to exercise power." Those who are unable to serve, Father McBrien said, could reasonably be excluded from ordination.

As part of the reform that would allow the ordination of women, Father McBrien said that he feels that celibacy should become optional. He stated that "for many priests celibacy is an obstacle to effective ministry." He feels that the celibacy requirement is affecting the quality and variety of candidates for the priesthood. Admitting that the change to a married priesthood would change dramatically the relationship between the Church and the priest, he said that it would not be "a simple reform; but a necessary reform, it seems to me."

Fr. Curtiss Appointed To Tribunal

Father Donald J. Curtiss, assistant pastor of St. Patrick's, Elmira, has been appointed to the Diocesan Tribunal, the Pastoral Office announced this week. The assignment begins in June, and in the meantime, Father Curtiss will go away for advanced studies related to his new work.

He is a native of Rochester, ordained five years ago at St. Michael's, Penn Yan, after six years at St. Bernard's Seminary. He had attended Cathedral College in New York before entering St. Bernard's. Father Curtiss was at St. Patrick's, Seneca Falls, from June 1971 until his transfer to Elmira in June 1973.

The Pastoral Office also noted that Father Frank Lioi of the seminary faculty had been named to the U.S. Bishops liturgy commission. Father Lioi's specialty is church music. He is chaplain to the Newman Community at the Eastman School of Music.

Fr. Dyburys Dies

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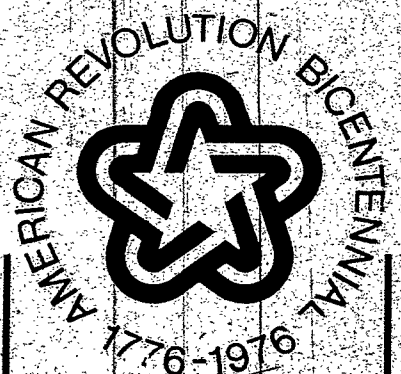
Father John Dyburys, OFM, pastor of St. George's Lithuanian Church on Hudson Avenue, died in St. Petersburg, Fla., on Holy Thursday, April 15, 1976. He had reached his 55th birthday two days earlier.

His body lay in state at St. George's Monday night, and the Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated there yesterday morning, with interment in a New York cemetery.

Father Dyburys was born in Lithuania and came to the United States via Canada in the late 1940's. He had been ordained in 1946. Before coming to Rochester in October 1974, he spent several years in Kennebunkport, Me., where the Lithuanian Franciscan vicariate of St. Casimir has its headquarters and runs St. Anthony High School.

BENEFIT SALE

The American Cancer Society's "Shop 8", at 8 Prince St. will hold a benefit garage sale on Saturday, April 24, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.



Your Heritage

April 19, 1853. Death of Father Stephen Badin, "proto-priest of the United States." Stephen Badin was a Frenchman who came to the United States in 1791 with the French Sulpician Fathers who opened St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore — the first Catholic seminary in the United States. A senior student, he was ordained a priest in 1793 by Bishop Carroll — another "first," for hitherto no priest had been ordained in this country. Father Badin was then assigned to the Kentucky mission. For some time he alone had charge of Catholics in Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Tennessee. Later he worked among the Indians in Indiana, founded an orphanage, and bought the land on which the University of Notre Dame now stands. A true missionary, strict but devoted to his people, he died and was buried in Cincinnati in 1853. His remains were later re-interred at Notre Dame. — Rochester Diocesan Bicentennial Commission.