

heights in Liturgy

Baptismal Vows: Easter Celebration

By FATHER BENEDICT EHMANN

The renewal of our baptismal promises during the Easter Masses may seem but a minor detail in the revised Liturgy. But it could have, and should have, important results in the years ahead, provided it is prepared for by a proper catechesis. It should help to make Easter Resurrection to be a live experience in every congregation.

For the Resurrection which Easter celebrates is not only that of the crucified Jesus "on the third day." It is also His resurrection in each Christian through baptism. In all times and in all places, Christians are Easter people. Engraved on their hearts and transfused into their being, Christ lives in them, in the power of His death, His burial and His resurrection. Their baptism has Christ-ened them.

St. Paul gives us the germinal idea which un-

derlies this reality. "In baptism you were not only buried with Him (Christ), but also raised to life with Him because you believed in the power of God who raised Him from the dead" (Col. 2:12). "You have died! Your life is hidden now with Christ in God" (ibid. 3:3). "Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Through baptism into His death we were buried with Him, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of His Father, we too might live a new life.

"If we have been united with Him through likeness to His death, so shall we be through a like resurrection... If we have died with Christ, we believe that we are also to live with Him... His death was death to sin, once for all; His life is life for God. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:3-5, 8, 10, 11).

When we went, or were held, under the water of baptism, the old Adam within us died, and was buried with Christ; and when we came up, or were lifted up, from the water, we came alive in the new Adam who is Christ. We rose in Him, and He in us, and became a "new creation" (1 Cor. 5:17). Newly baptized, we were now "dead to sin" and "alive to God." The physical rite, visible to the eyes, audible to the ears, was sacrament and symbol of an inner something; our eyes and ears could not take in - our dying and being born again in Jesus the Lord. No matter the calendar date of our baptism: whenever it is, it meant that Good Friday, Holy Saturday, Easter Sunday - the whole paschal mystery of Christ - was taking place within us.

A whole lifetime is hardly

Postmaster Finn Retires

William E. Finn, Rochester Postmaster and a parishioner at St. Louis, Pittsford, announced his retirement recently after almost 34 years of government service. His retirement is effective April 30.

Father John Reddington, pastor at St. Louis, describes Finn as a "very active layman." Father Reddington said that Finn is a daily communicant, serves as usher and is also a Lay Minister of the Eucharist.

In addition to his activities at St. Louis, Finn is vice-president of the Notre Dame Retreat League.

The 56-year-old Postmaster resides in Pittsford with his wife Ruth and two daughters Katherine and Jeanne. His son George is married and lives in Maryland.

Parish Mission At Brockport

Father Robert Devine, OSFS, of the Center for Renewal in Allentown, Pa., will conduct a mission April 24-28 at Brockport's Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Liturgies planned by various parish groups will begin at 7:30 each evening, and Father Devine will be accessible afternoons to those who seek private counseling.

Father Devine, a Philadelphian, became an Oblate of St. Francis de Sales in 1959 and was ordained in 1965. He has been involved in the Cursillo, Charismatic Renewal and Catholic Family movements. The public is invited to hear his talks.

COMMUNITY ROSARY

Elmira - There is a community rosary recitation each Sunday at 3:30 p.m. in St. Mary's Church, 224 Franklin St. All denominations are invited to attend.

enough to enable this baptism to prevail fully in each of us. Every day the baptismal process goes on within us, this "dying to sin" and "living to God." Constantly we are being baptized in that "fountain" of which Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) - "a fountain within us, leaping up to provide eternal life." But this ongoing vitality can go on only if we cooperate with it. To neglect it, or, by our conduct, contradict it, would be to dam it up or choke its channel within us. The discipline and penance of Lent have as their purpose to dredge the channel and unclog the sluices of our inner self, and so release the baptismal currents to flow freely in us.

How does this double dynamic of our baptismal "dying to sin" and "living to God" become a lived experience for us? Daily we "die to sin," when we say No to temptations and the occasions for sin; when we conquer pride, vanity, bitterness and hatred; when we discipline egotism and sensuality; when we fast and abstain; when we accept the pains, disappointments and tragedies of life, which come in spite of all our careful striving; when humbly and contritely we bow ourselves under the reconciling hands of our confessor; and when at last we make the total surrender of ourselves into God's hands as we die.

And daily we "live to God," when we commune with Him in faithful prayer, lifting a grateful and adoring heart to Him; when we read the Scriptures, searching for His word and His will; when we fulfill willingly the daily tasks; when we are attentive and

serviceable to the needs of others; when we give alms; when we strive to be Christlike in everything we say and do; when we share in the eucharistic banquet.

How fitting then that we should celebrate our baptismal resurrection with all the baptized community on Easter, by renewing the promises so lovingly made at our christening by our parents and godparents. Our hearts should be fervently gathered up into a resounding NO to the devil and all his works, and a jubilant YES to God and all His loving mercies.

LEGION OF MARY

Active and auxiliary members of the Legion of Mary renewed their pledges Sunday afternoon, April 3, at the 37th annual Acies Ceremony, held in St. Joseph's Church, Rush. Father Albert Shamon gave the homily.

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WORD FOR SUNDAY



Fr. **Albert Shamon**

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 20:1-9. (R1) Acts 10:34, 37-43. (R2) Col. 3:1-4.

The Easter gospel is the story of the pilgrimage of the apostles toward faith in the resurrection. This faith evolved from twin facts: the empty tomb and the prophecies in Scripture.

When Mary Magdalene arrived at the tomb, the stone had been moved away. She concluded someone had removed the corpse. She hurried to the apostles, hoping they would recover it. Because it was only a question of disappearance, the apostles believed her and went themselves to verify the matter. The tomb was empty, but the ceremonies which had shrouded the body of Jesus were on the ground. This precluded the hypothesis of removal. So the apostles "began to believe" (a reading preferred) to "he believed". The body of Jesus had obviously not been transported elsewhere. Could Jesus be arisen?

The answer was to be found in the Scripture (Hos. 6:2; Ps. 17:10). But at this moment the apostles did not have the key. "As yet they did not understand the Scripture." Faith has to be built not just on the empty tomb, but also on the Scripture.

The first step to faith is to experience emptiness. The world is the "tomb of God." Only when its emptiness is discovered can the first step to faith be taken. It was an experience of this kind that turned Cornelius to Peter.

The second step to faith comes from hearing the word of God. Thus faith was born when Peter explained to Cornelius and his household the resurrection of Jesus in the light of the Scriptures - "to him all the prophets testify." It is the fulfillment of Scripture in Christ that constitutes the essential object of faith. That is why the Scripture arguments assumed such importance in the missionary discourses of the apostles (R1). That is why we say in the Creed: "On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures."

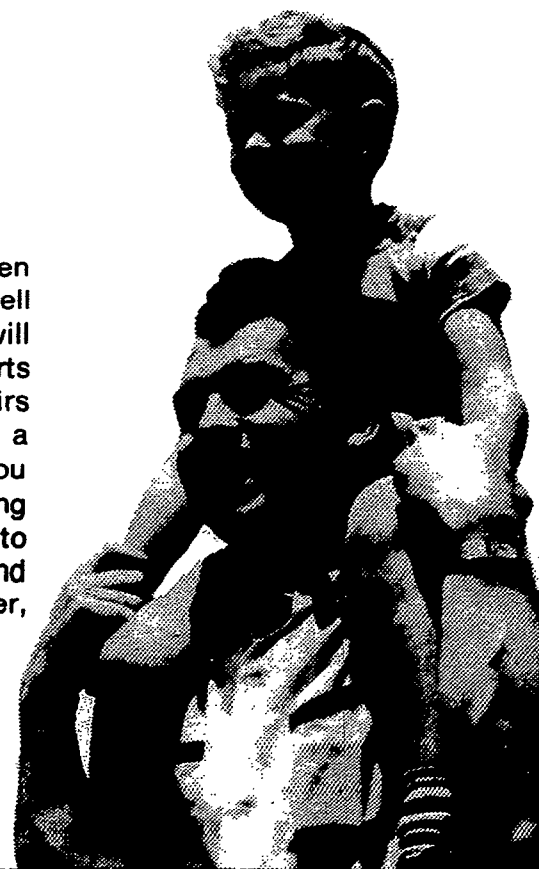
And both of these steps to faith are productive because of God's grace operating throughout. In the last analysis, faith is the gift of God. Paul wrote, "You have been raised up in company with Christ" - he uses the passive voice. Divine life is God's, not man's doing. If Christian life had its source from here below, religion would automatically be burdened with backbreaking do's and don'ts as happened with Phariseism, the religion of the Scribes and the Pharisees. But coming from above, as it does, there is not need to use human techniques for salvation and its maintenance. All that is required is that there be no compromise, that there be a complete break with a world that is always concerned to be its own source of life by use of fallible and sinful means.

The road to faith, therefore, begins when one undergoes the trial of the empty tomb, experiences the emptiness of the world, "the tomb of God." But such a feeling could easily lead to despair or cynicism were not one exposed to the word of God - "faith comes from hearing, from hearing the word of God." And both these experiences are the grace of God calling one to faith. Since faith is ours - and since it has been freely given us through no merit of our own - we cry out each Easter "Alleluia praise the Lord!"

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