

# THOUGHTS FOR LENT

## Another Light on Suffering

By FATHER WALTER L. WAINWRIGHT

Suffering in itself is certainly not a good thing. Suffering in itself has no value. It is only when there is a greater good to be derived that suffering really takes on a meaning and makes any sense. The idea of suffering seems always to be connected with the season of Lent. We don't necessarily call it suffering, it has another name:

penance. Sometimes too it is called Sacrifice.

Call it what you will, suffering takes on a great value if we see it and understand it in the light of the context of growth or of being strengthened. The idea of suffering is a negative one, again, if taken in itself. Put it together with a positive purpose and it changes drastically.

As an example, let us take the Gospel account of the

Temptations of Christ (Mt. 4:1-11). We usually place the greater emphasis on the temptations themselves. Without detracting from that aspect we should also consider that the temptation came after Jesus had spent 40 days in the desert. There aren't too many comforts in the rugged wilderness of the desert. There certainly weren't in Our Lord's day. Those days he spent in prayer to his Father were days when he had to "rough it" in the

truest sense of that term. He had to suffer quite a few discomforts which might well have run from cold nights to hot days and from little water to his fasting from food.

Again, taken in itself that suffering wouldn't have any value. What value did it have then? Here we're open to a lot of discussion and opinion. How about this? The discomforts, the suffering of those 40 days in the desert might well have

served to strengthen Jesus' humanity for what was to come throughout the rest of his earthly life. The great mission which was only beginning to unfold would demand eventually the shedding of his blood. There would be many occasions in his brief public life when his human nature would grow tired, when his patience and endurance would be tested. There would be encounters with so many different people, so many different situations when the man Jesus would have to call forth the strength of his being to meet one more demand and to be victorious over one more attack against his mission.

Our Lord's life is an example for us, as so many other events are. Jesus was teaching us by what he had endured that there would be times when we would be put to the test. He was teaching that, like himself, we have to be strengthened in order to claim victory over temptation.

Each year as we observe the season of Lent and take on some form of suffering or penance, we ought to remind ourselves that Lent is not some kind of endurance contest. We have been called by faith to be the 20th century disciples of Christ. We have been called to share in the continuing mission of Christ in our world. This season of penance is offered to us to become stronger disciples. Sometimes you hear someone tell what they are doing for Lent. Lent's purpose becomes clearer if, instead, they say what they are doing for Easter. Christ carried his cross to Calvary and endured all that suffering so he could carry the banner of the resurrection.

It's supposed to be that way with us too. Lenten penance, along with its sufferings, strengthens us to share in the carrying of the cross so in turn, we can walk proudly in the Easter parade, carrying our "Alleluia" banner.

## Women of the Church

By SISTER BARBARA MOORE

No matter what our walk of life may be, Lent affords us all a unique opportunity to do a bit of personal soul searching and to reflect on the reconciling gift of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Lent is a time when we can see our lives and our ministerial efforts mirroring in some way the life, death and resurrection of the Lord. For what else offers real meaning to those highs and lows, to the successes and failures that we all experience day after day?

When we contemplate the life and ministry of Jesus we see that he spent himself at the task of healing, reconciling and bringing people together. For those who believed and were struggling to be open he had the unique gift of calling forth the very best in others and breaking down the barriers which for so long had divided individuals and groups.

No matter what our role may be in the Body of Christ, how much we need people who are agents of

unity, bringers of reconciliation; people who love and call forth the best in others and urge them to place their gifts at the disposal of the Church, the community of believers.

One of the beautiful developments we are witnessing and experiencing during the 1970s is the unity and reconciliation that is coming among women. Women are bonding in their service of the Church. Married women, single women, and women who have chosen religious life see themselves as truly Women of the Church. They see much deeper ties that unite them than differences that divide them. Jewish and Christian women are bonding in an effort to understand and appreciate their common heritage and roots. Women of all walks of life are celebrating their giftedness, grateful to the Giver and then giving the same gifts away for the service of others. Truly in every sense of the term we are Sisters.

All women have much to learn from each other and much to give each other.

Our life experiences, our personal histories, our successes and failures, insights and understandings, our reflections and questions, struggles and doubts need to be shared. When they are, we can only be richer as individuals and groups and the life of the Body of Christ is enhanced.

Women should be looking for opportunities to share themselves and their gifts in all phases of life, both in Church and society. Parish, Region, Diocese, neighborhoods, communities, professions, government... all need the unique contributions that only women can make. There should be no limitation on the giving since God has been so generous with our gifts. In so many cases women and their talents are nurtured and we are all richer for it. But in other cases they are ignored, by-passed and their gifts are wasted and not celebrated, sad to say, not so much because of the gift, but because of the woman giving. When this happens the lesson of Lent becomes a reality for women and the experience of Holy Week becomes a lived experience for them here and now.

"By your cross, You have redeemed the world." People will really accept and understand this fact when they witness and experience sisters (in the fullest sense) and brothers in mutual respect and equality, giving to the Body of Christ what has been given so freely to all. We share the wonder of being created in the image of the Lord. We share the dignity of the Baptismal call, we share the heavy responsibility of renewing the face of the earth. I personally believe that that renewal will only come when together we work to make the life and message of Jesus Christ a reality to all those around us.

## God humbles Himself

By FATHER ALFRED MCBRIDE

Psalm 18 states: "You have stooped to make me great," in the New American Bible translation. Thus God humbles himself to bring about human greatness. Like a mere servant, God walks before Israel in the wilderness carrying the pillar of fire like a torch. God leaves the throne of glory and appears in a simple thorn bush to Moses. He descends from heaven to rest on the ark of the covenant and inside the limits of a temple.

How different is this view of God from other world perspectives. The Greeks created an apathetic god who did not worry about people. The Deists forged a watchmaker god who wound up the universe like a clock and forgot about it. Chinese philosophers preached about cosmic silence. One hears no god, only common sense law. The gods of mythology subjected people to fate and blinding necessity. People were just puppets in the hand of a chilling puppeteer.

These gods would not

engage in self humbling. They have no passion or empathy or concern for humans. That is why they never had a covenant. Only a God who could humble himself would enter into a covenant with man.

The covenant texts from Sunday's readings assume the self humbling of God. God steps down into the sandals of Abraham, experiences the despairing dead end of this man and his family. In so doing he heals the hopelessness of this homeless family and promises them a future based on trust and belief in that possibility. In Jesus this hope is fully realized by the saving Cross. The covenant sign of transfiguration forecasts the ultimate fulfillment of human hope in God.

Some people want to limit God to a Totally Other. But such a God would be too uncanny, too remote, too weird. A real God makes known his ways. God is indeed a mystery, but he is not too proud or distant to let us see something of himself. "Clouds and thick darkness are about him." This is his mystery. "His lightnings light the world.

The earth sees and adores." He reveals himself.

The concern of God, shining through covenant, especially the covenant of the Cross and its continuation in Eucharist, links God to our human predicaments. God does not leave us alone. The Bible says we are not alone and asks us to believe in God's self-humbling and loving concern.

This is seen in the scriptural theme of the anger of God. We hear not only his love, but his wrath. Not just the roses, but the yells and the hurricanes. This is not the evil anger of a petulant tyrant wanting to scare people. It is the good anger that rejects indifference, complacency and the so-called virtue of unshockability. His anger is the underside of love. God's sense of injustice is more intense than ours. The plight of the poor to us is a misdemeanor. To God it is a tragic disaster.

Our God is not ashamed to share in our humiliations. He stoops into them to bring us life and greatness. This is covenant. This is hope. This is the splendor of the self humiliation of God.

# POLLY-O

## LENTEN MENU

FEATURING POLLY-O  
MACARONI • GRATED CHEESE  
MOZZARELLI MUSHROOMS  
RECIPE OF THE WEEK

### Rigatoni with Zucchini & Mushrooms

4-6 servings

1 pound Polly-O Rigatoni (or any large cut macaroni)	1/2 teaspoon Italian seasonings
2 pounds, small, firm zucchini	1/2 pound Polly-O Mozzarella
2 cups fresh or 1 cup canned Polly-O Mushrooms	1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper
2 eggs, well beaten	4 tablespoons Polly-O Grated Parmesan or Romano Cheese

Wash zucchini very well and dry. Slice in 1/2 inch rounds. Wash and slice mushrooms. 1/2 inch thick. Heat oil in a skillet and saute zucchini and mushrooms until soft and tender, but not brown. Sprinkle with salt, pepper and Italian seasonings. Reserve and keep warm. Slice mozzarella cheese thinly and cut again into strips or pieces. Cook rigatoni according to package directions. Drain well and turn into very hot, large heat-proof serving dish. Add the mozzarella, etc. Then add zucchini and mushrooms, the hot oil from pan and the beaten eggs. Stir well until eggs are lightly set. Sprinkle with parmesan cheese and place in preheated 400° oven 10 minutes, until cheese melts. Serve immediately.

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