



THOUGHTS FOR LENT

Good Friday and the Holocaust

By FATHER ALFRED MCBRIDE

The New York and Philadelphia public school districts have introduced a study of the Nazi holocaust of the Jews into the curriculum. To prepare for that, the writers interviewed survivors of the death camps. One man remembered the camps from the time he was seven years old. He was a prisoner in 11 of them. His job was to dispose of the bodies after gassing. The interviewers were so horrified they could not handle the testimony. He opened wounds and feelings too deep. They used professional veneers to fend off further involvement. "Thank you, sir. We will proceed with implementation."



A Catholic nun present at the time felt so bad about this that she went up to the man. She expressed regret and compassion and hoped that he would not feel any sense of residual wor-

thlessness. He thanked her and said: "Each Friday evening, I gather with my wife and two daughters. I bless the bread and a cup of wine and pass them around. And then I kiss my wife and

two daughters. That is my Shabbat (Sabbath). This is my heaven. To be alive and know the love of my wife and children."

During this week of the Passion of Christ, we may

ponder the martyrdom of Jesus. Or the complex types of martyrdoms of various Christians. Or we may take time to dwell on the holocaust of the Jews in Nazi Germany — the martyrdom of a people. While one death, whether on Calvary or in the Roman arena or at Auschwitz is enough to touch anyone's conscience, the incomprehensible cruelty of the murders should sober one's conscience for the rest of human history. Yes, this may sober our conscience. We must also come to cope with such a record.

The immense horror of the holocaust and the possibilities of hope and resurrection find new meaning in the testimony of the survivor quoted above. Millions of good and just people died senselessly in Auschwitz and Dachau. Fortunately, some of these good and just people survived to witness the possibility of hope, in the face of a despair unimaginable to most of us.

Alleluia means "Praise the Lord." No one could sing it if Christ had not done so at the Last Supper on the Way to the Cross. No one would dare if Christians had not sung it on the way to the Roman arenas. No one would have the heart, if the man of our story had not told us of his holy Shabbat. The paradox of facing death with faith is that it draws from the dark jaws of apparent defeat the most astounding victories of the human spirit.

"In the midst of life we are toward death." Yet by the blessed wood of the Cross we have an Ark that bears us to new life. "Hail O Blessed Cross. We adore thee, O Jesus, for by thy holy Cross thou hast redeemed the world."

Prayer

Lord Christ, crucified God, you sang an alleluia psalm at the end of the Last Supper on your way to betrayal and death. It is the only time your singing was recorded. Show us by this your insight into the bright hope that lay beyond the darkness of death. Stir us to bear with equal courage the Cross we must inevitably carry. We bless and adore you, O Redeemer of the world. Amen.

Over all of us this Holy Week stands the shadow of the Cross with its unrelieved humiliations. Yet that is a shadow already lined with the bright promise of an Easter dawn. At the hour of Compline the monks sing.

Lent Remembered

By MSGR. WILLIAM M. ROCHE

The days of yore are always appealing, and evoke within us fond memories of the good things. There is much truth to the saying, "The older I get, the farther I had to walk to school!" We never seem to recall the hard times, the disappointments, the frustrations. There are many in the church who spend most of their time recalling what they liked most about the "old church" and what they liked about it seems to be the totality of the reality.

I remember looking forward, as a boy, to Holy Week. For too long we had been kept off sweets and all the other good things, and life seemed dull and boring. But with the prospect of Holy Week, we could see the light at the end of the tunnel.

The ceremonies of Holy Week in the parish church were planned and rehearsed, and we knew we were getting someplace. When Holy Saturday came, our spirits rose with the appearance of the Easter lilies, and the Holy Saturday Mass became my favorite liturgy. I always wondered why no one came

As we grew older we gradually came to understand why we were urged to "give up" things, and why we couldn't go to the movies on Saturday afternoon.

Now here comes a puzzle for me. If the things we did then were good, and I have no reason to doubt that they were, then why don't we do more of them now? As a priest, I've tried to provide Wednesday devotions and Friday Stations of the Cross, but to no avail. In a large parish the attendance would

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be from two to twelve people.

Liturgists I've read have said that there has to be a connection between the "popular religion" (those

devotions and prayers and practices people associate with religion in their minds) and what happens in church. We haven't done this yet, so much of what happens in church is looked upon by people, sometimes with interest, but they are not a part of it.

Probably that's what happened to the Holy Saturday liturgy. It was so beautifully appropriate, as it is today, but no one saw it as the death and rising of Christ and our incorporation into His baptism. Every priest knows that the Easter Sunday Masses are an anticlimax. The wonder of the Resurrection has been announced during the Mass of the Easter Vigil. The Church just couldn't wait until daybreak to share the Good News.

So now we have the "New Church." We hear lots of lamenting the passing of the Good Old Days. But when we stop to look deeply into what's happening, it isn't all that different.

Mandatory fasting is a thing of the past. We're supposed to be more literate now—more adult about our spiritual lives. We're supposed to figure out ways of doing penance

for ourselves during Lent. The injunction of John the Baptist is still appropriate: "Reform your lives." That is, don't fall into the trap of criticizing and rash judging. Be an example to others that they might see Christ present in their midst.

And try the Easter Vigil Liturgy this year. Since the changes it's as beautiful as ever!

Holy Week offers us the chance to ponder the death of six million suffering servants of the Hebrew Covenant, along with our brethren from the ancient Roman persecutions, plus modern Communist murders and above all with our good and just Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Resurrection and hope arose spontaneously from each of these brutal events. Take hope therefore not with the old leaven of sin and hate, but with the new Easter leaven of universal

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1 cup rice, uncooked	

Preheat oven to 350°. Cut a slice from stem end of peppers, remove seeds and parboil 5 minutes. Crumble sausage into a large skillet and brown with onion in butter until onion is soft and transparent. Add rice and stir until rice is lightly browned. Add dissolved tomato paste and salt to taste. Cover and simmer until rice is barely tender and has absorbed liquid. Add grated cheese and blend. Stuff peppers with rice mixture, piling stuffing high. Top generously with mozzarella, and dot with butter. Arrange peppers in well-greased baking dish and bake uncovered about 30 minutes, or until mozzarella melts and is golden brown.

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