

Ash Wednesday ... A Personal Memory

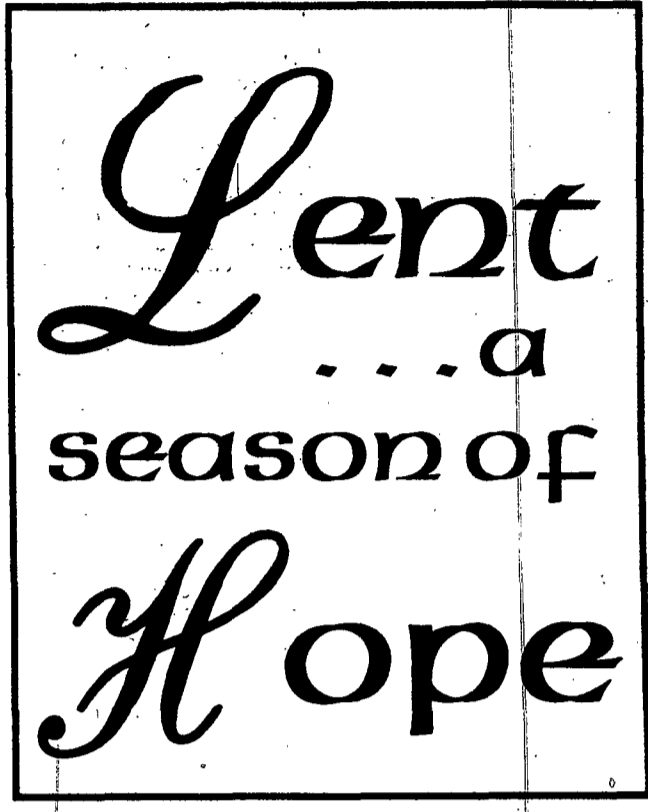
By SISTER MARY JEAN SMITH

Ash Wednesday, 1939 — "Remember, man, that thou art dust" — seven years old — a big smudge on my forehead — my public school friends laughing and puzzled — "Your face is dirty!"

Ash Wednesday, 1979 — "Repent and believe the good news" — a big smudge on my forehead — more than forty Ash Wednesdays behind me — what will this Lent mean in my life?

I think back to my growing up days in Cohocton and Bath where everyone knew and loved Doc and Mary, my quiet, gentle, faithful Dad and warm, outgoing, always-by-his-side Mom. My brother and I first met God through them and we grew up going to Confession every Saturday, attending Mass together Sunday (the earliest one so my Dad could get on his rounds!), and learning the catechism in our released time classes. Long before each Ash Wednesday dawned, our list of what we would "give up" had been approved, a brand new mite box was ready for our sacrifices, daily Mass was a "given" for the whole family, and no desserts til Easter was a painful taken-for-granted. I am increasingly grateful for the faith and wisdom of my parents who knew those simple observances would help us learn how to respond to the Lord as we grew into our own persons.

This year Ash Wednesday falls on the anniversary of my baptism and the celebration of that covenant emphasizes for me the Church's age-old call to reject Satan and his empty promises in favor of choosing God and His life of freedom. I have heard the Lord's call to metanoia many times and in many ways throughout my life and I hear it new again today. "Even now, says the Lord, return to Me with your whole heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning." (Joel 2:12) Those who know me best know how I desire to respond to that call and yet how often I resist being turned away from my self-center to my real center-God. I have a way of choosing the easier crosses (they seem hard enough to me!) — but He has a way of cutting right to the core to put before me the choices that touch the very roots of my sinfulness. I pray that He may have His way in me!



It is somehow comforting that at the beginning of Lent the Church again calls us all together and strictly enjoins us to give our alms, to do our deeds of mercy, to fast, and to pray in secret and with joy so that we bring them unspoiled by hypocrisy to our Father. Individually and as Church, we are called anew to listen to His Word in all the words we hear, to examine the direction of our lives, to make new choices, and to put our time and personal gifts at the service of each other. My personal world is small and God's power is truly concealed. Yet it is precisely within the limits of my everyday life that He calls me to be no less than an ambassador for Christ, engaged in the Lord's work of reconciliation. God's power continues to be at its best in weakness. So I rejoice in my weakness and in His power even as I look forward to the fullness of redemption in His own gracious time.

Sister Mary Jean Smith, SSJ, is president of the Diocesan Sisters Council.

All in the Family

By Sarah Child

'Little Women' Victim of TV

I don't write about TV anymore, at least not on a weekly basis and there are times when I really miss not having an outlet.



For example, a couple of weeks ago there was an ad for the new series based on the book of "Little Women". The attention grabbing catchline read something like this: "Jo is forced to spend the night in the company of her fiancé and is confronted by her own sensuality."

It was enough to make this Louisa May Alcott fan see purple, red and a couple of other colors besides. Those familiar with the children's books that Miss Alcott wrote know that it is a major wonder that any of the characters produced offspring.

Yet here were the producers ready to cash in on a commodity which while having no place in this particular story, had proven itself profitable thousands of times before in the medium.

Then on a recent vacation morning when each of my three children had had a friend sleep over (head of the house was out of town) I wandered into the family room to find all six viewing a morning edition of "Dating Game". In this particular scintillating version the young lady was holding up a bra for what purposes I know not since the channel was abruptly switched in response to some coloratura screeching by me. For shame ABC, for shame!

Not all TV is cause for moaning. We watched Roots — The Next Generation for several episodes and during a lynching scene the oldest confided that when similar horrors are discussed in social studies class she frequently finds a pretense to leave the classroom for the moment.

One can only wonder what the effect of such graphic details as those supplied by this magnificent series can have on the social consciences of those watching across the nation. Let us hope that the young viewers in particular are stirred by the injustice that is so much a part of our history because what comes next is in their hands.

Blue Army

The monthly all night vigil, sponsored by the Blue Army of Our Lady of Fatima, will be opened by Father Richard Brinkler at 9 p.m. on March 2, in Holy Rosary Church. Father William Endres and

Father Edward Heidt also will lead devotions during the night. The vigil concludes with a 6 a.m. Mass celebrated by Father Robert Meng, Holy Rosary pastor.

'Celebrate Life' to Sing in Penfield

St. Joseph's Church, Penfield, will mark a special "Celebrate Life" weekend March 3 and 4 which will include a concert by the widely known Horseheads group "Celebrate Life" and a high school cabin party for young parishioners at Powder Mill Park.

The concert scheduled in the school hall is for the entire family. Tickets for the event set for 8 p.m. Saturday are \$1.50 per person.

The cabin party which

includes a meal and refreshments and is for high school parishioners will be held from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday at Powder Mill. Tickets for the party are also \$1.50 but students who wish to purchase a combination ticket for both events may do so at a special price of \$2. Tickets are available at St. Joseph's rectory.

The Musical group "Celebrate Life" is a youth project of St. Mary our Mother Church in Horseheads. The group was formed in 1968 to sing at the

weekly Folk Mass. In February 1969 the group began giving concerts of both religious and contemporary folk music for hospitals, nursing homes, civic and church groups in the Southern Tier.

In the 10 years of its existence, "Celebrate Life" has performed for more than 500 groups and has recorded five albums. More than 500 young people have been members and the current group numbers between 30 and 40 teenagers and young adults. Director is Ray Defendorf with Faith Eaton.

Charismatics Give Diocese \$600 for Poor

The Eastern Regional Services of Catholic Charismatic Renewal provided the diocese with more than \$600 for charity. In a letter expressing gratitude "in the name of our people," Bishop Joseph L. Hogan wrote that the money had been divided as follows:

To the Catholic Worker's Bethany House for women, \$210.40, and St. Joseph's House of Hospitality, \$200; to the Bishop Sheen Housing Foundation, \$200.

The letter was addressed to Joseph Breaux, president of the organization, at headquarters in Rutherford, N.J.



Gathering

The Mercy High School Alumnae Association has scheduled a Lenten Evening of Recollection for Monday, March 5 beginning at 7:30 p.m. at the Mercy Motherhouse on Blossom Road. Barbara Quinlan Giehl, general chairperson, shown at left and Ellen Sajone Fitzgerald, alumnae president, right, invite alumnae, their spouses, parents and friends to attend.

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