

# Lent... A Season of Hope

## Insights in Liturgy

By Michele and Thomas Driscoll

### Anticipating Holy Thursday

The Thursday of the last week of Lent has been known by several names: Paschal Thursday, the Thursday of the Lord's Supper, the Day of Cleansing, the Day of Forgiveness, Maundy Thursday, Holy Thursday. The early church commemorated Jesus' death and resurrection in a single celebration. This was the Easter Vigil, the Christian Pascha, which was preceded by the solemn fast of Friday and Saturday. There was no eucharistic liturgy from the last Sunday of Lent (Palm Sunday) until Easter. With the fourth century historicization of the ceremonies celebrating the last events of Jesus' life Holy Thursday became separated from the Paschal Eucharist (as did Good Friday) to become the memorial of the Lord's Supper.

From the fourth to the sixth century in Rome, Holy Thursday functioned as the time of reconciliation for

penitents (those seeking the forgiveness of the community). They would thus be prepared to join in the Paschal celebrations. In the Middle Ages, Maundy Thursday celebrations were marked by seven features: (1) Tenebrae (Service of darkness accomplished by the gradual extinction of 24 candles to commemorate Jesus' death), (2) the reconciliation of penitents, (3) the Mass, (4) the consecration of oils, (5) the stripping and washing of the altar, (6) the Pedilavium (Foot Washing), and (7) Caritatis Potium (Loving Cup), which was blessed and dispensed. (J.G. Davies, Holy Week, A Short History, pp. 46-48).

In our own time, it is fitting to remember the Liturgy of Paschal Thursday as our entrance into the Easter Triduum, one whole commemoration of the passion and resurrection of Christ. It is not merely the night we wash feet or celebrate the Last Supper. The Sacramentary recommends that the Mass of the Lord's Supper be celebrated in the evening with the full participation of the laity and clergy. Thus, in

accord with ancient tradition, all private Masses (without a congregation) are prohibited on this day. (Holy Thursday would therefore be an ideal time to gather the community for the celebration of the Liturgy of Holy Thursday Hours' Morning Prayer).

The following are suggestions for those planning the Liturgy of Holy Thursday:

(1) As in all liturgies, the lectors should be well-trained and rehearsed. The proclamation of God's Word should be expressive, exciting, and well-paced. Make use of silence before and after the readings.

(2) Consider honoring the Word of God by carrying the book in procession, enthroning it prominently between lighted candles, and using incense.

(3) The homilist may be briefer than usual in his remarks on the readings, since the rites and symbols of Holy Week speak so strongly in themselves.

(4) The Mandatum Rite (washing of feet), first recorded in 7th century Spain, can be a good symbol

of Jesus' command to serve each other. In England the name of this day is Maundy Thursday, which comes from "Mandatum" Commandment: "A new commandment I give you." (John 13:34). Careful planning and practice can ensure the smoothness and impact of this rite. For example, the participants might come forward already barefoot. Other ministers might assist the presider in the actual washing of feet.

(5) As a continuation of the mandatum rite the preparation of the altar might include gifts for the poor.

(6) Within the Liturgy of the Eucharist the words and symbols should be clear and full. This means one plate of freshly baked bread, and one cup of wine. The presider should give special attention to the careful proclamation of the Eucharistic Prayer, including posture and gesture. It might even be sung.

(7) Where proper bread is used, the breaking of the bread shows the significance of the name early Christians gave to the whole gathering. The reverent breaking of a large loaf into small pieces

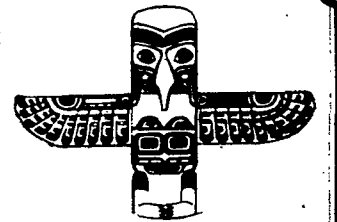
can be done simply and visibly. It is an important ritual, not a tedious task. As recommended by the Sacramentary and reinforced by the American bishops in November 1978, communion should be distributed under both forms.

Holy Thursday has also become a time of Eucharistic devotion. The transfer of the Holy Eucharist, especially to a separate chapel, is the occasion of honor for the Blessed Sacrament. The altar of repose is all that remains

of the medieval burial in Good Friday of the cross and host in the Easter Sepulchre (a portable tomb erected in church.)

The custom of visiting several churches after the Liturgy may parallel the celebration of Holy Thursday in Jerusalem at the end of the fourth century. In her writings (c395 A.D.) Egeria describes Holy Thursday observances which included pilgrimages to several of the sites of Our Lord's Passion.

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## At SS Peter and Paul Lenten Daily Mass 'Something for Myself'

Elmira — Members of the congregation at the noon-hour Mass at St. Peter and Paul Church stressed the value to themselves of attending daily Mass during Lent.

Six persons among the more than a hundred at the Mass recently expressed their interest in attending daily Mass during Lent for the spiritual benefits they could reap.

Joan Hurley noted that she attends "Mass as often as I can on a regular basis," but puts forth an extra effort during Lent. It is not always easy to do, she noted, adding that she was hurrying to get back to her job.

Daily Mass is "something I do for myself," she said, explaining that it is sometimes difficult to "set aside time for personal prayer," and going to the Mass insures that other things won't intrude.

Rose Carnegie, who works at St. Joseph's Hospital across the street from the church, said that she was attending daily Mass during Lent as a "form of self-discipline." She noted that she feels that it is "something I, myself, need," and that she benefits from.

And the noon-time Mass makes it "much easier when you have a family," she added.

Daily Mass is a good practice year-around, Richard VanBenCoten said,



George Bragg

Rose Carnegie

Joan Hurley

Theodora Bragg

Richard VanBenCoten

Anastasia Rosinski

and an especially good practice for Lent. The St. Peter and Paul parishioner said that attending Mass daily is the "least I can do," during the religious season.

Theodora Bragg will be attending daily Mass "because I think it's good for you, I really do, during Lent."

"It lifts you up," she commented, and provides spiritual support. She noted that she has made daily Mass a Lenten practice in past years, and is continuing it this year.

Her husband, George Bragg, commented that he'll be attending daily Mass this year as "one of the joys I can allow myself" now; it is

"something that I haven't been able to do for many years" because of work commitments, he explained.

He said that it is a "joy to be able to attend daily Mass."

He recommended daily Mass attendance to anyone who was able to do it.

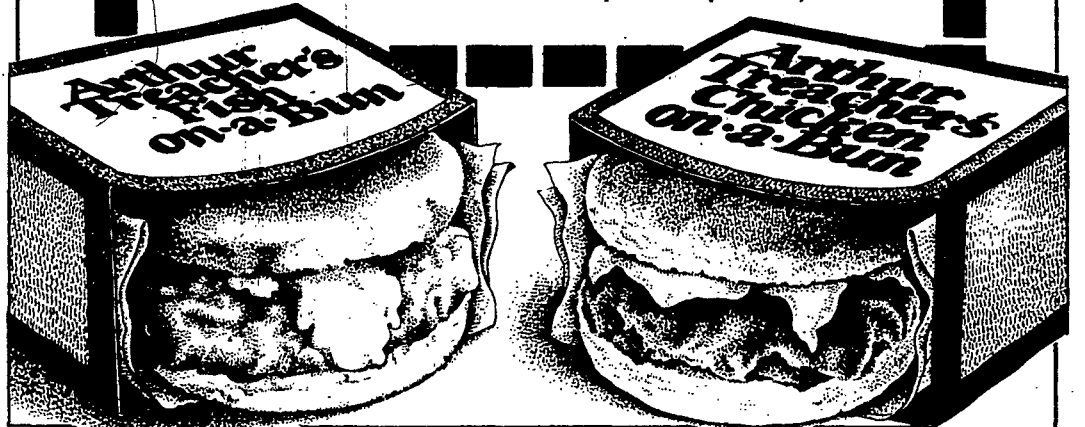
Anastasia Rosinski called her commitment to Mass every day all year "something positive to do," noting that this year she is "learning to be charitable with the tongue during Lent."

Participation in Mass, and the Stations of the Cross is a good practice for Lent, she said.

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