

Lent... A Season of Hope

Insights in Liturgy

By Father Robert J. Kennedy

Looking Forward to Good Friday

One should not be fooled by the spare decoration, the minimal ritual and the obvious restraint of the Good Friday liturgy. Such severity and restraint is not meant to lead us into sadness and tears, but rather it is the entrance to joyful triumph. The liturgy is not the mournful tones of "O Sacred Head Surrounded" or "Were You There." Rather the careful scrutiny of the texts of this unique liturgy reveals a confident, if restrained, joy in the fact that the cross is

the symbol of victory and the door to life.

The Celebration of the Lord's Passion does this in three main sections: the Liturgy of the Word, the Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion. They are like three beads on a string: separate parts with no inherent connection, yet all contributing to the celebration of the lifegiving event of Christ's paschal mystery.

The liturgy begins in silence and then an opening prayer that focuses our attention on the mystery of Christ's victorious Passover. This victory is seen

throughout the Liturgy of the Word. The first reading (Isaiah 52: 13 - 53:12) describes the Suffering Servant who bears our infirmities and endured our sufferings, "pierced for our offenses, crushed for our sins," yet, he "shall prosper, he shall be raised high and greatly exalted." The letter to the Hebrews then speaks of "a great high priest who has passed through the heavens," Jesus, who now makes intercession for us because he compassionately understands our temptations and sufferings. Thirdly, the Passion of John is read, the "glorious passion" in which the cross is understood as triumph for Christ, the victorious culmination of his ministry.

Because of the richness of these texts - texts that should convey their own power,

only a brief homily is recommended. Some silence between and after the readings will help the congregation to ponder the mystery of the Lord's Passion.

Then when the faithful are penetrated by the word that the Lord himself addresses to them, they are transformed by that word and join in prayer for the important intentions of the Church. It is wonderful that even when remembering the high point of salvation history, the Church does not forget the needs of the individual, bringing all things together in this celebration of the cross.

The liturgy then moves into the Veneration of the Cross. This ancient practice originated in the Jerusalem Church in the early fourth century when the relic of the true cross was brought

before the pilgrim faithful for veneration. In this light, some have recently suggested (and in fact the rubrics call for) the use of a cross, not a crucifix. The invitation that accompanies the unveiling of or the procession with the cross (not both) says "This is the wood of the cross...."

Ultimately, however, the veneration is not of the cross or even the death of Christ, but of the person of Christ and what his death means in terms of love for us. The Reproaches that accompany the venerating procession are a dialogue of love: the divine initiatives are spoken of, his loving intentions for his People, and the congregation responds with praise: "Holy is God! Holy and strong! Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us!" "We worship you, Lord; we venerate your cross, we

praise your resurrection. Through the cross you brought joy to the world."

This loving dialogue is then carried over into Holy Communion, the practice of which was restored to all the gathered faithful by Pope Pius XII in 1955. Some feel that there should be the early Church practice of fasting even from the Eucharist in the anticipation of sharing Communion at the Easter Vigil. But others see in the reception of the Body of Christ the most meaningful sharing in his glorious Passion.

In any event, this austere participation in the triumphant death of Christ is meant to continue Christ's healing work with us, bringing God's people pardon, comfort, strength of faith and the assurance of eternal salvation. May it be so!

At St. John the Evangelist

Meatless Friday Said A Matter of Traditions

"I fast from meat all year long — that's the way I was brought up," John DeRycke said recently when asked if meatless Fridays in Lent held any special significance for him.

DeRycke, an usher at St. John the Evangelist Church on Humboldt Street, responded to the question prior to a weekend liturgy at the church.

His sentiment was echoed by several of those attending Mass there.

But not before Mrs. Christine Murray responded with an emphatic "I hate Lent," to the question. "Psychologically, emotionally and spiritually, Lent depresses me," she said. She feels the Lenten disciplines detract from the Good News of the Gospel. "Jesus built up the egos of persons" she said.

Mrs. William Bartels, however, doesn't eat meat on Fridays "because it is Church Law — and I try to abide by that. I try to atone for my sins during Lent."

Agreeing with DeRycke's statement was Kenneth Brooks, who said that abstaining from meat was the way he was brought up, and that he observes that discipline all year long.

Yet, on the other hand, meatless Fridays "are just a catch to get you into Church," Miss Betty Manganello averred.

Even the "notion is just a hassle," she said. "It doesn't really do any good," she said. She added that Christians already have to be spiritual people and that Lent should be a celebration of that reality.

Mrs. Pat Hurley said, "I think the opposite. The



DeRycke



Mrs. Murray



Mrs. Bartels



Miss Manganello



Brooks



Mrs. Hurley



Geiger



Mrs. Carroll



Mrs. Ingram

Church gives us the opportunity to make a little sacrifice and I welcome it."

A surprising answer came from Patricia Ingram and her mother, Madeline Carroll. Both women abstain from meat throughout the year and not just on Fridays, but Wednesdays as well.

Mrs. Carroll explained that she "was brought up that way. Everyday is a prayer day for

me. My daughter added that the Church's disciplines are "for personal use." "The Church gives you the freedom to choose your own sacrifice," she said.

Family traditions again were cited when William Geiger said that he abstained from meat on Fridays, "because I was brought up that way — there's no other reason."

Father Charles Curran:

Sin Does More Than Break Law

By John Dash

The Christian's moral code is not only a matter of law. It is also a question of "relationship," Father Charles Curran said in Rochester last week.

Father Curran, a native son to the diocese and an internationally known moral theologian, was here as the first speaker in St. Ambrose Church's "Homecoming" program.

"I think there's always a place for law," he said in an interview prior to his lecture, "but relationship is the primary base for the Christian."

He explained that the Old Testament, when seen as a record of man's relationship with God, bolsters this view.

"Even in Genesis," he said, this is brought out. He described that book as an attempt "to describe, to explain why things are as bad as they are."

He cited a noted Jewish author who has asked how a good God could possibly have allowed the holocaust, as a corollary to the question answered by Genesis.

"Evil," Father Curran said, "is seen in terms of the reality of human sinfulness." The authors of Genesis "describe sin in terms of relationship."

In the story of the Fall, Father Curran said, "sin is described as a breach of the relationship man has with God, with his neighbor and with himself."

Where once God walked with Adam in the garden, now Adam hides. When asked why he had eaten the apple, Adam replies that Eve made him do it. Where once man was given dominion over the earth, even to the naming of the beasts, man is now obliged to eke his sustenance from it by the sweat of his brow — and Eve is to bring new life into the world in labor and pain.

All of this, Father Curran, said, indicates a view different from a legalistic view which describes sin in terms

of breaking a law, of disobedience.

The Church, in the reformed rite of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, recognizes this distinction as well, he said.

Father Curran is on sabbatical leave from Catholic University of America this semester. He is working on a book on American social ethics. Another book by him, Transition and Tradition in Moral Theology, will be published in June.

DAFFODIL SUNDAY

LITURGY OF HOPE

MARCH 25

CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH

864 E. MAIN ST. ROCH., N.Y.

11 A.M. MASS

Celebrant: Bishop Dennis Hickey

ALL INVITED TO GATHER TO PRAY FOR A CURE FOR CANCER

