

Lent... A Season of Hope

Insights in Liturgy

Looking Forward to Easter Vigil

By Pam Schaeffer and Paul Oliver

Part II

Last week's column gave parish planners insight into the time, effort, and liturgical accoutrements needed to facilitate proper attention to the setting, environment, hospitable atmosphere and symbolism of the Easter Vigil. Planners are again this week offered insights into the celebration of the Easter Vigil through the Liturgy of the Word.

The size and length of the Word Service seems very formidable. However, extended reading from the Word of God is an integral part of the Vigil service. In the early Church, people expected the Vigil to be long; they thought the Second Coming would occur during it, and they wanted to be found waiting, like the

wise virgins of the parable, with their lamps burning.

Nine readings are provided, seven from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament (the Epistle and Gospel). The structure of the Old Testament readings is: the reading, a psalm response, and a prayer.

In order to reflect the true meaning of the Vigil and to allow the people to savor the fullness of God's love for His people, all of the readings should be used. However, planners must gauge the needs of their congregations carefully. Some communities could spend hours reading and praying together, while others would find this uncomfortable. "The number of readings from the Old Testament may be reduced for pastoral reasons, but it must always be borne in mind that the reading of the Word of God is the fundamental element of the Easter Vigil. At least three readings from the Old Testament should be read, although for more serious reasons the number may be reduced to two. The reading

of Exodus 14, however, is never to be omitted." (Sacramentary, 21).

In one way or another, all the Vigil Readings have some relation to the baptism experience. Combinations using fewer readings can be used to reflect a particular theme. By using the readings from Genesis 1, Exodus 14, Isaiah 55, and or Ezekiel 36, an emphasis on God's re-creation in Baptism would be reflected. If no one is to be baptized, the theme of personal and community renewal of faith seen in Genesis 22, Exodus 14, Isaiah 54 and or Baruch 3 might be chosen. If there are catechumens, the emphasis might be on their preparation for Baptism using Exodus 14, Isaiah 55, Baruch 3 and or Ezekiel 36. Many other combinations are also possible; careful study and planning will be necessary to decide upon the best choice of readings for each congregation.

Not to be overlooked are the various possibilities provided by the accompanying responsorial psalms and celebrant prayers during the Old Testament readings. To aid the people's worship, variety should be carefully considered. During

the Word Service various positions for prayer might be used. For example, the people might sit during the reading, stand for the singing of the Psalm, and kneel for a period of reflection. When people are seated for long periods of time, they tend to lose concentration. Instead of being sung, the psalm might be recited after one of the readings and or you might decide to omit the psalm and reflect in silence. Prayers following each reading may be sung or said by the celebrant. Care should be taken in choosing the text and deciding upon their recitation or intonation. In any case, prayerful study of the Lectionary for choices in psalm offerings, and the Sacramentary for celebrant prayers, is a must for the planning group.

The use of more than one lector would also add variety. Listening to one voice for the entire Word Service would be monotonous and certainly would not lend itself to full and active participation. You might also consider using more than one leader of song and or cantor.

After the last reading from the Old Testament with its responsory psalm and or silence and prayer, the altar candles are lit, and the celebrant intones the Gloria. The Gloria should always be sung, and if possible, the people should have a part in this singing. If the church truly reflects an atmosphere of joy and the readings have spoken of God's love for His people, they will want to have a part in singing the Gloria. During the singing, church bells might be rung, according to availability and local custom.

Following this, the Easter Collect is prayed. This may be either intoned or said by the celebrant. Then, a lector proclaims the New Testament Reading from St. Paul.

The long awaited moment has finally arrived! An experience similar to eyes sighting the first bulb, planted the Autumn before, pushing forth from its Winter sleep, are the tones of the first Easter Alleluia to the Christian ear. This Alleluia should be one with which the people are familiar so they can joyously join in singing and prepare themselves for the Gospel proclamation: "Jesus Christ is risen!"

After a brief homily (the ideal at the Easter Vigil

would be three or four minutes of reflection upon one idea) and the Liturgy of Baptism, the community enters joyously into the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Secure in the knowledge of Christ's resurrection, a united people are now ready to share at His table. Freshly baked loaves of unleavened bread and wine, supplied by members of the congregation, should be in evidence. It is desirable for the congregation to receive communion under both forms.

The Easter Vigil is the celebration of the Lord's resurrection. New life enters, and grows, the community comes together in a special way to renew itself, to celebrate its union with the Risen Christ and to pray.

Vincent McCorry To Preach Here

Father Vincent P. McCorry, SJ, former associate editor of America magazine and author of that magazine's column, The Word, will be the homilist at all services during Holy Week at the Church of the Holy Spirit, 1335 Plank Road, Penfield.

Father McCorry also is the author of several books including Those Terrible Teens,

Everyman's St. Paul, and Flight of the Eagle.

Another unusual feature of the parish's observance of Holy Week will be the appearance of the liturgical choir of the Diocesan Festival Choir at the 5 p.m. Mass on Saturday, April 7. Sister Virginia Hogan, SSJ, directs the choir.

'Crosswalk' Aid Given

The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) is now offering a special program designed to allow "groups to experience the Stations of the Cross while relating them to contemporary themes," according to a release.

The Good Friday Crosswalk Packet contains a

description of the program and "relevant suggestions for implementation." CYO staff members advise that since the program takes some time to prepare, it is advisable to begin planning early. For further information those interested may call the CYO at 454-2030.

At Immaculate Conception, Ithaca

Lent Is Time to Follow The Footsteps of Jesus

Ithaca — Self-denial during Lent helps one to understand the sufferings of Christ, several Immaculate Conception parishioners attending parish Lenten events commented.

Those responding saw Lent as a time for "living in Jesus' footsteps."

Lucille Belcher noted that Lent "means a lot to me," and "it fills my spirit, makes me a better Christian and a better Catholic."

It also is a time for additional daily Masses, she noted.

Ann Otto commented that Lent "reminds me of Christ's dying on the cross for our sins," noting that Lent "keeps me near the cross." Observance of Lent "helps me in my life, and to lead a good life," she reported.

Lent "means that you're living through what God went through," Mary Bilky said, noting that a Lenten practice for her is praying the Stations of the Cross. The Lenten sacrifices also are good, as they help us to understand God's dying for us, she noted.

Rosalie Gombash stated that for her, Lent "is a time of sacrifices, giving up pleasures," activities which "show affection for God." It also is a time for "more prayer" and to "attend additional Masses" during the week.

She also tries to make an extra effort to help others during Lent, she added.



Ann Otto

Lucille Belcher

Mary Bilky



Anna Beckwith

Rosalie Gombash

Mary Camobreo

The effort is worth it, she said, noting that she feels as though she gets rewarded "a thousand-fold" for what she does.

"To me, it means not giving up something, but adding something to my life," Anna Beckwith commented. She said that extra Scripture reading, and other spiritual practices have additional meaning during Lent.

It also is a time to "ask the Holy Spirit to come into my heart," she said, and to "ask forgiveness for sin."

Lent is "a time for reflection into my past life," she commented further.

Mary Camobreo stated that "I love Lent. I think Lent is one of the most beautiful times," and that it "gives me a chance to grow closer to God."

She enjoys fasting and other self-denials, she said. Self-denial also "gives me more of a chance to make my faith grow," she added.

Lent also is a good preparation for Easter, she noted, commenting that "I think I enjoy Easter more than Christmas" because of the wonder of what Christ did. Christ's death and resurrection are proof that God's love for us is a reality, she stated, and that there is eternal life.

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