

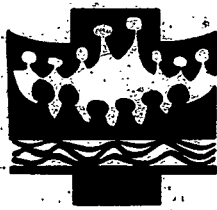


The Champs

The seventh and eighth grade Girl's Basketball Team of St. Rita's Parish has captured the CYO League championship. From left to right, team members are: (top row) Don Kuhn, coach; Debbie Thatcher, Barb Dimetro, Michelle Hickey, Lynn DeLuca, Kelly Kuhn; (middle row) Sandy Brunett, Beth Yaeckel, Kris Grasso, Gail Link; (bottom row) Colleen Anderson, Chris Gufler, Julie Grassi. Absent when the photo was taken were Grace Fulkenstein and Gil Budd, coach.

Insights In Liturgy

By Sister Estelle Martin, RSM



Celebrating Easter time

When you were a child did you ever wish that your birthday would never end? Did you hope to wake up the next morning and find that the party and presents could begin all over again? But birthdays are just one special day, limited by date and time. As children of God, however, we can celebrate the Great Feast of Christ's resurrection day after day. The death/resurrection mystery of Jesus expands and unfolds into a living feast which permeates the very depths of everything else we celebrate in the liturgical year.

In recent years Easter seems to have been short changed. We spend 40 days doing our "Lenten thing" and then squeeze our rejoicing into a few short hours. Somehow we fail to find "equal time" for celebrating. Easter Monday plunges us right back into plain, gray ordinary time. But the season of Eastertime extends from the Vigil liturgy until Pentecost. Its images of water and fire, life and light reach forward to touch each of the Sundays which follow. Within the context of the RCIA program these signs of vital Christian living assume even greater significance as the entire parish moves through the preparation, initiation and celebration of its newly baptized members.

A fuller participation in the spirit of these 50 days can enable us to share more deeply in the risen, vibrant life of Christ in our midst.

Ritual

- a sprinkling rite can replace the Penitential Rite to recall our commitment as baptized Christians
- standing during the Eucharistic Prayer is a sign that we are a people alive in a risen Lord; an Easter people
- communion in both

forms enriches the fullness of the sign of Christ's presence in his Body and Blood.

- initiating Sunday Vespers gives praise to God in evensong.

- introducing liturgical dance and the use of incense give special emphasis to the solemnity of the season.

- celebrating First Eucharist, Confirmation, Communal Anointing of the sick and elderly and the commissioning of liturgical ministers places these experiences within the context of the risen life of Jesus.

Music

- a continuation of the Easter hymnody extends the spirit of the Feast.

- singing the psalm response, the Gloria and the Gospel acclamation adds dignity to the proclamation of the Word.

- using bells, chimes and other instruments speaks of our joy in a new "voice."

Environment

- placing the Easter Candle in a prominent position calls attention to Christ's conquest over the power of darkness.

- arranging flowers and green plants throughout the assembly and entrance areas visually unites the community with the focus of action at the altar and lectern.

- hanging appropriate multicolored tapestries adds a festive atmosphere.

- placing a glass bowl of water near the entrance reminds all who enter of the baptismal commitment.

The Easter story is one that is to be continued... The challenge is ours. Our Sunday liturgies can possess the sights and sounds of a people who believe in Jesus, dead and risen, and have reason to celebrate that belief.

Fr. Albert Shamon

Word for Sunday

Holy Spirit Liberates Persons

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Jn. 20:19-31. (R1) Acts 4:32-25. (R2) 1 Jn. 5:1-6.

The first reading in next Sunday's liturgy is one of three summaries (2:42-47, 5:12-16, and the present reading) St. Luke has inserted into the first five chapters of the Acts to show the effects of the sending of the Holy Spirit upon the early Church.

The Holy Spirit is a Liberator. He breaks the chains that isolate man. Like the apostles after Good Friday, man can be enchained with fear, locked up within himself, or walled off from others. He can be bound by greed — keeping everything he owns for himself. Or shackled by suspicion, like a Thomas who protested, "I'll never believe it without probing the nailprints in his hands."

But when the Holy Spirit, the firstfruits of the Redemption of Christ, came upon the early Church, He brought to it a wonderful freedom.

The chains of greed were snapped: "All who owned property or houses sold them and donated the proceeds... to be distributed to everyone according to their needs."

All of their fears were dissipated with His "Peace be with you." Christ could give this peace, because He had lovingly given Himself in death — that was why He showed them His hands and His side. But more, He could give them His Holy Spirit. "He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" And He gave them the Spirit so that through the Spirit, man's most evil bondage — that of sin — might be burst asunder. Sin binds, shackles, enslaves. As a heart attack limits the movement of a man recovering from one, so sin limits one's freedom. The alcoholic can no longer take even one drink. The cigarette addict hardly is free not to take a smoke. The lustful man can no longer trust himself alone with a woman. But the forgiveness of sin starts setting the sinner free. It is the unbinding of the already risen Lazarus. Leaving sin unforgiven is leaving a person bound. "If you hold them bound, they are held bound" — "they," not just the sins, but even the sinners.

Finally, the Holy Spirit broke the fetters of the mind — the suspicions that thwart belief. After Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the community of believers were "of one mind and one heart." After Thomas saw the risen Christ, he still saw only a Man with scars, yet he made the leap of faith. Why? Because the Holy Spirit within him enlightened his mind and moved his will to say, "My Lord and my God."



In these Sundays after Easter, the Church would turn our minds and hearts toward the Holy Spirit. Redemption means liberation, liberation means freeing man — freeing man from within: from his fears, prejudices, suspicions, greed, unforgiveness, sin, error, hate and the hundred other shackles that cripple, confine and circumscribe man's freedom of action and movement toward God and toward each other in love. And this freedom is a process made possible only through the Holy Spirit who is given to us.

What this world needs is not more mountains to climb, nor planets to explore, nor wars of conquest — but love, sweet love, of which there is too little. And why? Because there is too little waiting and praying — constantly and expectantly — for the Holy Spirit to come to each of us. The unity of the Christian community, the harmony of minds and hearts, the power to give witness to the resurrection of Christ and to forgive sins — all these came from one source, the Holy Spirit, the God of Love.

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