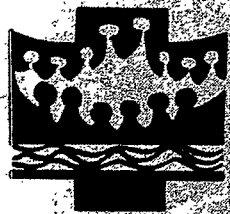


# CROSSROADS II

# RENEWED HEARTS RENEWED CHURCH

## Insights In Liturgy



By Father Benedict Ehmann

### The Paschal Mystery

"Each year you give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the paschal mystery with mind and heart renewed."

The paschal mystery! We name it each time we proclaim: "Christ has died. Christ is risen, Christ will come again."

It is a mystery but there is nothing dark or concealed about what we mean by it. It is, however, a great help to faith and devotion to delve into that meaning, which reaches far back through long phases of sacred history and divine revelation.

We call it "mystery," not because it baffles the understanding (though indeed it does), but rather in the sense of a power or work operating unseen within a visible, tangible, even audible sign, which effects what it

signifies.

It was in this sense that, in the early Church, the sacraments were called the "mysteria": they are visible signs of hidden energies.

Such is the paschal mystery. Its outer, visible reality is the Passover, the Easter or paschal event. Its hidden power is the Resurrection: the passage from death to life, from bondage to freedom, from darkness to light. It involves an exodus, a journey, a liberation.

It is called paschal from the Hebrew "pesach," pasch, Passover, when God first introduced it into the affairs of the world in ancient time. For a good perception of it all we have to go back to the origins of God's people, set forth in the Book of Exodus.

**I. The Passover Introduced**  
The descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived 400 years in Egypt, increasingly under oppressive

conditions, until finally they were little more than slaves. God at last entered in to release them and the man He chose for this awesome mission was Moses. After superhuman obstacles and grand epiphanies of God's power, the Hebrew thousands were allowed to leave.

Before they departed, however, God directed that each family slay and eat a young lamb, smearing their doorposts with its blood, for a sign to God's avenging angel to "pass over" their dwellings in his slaying of the Egyptian firstborn. They were to memorialize this marvelous deliverance each year with a festal celebration. This they they would continue to do and indeed have done faithfully, for now close to 4,000 years.

The Sinai journey of the Hebrews lasted 40 years. But before it got well under way, the Egyptian pharaoh changed his mind, chased after them with his army and hemmed them in at the Red Sea shore. God commanded Moses to move ahead. As the people did so, the waters divided and the people walked across dry-shod. The Egyptian army followed but the waters flowed back to drown them. This event gave

a second meaning to the word passover because here the Hebrews passed over to freedom between the walls of water.

**II. The Passover Fulfilled**  
"Christ our Passover is sacrificed," St. Paul declared to his converts in Corinth (1 Cor. 5:6).

From the Hebrew Exodus to the time of Christ, some 2,000 years can be counted. In all those 20 centuries, the Passover was faithfully celebrated, in "perpetual remembrance" of the marvels God wrought for His people.

Jesus spoke often in His ministry about His "hour." This was the "hour" appointed by the Father. It came during Passover week. Even at the hour when the paschal lambs were being killed in the temple for the feast, Jesus, the Lamb of God, was slain upon the cross. He was the new Passover, and as a sign of the passing of the old, the temple veil was rent in two from top to bottom (Mt. 27:51).

On the night before this bloody sacrifice, Jesus celebrated the Passover meal, fulfilling the Old Covenant, instituting the New. He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples: "Take this and eat it, this is my body." Then taking the

ritual cup of wine, He gave thanks and said: "All of you must drink from it, for this is my blood, the blood of the covenant to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins..." (Mt. 26:26-28).

This transformation of the Old into the New Covenant at the Last Supper is noted by St. Thomas Aquinas in some of the great eucharistic hymns: "Let all former rites surrender to the Lord's New Testament!" "At this table of the new King, the new Passover of the new Law does away with that of the old." Thus Christ is the new and everlasting Passover. He is at the heart of the Paschal Mystery, the Lamb who was slain, the Lamb now living, giving us His Flesh to eat and His Blood to eat.

**III. The Ongoing Passover**

No one, however, may partake of this paschal meal, who has not passed over, through waters of Baptism, from darkness and bondage to the light and freedom of Christ, like the ancient Hebrews through the Red Sea. It is St. Paul who assures us that in the Baptism water, we are plunged into Christ, our old self dying with Him, our new self rising with Him (Rom. 6:3-11). "We are Easter people," St.

Augustine insists. For in our Baptism we die and rise with the Lord, partaking in His Passover.

Jesus is the everlasting Lamb of God whom St. John saw in Revelation (5:6), standing on the altar in heaven, "a Lamb that had been slain." There the Lamb makes unceasing intercession for us, offering His blood for our ransom at the Father's throne.

All His people, washed by the blood of the Lamb, are incorporated into Him; They live out in their earthly life His Passover death and resurrection. We are people of His ongoing Passover, dying with Him to sin, living with Him the life of God.

All this, and ever so much more, is wrapped up in the Paschal Mystery. Day by day, especially in the season of Lent and Easter, we are encouraged to realize, ever more deeply in the fabric of our daily living, the dying and rising of Christ, which became ours through the Passover into Him; dying to self slowly but surely, in all our sufferings, pains, penances and afflictions from without and within; rising with Christ, again slowly but surely, in all our love and service, our patience and self-spending.

## Holy Week Schedule at The Cathedral

Several special ceremonies are scheduled this week at Sacred Heart Cathedral as the Lenten season culminates in the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday.

At 7:30 p.m., Holy Thursday, a Mass of the Lord's Supper will take place as part of the Sacred Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter).

At 3 p.m., Good Friday, the Liturgy of the Lord's passion will begin at 3 p.m.

The Easter Vigil Mass will be performed at 11 p.m., Saturday and Bishop Matthew H. Clark will be the celebrant at the Easter Sunday Celebration at 11 a.m., Easter Sunday.

The Triduum provides

time for special reflections on all that has happened during the 40 days of Lent. It provides for further enrichment of people who long for nourishment and calls all to enter into the holiness of this time to be renewed.

According to the diocesan Office of Liturgy, individuals may take the renewal of the baptism vows at the Easter Vigil and on Easter Sunday as a significant symbolic experience of the Lent-Easter journey.

Earlier in Holy Week, the annual Chrism Mass, which has become a customary occasion for the gathering of people from across the diocese, took place Tuesday at the Cathedral.



## The Journey

Throughout the Easter Season, Bishop Clark will continue his journey as he celebrates the sacraments of Eucharist, Confirmation and Ordination in Churches throughout the diocese. Many of these occasions will be featured with photos and story in our weekly Catholic newspaper The Courier Journal. These events will be accompanied by the CROSSROADS II: RENEWED HEARTS . . . RENEWED CHURCH logo. Listed below are just some of the events to watch for:

19	7:30 p.m.	Sacred Heart Cathedral (Holy Thursday)	Mass of the Lord's Supper
20	3:00 p.m.	Sacred Heart Cathedral (Good Friday)	Liturgy of the Lord's Passion
21	11:00 p.m.	Sacred Heart Cathedral	EASTER VIGIL
22	11:00 a.m.	Sacred Heart Cathedral	EASTER Sunday Celebration
May 8	7:30 p.m.	Immaculate Conception, Ithaca	Neophyte Mass
15	7:30 p.m.	St. Ambrose Church, Rochester	Neophyte Mass



## Bishop Dedicates Cornerstone

Bishop Matthew H. Clark, left, adds some mortar to the Holy Rosary School cornerstone during ceremonies last Wednesday. Next to him is Father Robert Meng, pastor. Above, Bishop Clark and Father Meng join in the applause with parishioners who attended the blessing. The school will be ready for operation next fall.