

Seek silent moments during the triduum

By Father Thomas P. Mull
Guest contributor

One of the church year's most active liturgical times is the sacred triduum. When the days arrive, final steps of preparation can cause stress and confusion. Many liturgists breathe a sigh of relief when Easter Monday dawns.

It is important for all who are involved in liturgy to realize the need for silence — silent reflection as preparations occur; silence well placed in the liturgy so that the message can be experienced and absorbed; and silence in the reflection as one liturgy ends and another soon begins.

Silence is key to deepening our faith experience in the triduum celebration.

The evening Mass of the Lord's Supper is the advent of the triduum celebration for the Christian community. Beginning at that hour and continuing until evening prayer on Easter Sunday, Christians will commemorate in ritual, song and prayer our redemption's ancient story.

Holy Thursday calls us to witness

Jesus washing the apostles' feet as a sign of service and an invitation to "do as I have done." As we recall the institution of the Eucharist, we also must recognize the demand Jesus places on his followers to "be eucharist to others."

The invitation to share in holy Communion with God is not a singular event, but one which challenges the faithful to action. Holy Thursday's "night" experience is a time of quiet prayer. It allows for an internalization of what has been said and what is going to be done. Silence in this night gives participants a chance to sense the community keeping a sacred vigil and the internal generation of the Spirit as one faithful member watches in prayer.

Good Friday is a day of irony and conflict. We can see human nature's sins in betrayal, denial, fear, misplaced loyalty, selfishness, pride and death. Yet we also see victory, light, salvation and love. It is a day on which we highlight the powerful image of the cross lifted high before us.

Good Friday allows Christians to retell the story of the victory of Calvary and the desolation of the faithful remnant who remained confused and wandering about, thinking all was lost. As Christians come forward to embrace the cross and remember, the silence of that moment deepens our intense awareness of Jesus' presence. The Jesus who accepted the cross is the Jesus who lives in me now.

This life is not mine but one which I must lovingly give away as a sign of my acceptance of this cross. The haunt-

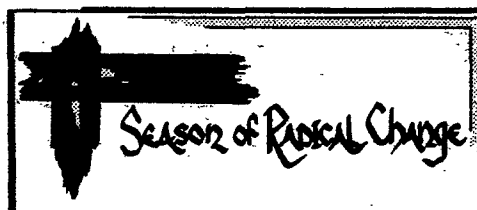
ing silence at the conclusion of the solemn liturgy of the Lord's Passion and death echoes in our ears as the faithful slowly move to exits more deeply aware of one another and God.

The evening and night hours are given over to deep silence, calling Christians to a reflection of these past events and showing how these events may continue to happen in our present day. We are indeed part of this story.

Holy Saturday's silence envelops the entire church. He is dead and he is buried. We are without a Savior. Can this be true? The stillness of the Holy Saturday nighttime is broken by the igniting of a fire, the lighting of a candle, the shuffling of feet, the whispering of voices, the single voice chanting, "This is the night ..."

Yes, against the background of the ancient story of salvation, it is announced: "Jesus is risen!" The alleluias rebound and echo. The elect come forward for initiation, their eyes ablaze with expectation. Christ's fragrant oil signs them and those to be admitted to the church. United, renewed, forgiven, restored, the community comes to the Lord's table. Easter has dawned.

Easter Sunday, that first day of the week, brings with it a sense of wholeness and fulfillment. "Jesus is risen — it is true — he has appeared to Mary!"



The renewal of baptism vows allows Christians to understand that we do not simply recall the ancient past but we are also part of the story.

The Resurrection would have no meaning if we, as a community, were not willing to live it out in our daily lives. This holy day's evening prayer invites all of us to look back and wonder. In the silence of eventide, the voices of our ancestors speak. We have experienced our living God once again with the wonder of light, the fresh smell of incense and chrism, the sweet sound of "alleluia" and God's refreshing silence.

Allow yourself the luxury of silence in these coming triduum days. Amid this time's social and ritual activity, let God's silence touch your heart so that the Easter message of love and reconciliation will not only be proclaimed by our church's ministers but also by the lives of those who embrace the risen life of our Savior. Silence allows the story to be told; faith calls our silence to action.

Father Mull is priest-consultant to the diocesan Office of Liturgy.

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Program to focus on care for dying

ROCHESTER — Exercising proper judgment for the dying is a constant challenge not only for family members, but also those who provide professional care.

This reality serves as the basis for a one-day conference, titled "Making the Right Decision: When Someone You Love is Dying." Geared toward those who minister to the dying, the program will take place on Friday, April 30, at St. Bernard's Institute, 1100 S. Goodman St.

From 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., five presenters will address the medical, legal, moral and pastoral ramifications of medical treatment for the dying through case studies and small-group discussions.

The event will feature Dr. Marvin Mich, associate professor of Christian ethics at St. Bernard's Institute; Edward Fox, an attorney who specializes in health-care issues; Kathie Quinlan, director of Isaiah House, 71 Prince St.; Dr. Joseph Salipante, vice president for medical affairs at St. Mary's Hospital, 89 Genesee St.; and Sister Susan Schantz, SSJ, chaplain at Highland Hospital, 1000 South Ave.

Mich told the *Catholic Courier* that he saw the need for this program after serving as chairman of a diocesan Synod writing committee. He discovered that people wanted to further

delve into the recent synod theme: "how we can help those facing violence, addiction, burdensome pregnancy or terminal illness."

"People were concerned that they didn't have enough information," Mich acknowledged. "The topic (care for the dying) is so much in the news, we want to clarify some things — cases when the courts get involved; where state laws apply. People aren't sure how much control they have."

The diverse list of the presenters was arranged to illustrate how various professionals "view the setting and the patient. Lawyers, doctors, moralists — what are the perspectives of these people?," Mich said.

Also on the agenda, Mich added, will be the role of the minister or priest with those who are dying.

Although the program's participants will be predominately those in pastoral-care roles within the Catholic community, Mich noted that people of all faiths are welcome to attend the conference. Registration may be made through the diocesan Department of Professional Development office, 716/328-3210, ext. 255.

Cost is \$45. Those completing the conference will receive one continuing-education credit. The registration deadline is April 23.

— Mike Latona

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