

God is a God of faithfulness and hope

This week we prepare for the most important days in the liturgical year: The three-day solemnity moving from Holy Thursday to Easter Sunday marks, in ritual form, the core reality of human life. The symbols showcased over this period alert us to what sustains our life and our faith throughout the entire year: water, fire, oil, light, bread and wine.

It is as if we take these days to visibly "act out" the central mystery of the God-and-us relationship actually unfolding over the whole course of our lives. The powerful, centuries-old observances that make up the liturgies of the Christ Mass and Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter Vigil draw us through a visual, sensible depiction of what God is doing in our lives and in the whole world all the time.

We have a variety of reactions as we move through the celebrations of Holy Week, and the reflections we bring from our own lives and recent experiences affect what happens to us through the rituals. Part of the effect can be to move us toward truer appreciation of what is "really real" and really important about life.



the moral life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SSJ

We are reminded on Good Friday, for example, that God's Messiah is not the "Messiah of Magic," but is the Messiah of faithfulness and hope.

By "Messiah of Magic" I point to an experience many of us may have from time to time. There are times when we seem to want God to perform some act of "magic" to rescue us from some very real problems that we face in life. If I'm in some big traffic jam, for example, I sometimes sit there and actually ask God to remove the cars that are blocking my way! I suppose I think since God is so powerful, a Chitty-Chitty Bang-Bang move on his part could make those cars

fly away! If I face a difficult decision, or can't resolve a problematic relationship, I expect God to take direct charge of the matter and magically straighten things out.

This can happen when we face some of the serious problems of life: frustration of our plans, financial worries or job loss, health difficulties, family illness, the death of someone we love — even the prospect of our own death. Somehow, we seem to expect God to "make it better" using a magic solution that will eliminate the problem and produce clear sailing for our own visions of how things ought to be.

Part of what we learn again over the course of Holy Week, though, is that Jesus is not, after all, a Messiah of magic. The account of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus shows us that the God of Jesus Christ is not a God of magic solutions to life's problems and difficulties. God never promised to magically erase human suffering. Jesus did indeed experience real rejection, real suffering and real death. No magic to "get him out of it" and avoid the

hurt.

The account of the death and resurrection of Jesus shows us that God is the God of faithfulness and hope, not magic. We are assured in the resurrection of Jesus that God will be faithful to us even if we die. God will be faithful to us even though we are sinners. God will be faithful to us even if we fail and ALL our plans go up in smoke. God will be faithful to us when we are healthy AND when we are sick.

The resurrection of Jesus is not a guarantee that our problems and sufferings will be magically "fixed." The God of Jesus is not a God who steps in and directly resolves the difficulties we face.

But we are assured of something far more important: We are guaranteed that God's faithfulness to Jesus in death extends to us, too. Even in our suffering, God will be present to us and faithful to us. God will never desert us, and on the last day God will, indeed, raise us up, too.

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Sister Schoelles is president of St. Bernard's Institute.

Jesus is our mediator

Sunday's Readings: (R3) Luke 22:14-23:56. (1) Isaiah 50:4-7. (R2) Philippians 2:6-11.

During the 19th century Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Prussia entered Jerusalem riding a white horse. So great were the number of soldiers and officials that an entire section of the city wall had to be removed.

In the first century Jesus entered Jerusalem riding, not a symbol of prestige, but an animal symbolic of servitude, a donkey. The city may have been crowded with people who had come to celebrate the Passover. Every Jewish male within 20 miles of Jerusalem was required to attend.

But Jesus did not come to the city to be honored. Jesus knew that the price of redemption would be the cross, a humbling and painful death.

People thought they knew the reason for his coming:

During President Ronald Reagan's campaign in 1979, a woman of about 80 spoke out from the audience at the end of one of his campaign speeches.

"Mr. Reagan," she said, "everything you've said sounds just fine. But what about the old folks? Haven't you forgotten us?"

The man who was to become the oldest president of the United States smiled and replied, "Forget you? Heavens, how could I ever forget you? I am one of you."

People looked to Jesus because he had become one of them. They wanted a po-



a word for sunday

By FATHER ALBERT SHAMON

litical Messiah, one who would liberate them from the hated Romans. They cried "Hosanna," which literally means "Save now." Now was the time for liberation. The king was come to set up a new empire. So people pressed everywhere to see him. Like King Jehu (2 Kings 9:13), they stretched out their cloaks in the path to honor him as king. Like Simon Maccabeus (1 Mac 13:51), they cut down palm branches and laid them in the street to honor him as a victor coming home from battle.

They wanted a political king, but he came to be their Savior. So a few days later their praise turned into rage. Some people today want Christ, but only on their own terms.

Most dignitaries would be offered the keys to the city; Jesus was offered a cross outside the city. But it would be the cross that would unlock the door to heaven for all who believed.

Our faith differs from that of all other

religions because its object is not a spiritual leader who had come and gone, but one who died and rose from the grave. He is alive to be our mediator between God and man.

History has shown us the value of mediators.

During the Civil War a man was sitting on a park bench in Washington, D.C., crying. His son, under great distress, had deserted his post in battle and was to be shot by a firing squad soon. The father had come to the nation's capital to see President Lincoln but couldn't get past the front gates. People passed by, but nobody stopped to listen.

Finally, a little boy paused and asked the man why he was crying. In his distress, the man told his story. He ended by saying that if he could talk to the president, he knew his son would be pardoned.

The young boy asked the man to follow him. When they came to the front gate of the White House, the little boy said to the soldiers, "It's all right, he's with me."

The man followed in amazement. They came to the room where President Lincoln was conferring with his generals and cabinet members, guarded by yet another detachment of soldiers. The young boy pushed inside and jumped up on the president's lap. Conversation stopped as the boy said, "Daddy, there's a man I want you to meet. He needs your help."

The man was brought in to talk with the president. His son received the presi-

dential pardon because the son of the president took an interest in his plight.

Jesus said: "Once I was dead, but now I am alive forever and ever" (Revelation 1:18). He who paraded into Jerusalem will lead us all into the New Jerusalem and bring us face to face with God his Father.

If only we follow him.

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Father Shamon is administrator of St. Isaac Jogues Chapel, Fleming.

Daily Readings

Monday, April 6

Isaiah 42:1-7; John 12:1-11

Tuesday, April 7

Isaiah 49:1-6; John 13:21-33, 36-38

Wednesday, April 8

Isaiah 50:4-9; Matthew 26:14-25

Thursday, April 9

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14;

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:1-15

Friday, April 10

Isaiah 52:13-53:12;

Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

John 18:1-19:42

Saturday, April 11

Genesis 1:1-2:2; Genesis 22:1-18;

Exodus 14:15-15:1

Isaiah 54:5-14; Isaiah 55:1-11;

Baruch 3:9-15, 32-4:4

Ezekiel 36:16-17, 18-28;

Romans 6:3-11; Luke 24:1-12

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