

## COLUMNISTS

*First, the bad news ... then, the good*

I have heard that human beings prefer bad news to good news. Even reading the first book of the Bible, Genesis, we get a glimpse of human distrust of good news. Instead of enjoying the fulfillment of Eden, Adam and Eve go ahead and eat the forbidden fruit. Truly, this is a "fall" — into misery, suffering, absurdity, and broken relationships.

From that point on, as we move through Scripture, we move through a whole series of stories that depict human life from the perspective of this human fondness for bad news. We read about murder, falling towers, devastating floods, warfare, betrayal, adultery, you name it. This may not seem surprising at all; one wonders who would actually have read a Bible filled with pleasant stories about life in Eden.

As I think about our celebration of Lent, Holy Week and Easter, I count myself among the "bad news mongers." For example, I'm fairly pious during Lent, and move from there into an almost intently pious mode during Holy Week. The solemn rituals, the tragic and somber accounts of Jesus' suffering, the generally serious tone of those who gather to worship and pray all contribute to a basic ambience of particular religious focus and devotion. I have been part of this recurring obser-



the  
moral  
life

By PATRICIA SCHOELLES, SJ

vance for many years, and I find it renewing in many ways.

The problem that I have, though, is that I don't seem to bring the Holy Week dedication and commitment forward into Easter itself. I certainly don't move forward into the post-Easter liturgical season with the same zeal and interest that I bring to my Lenten observance. Sometimes I think I actually "lose interest" once we have ritually commemorated Jesus' dying.

This is a particularly foolish attitude on my part. I think it must stem from my own preference for bad news over good news. In fact, the overriding message of Lent, Holy Week, and the entire Christian religion is that the crucified Jesus has been raised from the dead (1 Cor 15:3-5). The risen Christ is our Savior (Rom 4:25), the

ever-present living Lord of the world (Rom 10:9, 1 Cor. 12:3). This is the great good news that gave birth to Christianity in the first place. It is the entire point of the New Testament. Redemption from sin and the risen life to come are based in Jesus' personal resurrection, the reality to which the early Christians testified, and which shaped their very account of God.

We know God especially in the event of Christ's resurrection. As Vatican II has proclaimed, "the climax of God's self-revelation came with the crucified Christ's resurrection from the dead and the sending of the Holy Spirit (*Dei Verbum*, 5). If we are wrong about Jesus' rising from the dead, we would indeed be the "most pitiable" of all people (1 Cor 15:19).

Christians experience Christ's passage through death to a new life liturgically through baptism and the Eucharist. This passage from death to new life is being actualized and realized in our midst all through our lives. But it is above all in the Easter vigil service that we experience and celebrate the richness of Christ's redemptive "passover" from death to life.

The experience of this faith in the Good News of Jesus' resurrection is not automatic, of course. We rely on the testimony of those first disciples to the post-cruci-

fixion encounters with the risen Christ. In many ways, faith in Easter is a decision we make as we experience and rely on the grace of God. This faith becomes the cornerstone and foundation of our whole lives, so that in facing our own experiences of death, hatred, suffering and absurdity, we are able to find new life, meaning and love through this faith in the risen Jesus.

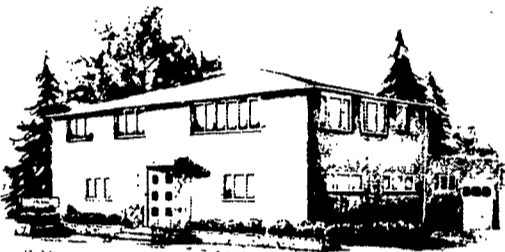
As we move through the next few days celebrating together the core mystery of our faith, we might need to remind ourselves that the message at the heart of Christianity is not really the bad news of Jesus' crucifixion. The great good news assured to us by faith is that Jesus is risen from the dead. The solemnity of the services this week is more than matched by the wonderful celebration of the Resurrection that begins at the Easter Vigil on Saturday evening and continues into the weeks ahead.

The words of 1 Peter are especially reflected in the liturgies immediately following Lent: "Without having seen him you love him; though you do not now see him you believe in him and rejoice with unutterable and exalted joy." (1:8).

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

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**Kids' Answers from page 12**

Daniel, Esther, Hosea, Obadiah,  
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