

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 28 April, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

All around you, the miracle of SPRING is unfolding.

It's a great time of year...and it makes sense to pray about it.

It's SPRING, Lord,
and something stirs in me,
reaching, stretching,
groping for words,
peeking through my defenses,
beckoning in my laughter,
riding on past my fears,
pulsing in my music.

There's a promise in the season,
and I know no name for it except
LIFE.

Be with me in my reaching,
so I will touch or be touched
by a grace, a warmth,
a light...
to unfold my life to a new beginning,
a fresh budding,
a SPRING...within me and around me.

O Lord,
You have sketched the lines of SPRING.
Be with me in my unfolding,
my longing,
my reaching.

I hope that the distractions of the moment won't keep you from seeing the beauty of this Season of Grace.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

PARISH PICNIC

The Spring PARISH PICNIC will be held at Camp Buckner on Sunday, 5 May, starting with Mass at noon. A bus will leave the Supe's Box at 1100 on

5 May to transport cadets to Buckner.

AN EASTER THOUGHT:

UNDERSTANDING THE CROSS:

Two pieces of wood lashed together
converted the world through its powerful message...
a message of hope,
a message of love,
a message that offers meaning to life.

Humanly,

I want to banish the pain and suffering of the CROSS.
Yet when I reject the full meaning of the CROSS,
I reject Christ,
and he becomes nothing more than a mere philosopher.

Naturally, we don't like suffering.
Yet we cannot escape it in our lives.
What to do?
How to interpret suffering?
How to accept pain?

Before I can accept the CROSS,
I must believe that my Heavenly Father
is a God of love.
Everything is a part of His mysterious plan of love for me.
"Yet not a single sparrow falls to the ground
without your Father's consent...
so do not be afraid of anything.
You are worth more than an entire flock of sparrows."
Matthew 10:29-31.

So if God is a God of love, why must I suffer?

Ideally, the CROSS and our suffering
should create a renewal or a deepening of faith.
Suffering jars us out of our trance-like routines
and forces us to confront our relationships with God.

Even though I may want to run away from suffering,
it deepens my faith.

When I accept the CROSS as a gift of love
from a God of love,

I imitate Christ, the model of faith,
who freely and humbly offered himself
to suffer and die in our place.

If I want to imitate Christ in all things,
then I must freely choose to relinquish myself freely
to the CROSS of Christ,
crushing my ego under its heavy weight.

As St. Paul said:

"I have been crucified with Christ;
it is no longer I who live
but Christ who lives in me."

Galatians 2:19-20.

Or, as St. Peter observed:

"The greatest joy and exultation
are born only of suffering.
Hence we should rejoice
if we partake of the sufferings of Christ.
because we will enjoy a much greater gladness
when his glory is revealed."

I Peter 4:13.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE WORD "EASTER":

In almost every language except English, the name for "Easter" is some form of the word for "Passover" (for example, "Pasch", from the Hebrew word "pesach" for "Passover"...or the French "Paques", from the same root).

When Christianity arrived in the countries of northern Europe, the feast received a new name from the Teutonic people, and that name is used by English-speakers today: Easter.

At one time, it was thought that the name came from an Anglo-Saxon spring-goddess, Eostre (the Catholic monk-historian Bede the Venerable, who died in AD 735, thought that this was the case).

But there is some doubt that there ever was such a goddess' name.

The more probable explanation comes from a misunderstanding.

During Easter week, the newly-baptized wore WHITE garments for the whole week following Easter as a symbol of their new identities.

The Latin word for "white" is "alba".

The Old High German speakers took this to refer not to clothing but to the dawn.

Their word for "dawn" was "eostarun".

For them, Christ was the sun that rises at dawn in the east.

Hence, from their word "eostarun", we get the name "Easter".

PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

- ...the grandfather of a cadet ('02), who died last week.
- ...the sister of a cadet ('02), who had emergency surgery last week.
- ...the grandfather of a cadet ('04), who had heart surgery last week.
- ...the father of a cadet ('05), who will be operated on in early May for a brain tumor.
- ...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world, especially those in areas of risk.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, what does the Church think about "competition"?

A: The Church believes that "competition" is a natural part of human life.

From early youth, people are immersed in attempts to "compete" with someone or other, and the process is seen as a means of highlighting our own individual ability or to win much-desired results.

The ideal type of "competition" should be healthy, stimulating and rewarding for the individual and for society.

Still, this is not to say that it is always a good thing.

"Competition" can also be very damaging...to both a person's psychological and spiritual life.

It becomes evil when we make it evil, and we can do that in a variety of ways:

- when "competition" becomes the center of our lives;
- when love of "competition" replaces love of God or neighbor;
- when the thrill of winning makes us selfish or greedy;
- when we debase ourselves or others just to win something;
- when a material goal becomes a substitute for spiritual objectives;
- when "competition" becomes an end in itself;
- when we become ruthless and obsessive in "competition";
- when we desire only to overrun our competitors and treat them with contempt.

The Church would say that "competition" for earthly goals is deceptive and fleeting, and that the great "competition" of all is to compete with oneself, with one's own infirmities...and to be successful.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

ANTI-CHRIST:

The term "anti-Christ" comes from references in two letters of St. John in the New Testament:

Children, it is the last hour;
and just as you have heard that the anti-Christ was coming,
so now, many anti-Christ's have appeared.

I John 2:18

Whoever denies the Father and the Son,
this is the anti-Christ.

I John 2:22

...and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus
does not belong to God. This is the spirit of the
anti-Christ that, as you have heard, is to come
but in fact is already in the world.

I John 4:3

Many deceivers have gone out into the world,
those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ
as coming in the flesh; such is the deceitful one
and the anti-Christ.

II John, verse 7

These are the only references to the word "anti-Christ" in the Scriptures,
and it might be helpful to explore what we moderns mean when we use the word.

We generally mean a totally evil human being who will appear right before the end of the world. This human being will persecute the good people of the earth and will eventually be defeated by Jesus Christ. There is also some belief that right before the coming of this "anti-Christ", the good people will be whisked away to heaven and will not have to endure the persecution; this is known as "The Rapture".

But as we saw above, the Scriptures do not mention any of this in talking about "anti-Christ"...even though some people identify "The Beast" in Revelation (Chapter 12 and ff) with "anti-Christ"...and some others identify St. Paul's comments about the "man of sin" (II Thessalonians 2:3-10) with "anti-Christ", as well. "Anti-Christ" isn't mentioned in Revelation at all, and St. Paul doesn't use the term either.

As a matter of fact, John seems to be saying that you can find many "anti-Christ". In the text, he says that "many" anti-Christ's have, in fact, appeared.

Before the time of Christ, many Jewish people believed that there would be a totally evil human being who would arise to frustrate the coming Messiah. From about 500 BC until the coming of Jesus, Jewish writings speak of these people or groups, and you can find all types of symbolic descriptions about them (read Daniel 7, if you want to see an example). Sometimes, this "power" is spoken of as a single human being; sometimes it's a nation, like the Persians or the Greeks.

By the time of Christ, the belief was very strong, and it's only natural for John to write about such a power...and he calls it "anti-Christ"...although at one point (above), he speaks as if he considers it to be a group, and at another point, he speaks as if it's a single person.

Over the centuries since John's time, the belief has grown, and term has often been used for one person - like Nero, Muhammed, Pope John XXII, Peter the Great, Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Ronald Wilson Reagan (whose names adds up to 666), Henry Kissinger or Mikhail Gorbachev; it has also been used for such groups as Muslims, Jews, heretics, etc.

One of the more colorful interpretations can be found in the writings of Pope Gregory the Great (c 600 AD), who said the following:

How many have not seen anti-Christ and yet function
as his testicles because they corrupt the hearts of the innocent
by the example of their actions?

Moralia in Job 40:12.

Gregory also said:

Anti-Christ's work is done daily among the wicked.

The belief also appears in the Muslim faith, although they don't use the word "anti-Christ" (they use the name "Dajjal") and in medieval Judaism (they use the name "Armillus"). Both these traditions see these figures pretty much the same way as the Christian tradition has seen "anti-Christ" - a power of total evil which will oppose the final victory of God.

But in every age, the speculation seems to center around the same questions:

- Will "anti-Christ" be one or many?
- Will "anti-Christ" be Jew or Gentile?
- Will "anti-Christ" be fully human or part demon?
- Will "anti-Christ" be a false teacher or a political persecutor?
- What are the signs of the coming of "anti-Christ"?
- How will "anti-Christ" be destroyed?
- Will the death of "anti-Christ" signal the end of the world as we know it?

Modern Catholic belief tends to go along with St. Augustine's interpretation in one of his sermons ("Homilies on John" 3:8), when he said:

"Everyone who, by his or her works, denies Christ...
that is 'anti-Christ'."

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"Each small task of everyday life
is part of the harmony of the universe."

St. Therese of Lisieux
(d. 1897)

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!

Have a good weekend!
There's lots of stuff going on...
but try not to forget God.
And hang in there!!

Woodie