

## CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 25 August, 2002

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

Lots of confusion round...lots of running about, hand-wringing, worry...the kind of stuff that's always ready to swoop in and destroy our good humor and equilibrium...

Why not pray about it:

Almighty God!  
Help me to get hold of myself.  
Keep me from being overwhelmed by discouragement  
or crushed by defeat.  
In Your compassion,  
remind me that no defeat is ultimate  
and no disaster is final in Your sight.  
Lead me to find in You  
a strength that is greater than my own,  
a strength that will uphold me in time of need.  
Though now, I do not seem to be able  
to find a firm ground of faith on which to stand,  
I pray that You will lead me out of my trouble  
and become my Rock and my Fortress.  
In the name of Christ the Lord.  
Amen!

Best wishes for a calmer future and a great weekend.

## THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

### CADET SUNDAY MASS

is celebrated every Sunday in WH5300 at 1715.  
Gym-A is OK to wear (or running suit).

### DAILY MASS

Every weekday (not Saturday) at 0630 in the  
Catholic Chaplain's Office in Washington Hall.

### PARISH PICNIC

The Fall PARISH PICNIC will be held at Camp  
Buckner on Sunday, 8 September. No special Mass  
will be held at Buckner, but the picnic will begin

following the normal 1100 Mass at the Chapel. Archbishop O'Brien, of the Military Archdiocese, will invest Father Burns as "Monsignor" at the 1100 Mass, and after the Mass, people will head to Buckner for the picnic. Transportation will be available for cadets; more details to follow.

#### LECTOR, EUCHARISTIC MINISTER

Lots of you have expressed interest in participating at Chapel as Lectors, Ushers or Eucharistic Ministers. I'll be sending out info about these after Labor Day Weekend.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

Some CHURCH-ART history for you ART and HISTORY buffs.

The TABERNACLE - so familiar to Catholics - has an interesting history.

The word itself comes from a Latin word "taberna", meaning "a hut or booth or tent".

You would know it as the large and costly container in which the consecrated bread is stored, and usually it's located in the front of most Catholic churches - right near the main altar.

But in the days of the early Christians, there was no such thing.

In those times, Holy Communion was reserved for the sick, but instead of using a TABERNACLE, those early Christians kept the Eucharist in their private homes (usually the homes of deacons). The churches of that time didn't reserve the Blessed Sacrament in the church-building itself or even give it the permanent place of honor that it has today.

By the Middle Ages, this had all changed.

In France and England of the 1200s, for example, the Blessed Sacrament was hung in a PYX (a small boxlike container) over the main altar of the churches. Often, the PYX was shaped like a dove.

Sometimes, too, a crozier (the bishop's staff) was fixed behind the altar, and a small space was built into the staff itself to contain the Blessed Sacrament.

In Germany, the normal custom was to keep the Sacrament in a niche in the wall, closed by an iron door. In large churches, the niche was replaced by a large "Sacrament House", which stood near the main altar and was built in the form of an artistically decorated tower.

Finally, in the 1500s, there spread from Italy the custom of using a TABERNACLE, a costly shrine. It was placed right in the center of the main altar and solidly fixed there.

Not until 1863 did the Church insist on this method of "reservation of the Sacrament" for every Catholic church.

Recent liturgical focus has begun to return to the ancient attitude: namely, that the focus in a Catholic church should be the ALTAR - where Holy Mass is celebrated - and not the TABERNACLE (which really reserves the Sacrament for the use of the sick). The TABERNACLE can still be in the middle, but many modern churches also offer the option of constructing special chapels to reserve the Sacrament.

## PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...all the plebes who are on Retreat this weekend.

...the Class of 2003, as it celebrates Ring Weekend...and all who are traveling to be a part of their celebration.

...all our military personnel and their families throughout the world, especially those in areas of risk.

## GOT A QUESTION?

Q: I went to Mass this past weekend with a friend of mine, and we were talking about the crucifix. She said that one of her friends learned that the cross is used by everyone except Catholics because we use the crucifix. I told her that I believed that the cross is only the crucifix minus the figure of Jesus but that they both represent the same thing. Any thoughts?

A: As you probably have guessed already, the cross has a long and colorful history.

The earliest Christians avoided using the symbol at all because it was distasteful to them (it would be like us using an electric chair as a sacred symbol), and during the Roman persecutions (AD 66-313), it was also dangerous for them to openly use the cross as a symbol.

They would often disguise the symbolism. Sometimes they would use an anchor (which, in Church art, eventually became a symbol for HOPE), and sometimes, they would use combinations of Greek letters for the name "Jesus Christ". For example, you would often see the two letters "chi" (X) and "rho" (R) intertwined; these were the first two letters in the word "Christ".

After Constantine made Christianity legal in 313, the cross was used publicly, and it was often made of precious jewels to symbolize Jesus' triumphant resurrection from death. This was called the "crux gemmata", and it reflected the belief that what once had been a symbol of shame had now become a sign of victory and triumph.

Later in Church history (Dark Ages), theology began to emphasize the sacrifice of Christ, rather than the symbol itself, and Christian art began to depict the body of Jesus on the cross. By the year 692, the Council of Constantinople ordered the use of crucifixes instead of ornamental crosses. At first, Jesus was not depicted as suffering but as standing upright, arms outstretched, dressed in imperial robes. The large crucifix hanging from the ceiling at Most Holy Trinity Chapel preserves this image.

As the year 1000 approached, people began to prefer "realism" in the depiction of Christ, and the figure of "Jesus Suffering" became widespread. There were two types of this approach: the "Agonized Christ" (where the depiction often reaches extremes of agony and suffering) and the "Tranquil Christ" (where Jesus is shown in death, tranquil and at peace).

The Protestant Reformation (1500s) represented a new type of interpretation, as the Reformers began to purge the Church of any "Catholic" influence for various reasons:

some saw the use of any "images" as offensive to their interpretation of religious faith; others didn't believe that Christ's sacrifice could be adequately depicted. And from this time on, the plain cross was associated with Protestant Christianity, while the cross with the body of Jesus was thought of as specifically "Catholic".

It's incorrect to say that only Roman Catholics depict Jesus' suffering on the cross. The Orthodox tradition does it, and so do the Episcopalian and Lutheran traditions. However, for the last four centuries, the strictly Protestant tradition has tended to avoid depicting Jesus on the cross while the Catholic tradition has preserved the custom. Many people who are interested in emphasizing the divisions between the two have focused on this difference, but for me, both customs proclaim the same faith in Christ's death and resurrection.

## THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

### CLONING THE DEAD:

Yuck!

What a topic!

But it was brought into the forefront of our lives in July by the death Ted Williams, the baseball Hall of Famer.

His body is now suspended upside-down in a 9-foot vat of liquid nitrogen at -320 degrees, sharing his resting place with three other corpses and five heads.

It's all about "cryonics" (from the Greek word "kruos", meaning "icy"), which is a peculiar practice whereby people have their bodies frozen after death in the hope that when new technologies and medical advances arrive in the future, they might be resuscitated or "brought back to life".

At the "Alcor Life Extension Foundation" in Scottsdale, AZ, you can preserve your body in liquid nitrogen for \$120,000...or for a reduced rate of \$50,000., you can have just your head preserved (in the hope that when the right time arrives, you can be revived and attached to a brand-new, laboratory-grown body).

And it also involves some thoughts about cloning the dead.

Some people think that Ted Williams' son wants to sell his father's DNA to people who would try and have little Ted Williamses through in-vitro fertilization.

Cloning the dead is not purely hypothetical.

Scientists have already cloned dead animals. Italian researchers have already created cloned lambs from the cells of dead sheep.

And it's "scientifically possible" to clone dead humans, according to Dr. David Prentice of Indiana State University School of Medicine...but he added: "It's unsafe to be a clone. Your chances of survival are very slim".

Still, the possibility attracts people. A man from Glendale, CA, is storing a tissue sample from his dead mother in the hopes that he - or one of his siblings - might clone her in the future, uniting their DNA with the mother's...and he spoke very frankly about the possibility of "being a father to my mother..."

Obviously, the whole field has lots of moral questions in it.

Doug Hunt, spokesman for the International Center for Technical Assessment believes that cloning violates the human dignity and rights of the one who is cloned, exposing them to unrealistic expectations. He says: "We have a right to an open future. The quest to 'engineer children to specification' is the ultimate idolatry. It harkens back to the desire to control the real nature of human life..."

And what about the morality of freezing people in liquid nitrogen?

Even though the Catholic Church has not formally addressed the topic as yet, the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" does speak about respect for the dead:

The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect  
and charity, in faith and hope of the resurrection.

(#2300)

And the Catholic tradition has always maintained that at death, the soul is separated from the body. The practice of "cryonics" seems to deny both the death of the body and the true resurrection of the soul.

In any case, stay tuned.

There will definitely be more to come in this controversial field.

#### UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"Conquer yourself,  
and the world will have been overcome."

St. Augustine  
Sermon 57:9

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!!

That's all for now.  
Have a great weekend.

Woodie