

CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 11 May, 2003

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

We're still in the season of Easter in the Church calendar, and it should make us think about how we experience GOD each day of our lives.

In his book called "The Confessions", St. Augustine tried to explain what GOD meant to him.

This is his prayer:

Late have I loved You,
O Beauty so ancient and so new;
late have I loved You.
You were within me, and I was outside.

I sought You in the things You made.
They are lovely things,
but I made them unlovely.
You were with me, but I was not with You.

You cried out to me,
and You broke open my deafness.
You sent out Your light,
and You pierced my darkness.
You breathed fragrance on me,
and now I pant for You.

I tasted You,
and now, I hunger and thirst for You.
You touched me,
and now, I burn for Your peace.

May the Risen Christ fill you all with hope for your futures and with his peace, which is beyond all understanding.

May he transform you into his image.

THOUGHT FOR THE EASTER SEASON:

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 from 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 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 of more value than many 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 my suffering,
it deepens my faith.

When I accept my 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 now no longer I who live
but Christ who lives in me.”
Galatians 2:19-20

Or, as St. Peter observed:
“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.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

FOR FIRSTIES

The annual BACCALAUREATE MASS will be held
at the Chapel on Thursday, 29 May, at 1900. More
details as we get closer.

MOTHER'S DAY

This Sunday (11 May) is MOTHER'S DAY.
Be sure and call your Mom.

DID YOU KNOW?

Have you ever worn a religious medal?

If you have, then you're taking part in a Catholic religious custom that dates back to the earliest Christian centuries.

A medal has been found dating to the AD 100s. It bears the figures of Peter and Paul.

Others – from the 4th to the 8th centuries – bear the images of other martyrs.

In the 4th century, the newly-baptized were given a medal as a remembrance of their Baptism...and at times, coins of this period were stamped with a figure of Christ and were worn for religious purposes.

A 5th century “Life of St. Genevieve” tells of St. Germain bestowing a medal on Genevieve. It was marked with the sign of the cross, and it was to be a memorial to her vow of virginity.

By the 12th century, pilgrims returning from the Holy Land or the great shrines of Europe wore a medal stamped with the sign of their particular destination.

In the 13th century, a type of medal (called a “jetton”) appeared. These bore initials or a device by which the owner could be identified. And in addition to the mark of identification, there was generally a religious saying, such as “Love God and Praise Him” or “O Lord, Our God”.

More recently, Catholics wear medals with figures of Jesus, Mary or a particular saint.

Their purpose is to inspire devotion and prayer...and in general to signify a person's commitment to a holy life...but Catholics do not believe that the medals themselves have any power. They are simply symbols that recall one's faith and dedication.

GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, a lot of what is taught about Jesus comes from his early childhood and from the age of 30-33. What occurred between those times? Someone told me that Jesus possibly belonged to a type of "religious order" and that John the Baptist was mentored by this group.

A: The Four Gospels contain no reference to Jesus' "middle years", except for Luke 2:39-52 (which tells the story of him being "lost" in the Temple of Jerusalem at age 12). Outside of that, the Gospels don't contain any other reference to his age at any time. Our assumption that he was 33 at his death/resurrection is essentially based on a legend (and there's are lots of those). So, no one really knows anything about his life as a child or as a young adult.

The story that he belonged to a type of "religious order" is also based on speculation. There actually were groups of Jews who lived in a kind of "religious order" setting. They were called "Essenes", and in many ways, they lived like monks. Still, there is no hard evidence that either Jesus or John the Baptist were formal members of this group, although they would have certainly known about them.

The word "Essenes" is believed by scholars to have come from a Jewish word meaning "the pious ones), and it's certainly possible that many of Jesus' ideas were believed by these Essenes, because the whole purpose of the Essene movement was to live an "ideal" Jewish life.

Q: Father, what is "immersion"?

A: Immersion is a form of Baptism in which people are totally immersed in the water.

Catholic Ritual permits three types of Baptism:

- a) immersion of the whole body under water;
- b) immersion of the head only; and
- c) sprinkling or pouring of water on the head.

The last form is the most common for us, primarily because of the risk of putting an infant's head under water.

Within Protestant and Orthodox traditions, immersion is much more common, but Catholics too may be immersed at Baptism, if they so choose.

Differing forms of Baptism are found in the Early Church. St. Paul spoke of Baptism as being "buried with Christ" (Romans 6:3-4), and elsewhere, it is spoken of as a "bath" (Hebrews 10:22). The understanding has always been that this description was referring to Baptism by a type of immersion.

But the "Didache" (an ancient Christian handbook, written at the same time as several of the New Testament books) also allowed that if immersion were not feasible, then one could pour water on the head three times, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

So the Catholic Church has preserved different forms over the centuries, and the

options remain for Catholics today.

THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

WHAT RESURRECTION IS NOT:

Many people have seen the Resurrection of Jesus as “just one more” in a chain of legends about gods and goddesses... “a god who dies and rises again”...

Classical mythology was full of such stories.

There was Osiris in Egypt. He was a benevolent god, lord of justice, protector of cities and the family. His evil brother Seth murdered and dismembered him, but Isis brought him back to life, and he became “judge of the dead”.

There was Adonis in Greece. He was a perfect human specimen, so much so that goddesses fell in love with him. Zeus finally ordered him to spend half the year (autumn and winter) with the goddess Persephone in the Underworld, and the other half of the year (spring and summer) with the goddess Aphrodite. One year, in the summer, Adonis went hunting and was mortally wounded by a wild boar. He died, bathed in Aphrodite’s tears, and the blood-red anemone – the windflower – blooms each year where his blood fell.

In Greek mystery-religion (the “Orphic rites”), there was Dionysus. He was torn to pieces and restored to life. His festival was kept every year, and he was thought of as the god who freed men and women from death. He was also the god of wine.

But the Resurrection of Jesus isn’t comparable to any of these stories.

None of the pagan myths involve “passion” and “resurrection” as Christians have understood the terms. None involves the idea of “self-renunciation”, so central to the Christian message. None involves a person, fully human (as well as divine), who voluntarily suffers for the redemption of others. None involves the continuation of a human personality beyond the grave into a new life.

This is a BRAND-NEW reality.

The Resurrection-event of Jesus of Nazareth did not produce a “cult of fertility”, nor a “nature analogy” nor a ritual ceremonial”.

Instead, the Resurrection-event of Jesus of Nazareth transformed the conception of life itself, linking the soul with the body and affirming the “whole” human being.

Not only that.

It gave a specific form to those formless instincts that produced the pagan myths of antiquity that were mentioned above. It provided the answers to those nameless desires that enliven the hearts of people of every age.

It was – and remains – a truly NEW reality. It was – and remains – the communication of God. It was – and remains – the only revelation that finally makes sense of life itself.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“God is a verb.”

RB Fuller

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.

TEEs are fast approaching.

Remain CALM!

And know that you're in my prayers.

Woodie