How Do You Preach to Children?

You don't; you talk. And you don't talk at them, but with them. This means it's ideal to gather them around, on the rug and the altar steps of the sanctuary (and even at big Masses this can be done with the smaller ones). If you're still tongue-tied, you will be helped method-wise by a fine little book from Abingdon Press, called The Irritated Oyster, and Other Object Lessons for Children (hardbound; 3.95). The authors, Harvey and Patsie Moore, take off from a short scripture reading by (1) showing the children a visual object; (2) building a story around it; (3) sharing experiences — always. Ask for them; don't do all the talking. Sometimes the story makes the point or points the moral sufficiently; other times the children will help you draw the conclusion. The authors use items like stuffed animals, a live puppy, a sponge, a tape recorder, and a stone.

I discovered this method years ago and used everything from a live kitten to seeds, unwashed dishes, a dust-cloth (who uses it?), dolls (well made but you're made better), a grapevine, bread (do you eat the crusts? Can you make French toast? How did bread get started anyway?), a rosebud, a rose with thorns, road maps (how do we know where we're going?), and so on and on. The list is endless; you can easily make your own. Perhaps you know, as these authors help you discover, that it's easier to proceed with an "object lesson."

Greeley and Sloyan

Andrew Greeley has written so many books that many don't buy them on the assumption that they can't be all that good. They are uneven, but you should sample some of his titles like The Sinai Myth and The Jesus Myth and now the very latest (unless he wrote one last week) Death and Beyond (Thomas More; 6.95). They give you a swift updating of the best thinking, a good bibliography, and good insights — his own, and others.

The mail also brought the Commentary on the New Lectionary by Gerard S. Sloyan (Paulist; pb., 10.00). His essays on the three-year cycle first appeared in the Liturgical Conference's homily service. They are heavy exegesis, too much for most, and the ad honesty states "This is not a book of tips for preaching." But it challenges and aids the priest who wishes to penetrate the scripture he is called upon to preach.

A British book we've got to review is by an eminent Methodist preacher, Colin Morris, called The Word and the Words (Abingdon Press). It is the best defense possible of old style preaching; the writer (and preacher) is so learned and genuine that his thoughts are a pleasure to read. But I don't think it reflects a fair understanding of communication and the contemporary scene. If we had great preaching — genuine, biblical — do you think the churches would fill up again?

The Parish Bulletin Preaches

A Redemptorist priest, Fr. Al Olive, sends in a suggestion from Brooklyn to enliven parish bulletins. It's simple. Just snip out headlines from books and magazines and fit them (sometimes with a touch of humor) to appropriate news items. Offset printing makes this easy and the bulletin is no longer dull print. We still recommend photographs if you can do a good reproduction; think what it means to
photo-present your "parishioner of the week," or the new arrivals in the parish, etc. And — if you haven't tried the Noonan cartoons yet, let it be known they were recently reproduced, with permission from GOOD NEWS, in a worldwide journal of Christian communicators (WACC) then in an East African newsletter, and finally in an Asian journal from Singapore.

One of our favorite Episcopalian parish bulletins uses the line drawings from Good News for Modern Man to illustrate their preview of the scripture for the day. The drawings are famous; many transfer them to slides. The publishers (American Bible Society) won't object at all to your spreading their work. By the way, have you seen their handsome, inexpensive hardcover edition of Good News for Modern Man? Its illustrations make it a fine gift book for anyone, and especially for children.

Interchange

We frequently get two requests: more scripture, and more illustrations. This has prompted two new features, the scriptural and pastoral commentaries, and we would appreciate hearing from you if they are of help. The scriptural commentary is an in-depth treatment of the gospels for the month. Too deep? I don't think so (you should see some scholarly treatments). It draws out the key themes of scripture, and we should know them ourselves, even if we don't always preach them on a particular Sunday. We can't just be moralists, authoritarians, mouthpieces; God gave us the Word and the Church gave us this set of readings to get a message to us — and through us to the people!

If you are rightly concerned to be "practical," then follow the scriptural with the pastoral commentary, which discusses different approaches in preaching and adds more examples and quotations. And read (of course!) the homily models. Before any of this it helps to read and pray the scripture passages themselves. It's easy to rush on to the illustration before we know what is being illustrated.

Does anyone still sing the Passion, on Good Friday or Passion (Palm) Sunday? There are several good versions in English, and it is an effective way both to proclaim and meditate the gospel. This presupposes three talented singers (otherwise I would opt for three capable readers). Either singing or reading should be gone over, privately and in the church setting. I would rather have the Passion presented by one or two teams which volunteer to take more than one Mass. Could not this become a high point of a lector program, something anticipated each year, a special gift by three parishioners to the Holy Week worship?

Easter Dawns

We would like to recommend again a proper psychological approach in presenting the liturgy of Easter morning. The Easter Vigil is the greatest liturgy but our pastoral common sense should tell us that the greatest number is still there Easter morning. What are some of the suggestions and past practices that help?

Begin low key; hold off the music and triumphant procession; build up to the gospel and make it a real proclamation. Then sound the trumpets and the organ and sing out the Alleluias; light the Paschal candle and renew the vows. Christ is risen! You might also study rearranging the readings this day. The first one makes a good commentary on the gospel (it was originally an Easter sermon). The sequence could be sung as a congregational hymn; see Roger Nachtwey's comment in Music and Media this month. If you prefer to stay with the regular order of the Service of the Word, at least try music or singing after the gospel. The final hymn for an Easter Mass should be well-known; it's no time for a thin response. "Crown Him With Many Crowns" or "On This Day the First of Days" are often used too much, but they could be sung with new fervor on this, the New Day.

You help us, but much more, you help each other by writing with suggestions and "things that work." One priest mentioned how often a clergyman is called upon for benedictions, invocations, and "a few words" at dedications, banquets, and civic invocations; he asks GOOD NEWS readers to share some of their best. Send them; we'll mail or print them. Another pastor asks for more funeral sermons like the "Thoughts for a Funeral" feature in January. More coming. Meanwhile mark up this copy of GOOD NEWS for funeral sermon ideas; you'll find many of them — stories, quotes, and thoughts to develop.

I hope you take Easter Monday off (we used to call it Emmaus Day, and go on a trip). Wherever you break bread, may He be with you.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
FIFTH SUNDAY LENT: 4 APRIL 1976

Yes, save yourself, Jesus.
The world will not appreciate you anyway.
But this Jesus lives by a secret.
The “man for others” is God’s man.
And God will “lift us up from the earth.”

PASSION (PALM) SUNDAY: 11 APRIL 1976

Crowds, hosannas, parades —
Jesus could have been a big success!
And all those apostles “big wheels.”
But he takes a slow road.
Loving. Dying. Trusting his Father.

EASTER SUNDAY: 18 APRIL 1976

More guns, more guards!
We’ll beat this Jesus thing yet.
Don’t be too sure.
Try to keep the sun from rising.
Or love from changing lives.

SECOND SUNDAY EASTER: 25 APRIL 1976

Thomas is surprised by love,
love that is stronger than death
and casts out fear.
It is doubt that dies.
Jesus — and Thomas — are alive.
FIFTH SUNDAY LENT: 4 APRIL 1976

Penitential Rite

The first reading today can be sung as a Penitential Rite, using the beautiful Deus melody. See the note in the Pastoral Commentary.

Prayers for Worship

(BEGINNING)

Father, Jesus our brother has promised that if he be lifted up he will draw all people to himself. When he was lifted up on the cross he shared our dying, but now that he is lifted up on high, raised up in glory, we ask to share his living.

We believe that he is "the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him."

And we ask your help, your gracious power to live the covenant of our baptism.

(OVER THE GIFTS)

By your powerful word, Lord, you changed death to life and sadness into joy. Change the bread and wine. Change us. And make us living — the living Christ.

Prayers for Worship

(MEDITATION OR GOING FORTH)

"Sir, we would like to see Jesus." This is all we ask but you show us a sick woman, an old person, a little child, a worker, a youth. We would like to see Jesus. And you pour water, rub oil, say prayers. We would like to see Jesus. And you read us a gospel, preach us a sermon, give us bread and wine.

Don't you hear us, Lord? We would like to see Jesus. You tell us to go for a walk in the country, or in the desert, alone. We would like to see Jesus. And you speak of prisons, slums, hospitals, and crowded cities.

Why do I walk in darkness seeking him whom my heart loves? You tell me Jesus is already here. Then, Lord, let me change my prayer. Just help me to see.

These prayer models are usually based on the scripture, and you may prefer to use some of them before or after the reading, or after the homily.
PASSION SUNDAY: 11 APRIL 1976

Profession of Faith

This Profession of Faith is an updating of a version first published in GOOD NEWS two years ago. The basic theme — the passion of Christ re-lived in the members of his body — does not wear out. This could also be used as a short homily for today or a Lenten day or as part of a Good Friday service.

LEADER

The pleading of Jesus, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” still echoes across the ages. Do we hear him? Do we forget that he speaks in the languages and dialects of people who are his flesh today? Listen, all of us. And let us use the words of the psalmist as a cry for help and recognition, not as a text of despair. Our response, then, are Jesus’ words from the cross, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

1. I am dead. I was never born. When I lived in the womb of waiting, men and women debated my fate and denied me a place in the land of the living.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

2. I live in a slum or a ghetto, and eat the arsenic, the paint that peels from the walls. Already they call me a social problem. If I live I have no hope.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

3. I live in Northern Ireland, or Palestine, or Lebanon, or Angola. I live wherever people die from violence and war. Sometimes I am the victim; sometimes I am the hunter, the one who hates.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

4. I live in prison. I am one of a quarter-million Americans who live in prisons. Perhaps I deserve to be here; I am not arguing that. I just want to live better than an animal in the zoo or a dog at the kennel. Even a prisoner deserves a chance at new life.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

5. I live in a nursing home where the biggest excitement is the Jello desert. From my window I see the children pass and the mailman stop, to leave the others mail.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

6. I live in many places like one-room utility apartments or big cities, even in a high-rise. I am unknown, unvisited, uninvited. I am alone.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

7. I am poor. I live on a tiny pension. I live on Campbell’s tomato soup. I have even tried dog food because my stomach hurts so much when I am hungry.

LEADER AND ALL:
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”
PASSION SUNDAY: 11 APRIL 1976
Prayers for Worship
(BEGINNING)

Father, we cannot measure
the pain of your Son
or his love for us
but we can confess our sins
and try to respond to his love
by healing and helping each other.

May the story of his passion ever remind us
that all life has come to us
out of love and pain;
remind us to use the gift of time
to enter now upon eternal life.
Through the crucified one we pray,
through Christ who died for us. Amen.

(OVER THE GIFTS)

Lord, do not let our worship
be one of words, words
or stop with gifts like bread and wine.
We ask that what we now do
may be the offering of Christ
who shares his life with us.

(GOING FORTH)

Jesus, Son of David,
we give you more than glad hosannas;
we try to give you
the gift of a contrite heart.

Jesus, Son of David,
we hail you as king,
that our allegiance to you
may keep us faithful to your church
and your law of love may rule our lives.

Jesus, Son of David,
make us unafraid to die,
sharing your trust in the Father
who never abandons us,
who sent us yourself
as the greatest proof of his love.

EASTER SUNDAY: 18 APRIL 1976
Prayers for Worship
(BEGINNING)

Lord, we do not run to empty tombs
like Jesus' disciples.
We come here.
We find each other.
We share a communion,
listen to a Word,
and know that Jesus is alive.

Today we celebrate
that he is more alive than anyone.
We celebrate the death of death
and the beginning of new life.

Thank you for the greatest hope
ever given to mankind.
Accept the worship we call thanksgiving
which we offer in gladness
through Christ, our Risen Lord.

(OVER THE GIFTS)

To live each day
and to turn our dying into rising
we need you, Lord,
and the gift of your Son
whose paschal victory
we celebrate with
bread and wine.

(GOING FORTH)

When Easter flowers wither,
let us be a sign.
When the paschal candle burns no longer,
let us be a sign.
When the gospel book is closed,
the organ silent,
the jubilation ended,
let us be a sign.

When Easter is over
let us be an Easter people.
We live now, not us
but Christ in us.
Of Jesus' victory
let us be a sign.
EASTER MEDITATION

We used this prayer/meditation, in the November GOOD NEWS, to pray for the dead and for ourselves. It is equally fitting to use in the Easter season.

Jesus grew older, he never grew old.
He died young, he rose young,
a melody in the night still sung,
a tale in the evening still told.

O beautiful One, undying One,
finish in joy what love has begun!
Lead me beyond the trying. The living. The dying.
Make me new again. And young. Forever young.

Joseph T. Nolan

SECOND SUNDAY EASTER: 25 APRIL 1976

Prayers for Worship

(BEGINNING)

Father, we are your believing people who wish to believe more strongly, to hold fast, not to falter when dark days come.
We are the church of Jesus your Son and we rejoice in the forgiveness of sins which makes an Easter of our lives.

Help us to believe and trust in the love which Jesus trusted, the love which we call “Father,” “God,” “providence,” you.
This is our prayer through the one you cannot turn away from, Jesus your Son. Christ our Lord.

(OVER THE GIFTS)

We dare to believe more than eyes can see and hands take hold.
We believe this bread and wine will be Christ: his body, blood, and life.

(GOING FORTH)

Lord, our last prayer is to ask for better vision, the power to see you not as Thomas did but to see you in others, in their faces, in their pain, and in their love.

We don’t ask to touch your wounds but to heal them, not to touch your hand but to touch each other in friendship, in healing, and in love.

Lord, you are already present to us. Give us the light called faith that we may see.
Theme/Call to Worship

On this day, which we used to call Passion Sunday, we are called to reflect on the mystery of new and fruitful life coming through death, to examine Jesus' attitudes toward death, and to look at our own.

Introduction to the Word

I. Jeremiah 31:31-34. This passage from Jeremiah, sometimes called the greatest in the Old Testament, was written at a time of total defeat for the people of God. Again and again they had broken their covenant with the Lord. Now they were a nation destroyed, a people without hope. Through the prophet God not only promised forgiveness and a new covenant, but one far surpassing the old. The new covenant would be written deep within the human heart; each man and woman would know the Lord directly. At the Last Supper Jesus himself became the new covenant, our way of knowing God.

II. Hebrews 5:7-9. The author of the letter to the Hebrews points out how like us Jesus is. He understands our weaknesses for he shared them. He understands temptation for he too was tempted. This passage refers to the Lord's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, when he experienced fear of death, when he had to struggle to accept his Father's will for him, and through his suffering became perfect.

III. John 12:20-33. For John the glorification of Jesus begins, not at the moment of his Resurrection or Ascension, but from the moment he enters into his Passion. In contrast to the passage we just read, the evangelist is not concerned with the pain and agony the Lord suffered; the light of John's faith is riveted on the meaning of it all. Through death comes new life, exultation, glory. And it comes only through death.
Homily Model

Recently at a Religious Education Youth Day attended by some 7,000 high school students one of the most popular workshops offered dealt with fears and attitudes about death. Students were encouraged to look at a coffin, try it out if they liked, pretend it was for them — not to be morbid but to lead to some acceptance of the reality of death for themselves. We have a variety of understandings and beliefs about dying, and not all of them relate to the gospel. Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross in her excellent book, On Death and Dying, points out how important it is for us to consider our own end from time to time in order to lessen our terror of it. Dr. Ross has interviewed many terminally ill persons in an effort to help doctors, chaplains, and family meet their needs to approach dying with dignity and without losing hope.

The readings today point out the source of our hope. We are asked to consider that strangest of paradoxes, that life itself comes through death. The letter to the Hebrews and the gospel both speak of Jesus’ death and tell us that it was real. It was cruel, violent, brutal, painful, inflicted out of hatred, at the hands of fellow human beings. And it ended his life as he had lived it on earth in the same way in which our death will end our lives. Yet through Jesus’ death comes our hope of new life. Jesus really died, yet he lives now. Each of us will die, yet because Jesus lives our Christian faith tells us we will live. Many people with whom we daily associate do not believe this.

Our culture has a hard time accepting death, perhaps harder than other cultures in other times. Medical science has learned ways to prolong life, but death is no less a mystery, no less fearful than it was to the first people on earth. Psychologists say that none of us, on the unconscious level, can conceive of our own death, that each of us has buried deep within our being a sense of our own immortality. Within our unconscious, each believes that death can come to others, but “not to me.” Perhaps death is more fearful for us because of the increased possibilities of mass destruction from nuclear blasts or chemical warfare, or perhaps it is more fearful because modern medicine, while very efficiently keeping us alive longer, also makes dying very impersonal and dehumanizing. One used to die at home surrounded by family and friends, and now one dies wrapped in a sheet on an operating table or in a hospital ward connected to tubes and machines, surrounded by strangers.

Consider the contradictory attitudes toward death. Our society at one moment threatens euthanasia and the next refuses to allow people simply to die, prolonging vital functions when there is no longer any possibility of living humanly. Our fear of death is such that we carefully never use the word, yet every night in living color we bring into our homes scenes of violence, death and destruction and seem always to crave more. We inflict death on one another in war, mass murders, street violence, family fights, and yet go to great extremes to deny its reality. People who while living never used cosmetics are powdered and painted when dead to look alive, ready to awaken at any moment. People pay tremendous amounts to have dead relatives quick-frozen, so that in some future time (in spite of overpopulation) they can be resuscitated. We avoid speaking of death to terminally ill persons who have a need to talk. We whisk children away from dying parents and grandparents, leaving them in a state of terrible confusion, to grieve alone, because we don’t know what to say to them. We who believe in the resurrection of Jesus and the
promise of our own resurrection live surrounded by people who have no religious belief to give validity to the powerful unconscious belief that they themselves cannot die.

As Christians, how are we to deal with all of this? Each time we say the Creed we say “I believe Jesus died and was buried and on the third day he arose.” In this Passiontime we need to enter into Jesus’ death in order to contemplate our own, to face our own fears, for ourselves and for those we love. The readings today point out how completely human Jesus is. He, as every man and woman, had to face the reality of his own death. He experienced that fear of dying which each of us carries deep within our being. In agony he asked his Father to rescue him. Listen again to the words from Hebrews: “Christ offered up prayer and entreaty, aloud and in silent tears, to the one who had the power to save him from death...” His agony in the Garden of Gethsemane was real and was resolved in the words, “Yet not my will, but yours be done.” It was not an experience free of fear or dread, or one he ran toward with joy. Jesus’ divinity did not overshadow his humanity in such a way as to make his human experiences unreal. In the account in Mark, three times Jesus asks his Father to save him from death before accepting with peace his Father’s will.

In the gospel we hear John’s version of that same happening, but how differently John sees it. One hardly recognizes it as the agony in the garden. There is none of the pain found in the other accounts because for John the new life that comes from Jesus’ acceptance of his Father’s will so far transcends the pain as to make it insignificant. Jesus’ death has only one message. It is the passageway to new life, to fruitfulness, to meaning undreamed of.

Jesus here speaks of his death not in terms of fear or denial. He plainly says that what looks like destruction of the person, the end of being, is in reality the way and the only way to new and greater being. He says that within our verifiable experience there are many examples of new life, new freedom, new happiness coming from what must be a death experience at the time. He offers two examples. There is the grain of wheat, a single grain, alone and unproductive. If it remains in that form it goes nowhere, accomplishes nothing. If it falls into the dark, cold, wet earth and seemingly dies, it will in reality burst out of its hard shell, produce a new plant and yield a rich harvest. He might have continued the example. The grain could undergo the destructive experience of being ground into the dust that is flour to produce bread, perhaps even the bread of the Eucharist. Jesus’ second example of life from what seems a death experience is that of a human person who lives for himself alone, who refuses to share or sacrifice anything of himself for others, and who ultimately destroys himself in his selfishness.

Is not the Lord saying that all of living is enriched by daily dying? Is he not suggesting that final definitive act of dying, is, in the end, no more destructive to one’s human identity, to one’s person than the many deaths which the very act of living demands of us?

Death then remains a mystery. Jesus’ death and yours and mine. The final death and the daily deaths are frightening and painful, yet the source of hope and new life. It’s the way the Lord walked. It’s the way the grain of wheat produces the rich harvest. It’s the way caterpillars become butterflies.
Homily Overview

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE ASKED TO BELIEVE THE STRANGEST OF PARADOXES – THAT LIFE COMES THROUGH DEATH.
- Jesus’ death was real; cruel, violent, brutal. It ended his human life as he had lived it on earth in the same way death will end ours.
- Through his death comes hope of new life, because he lives now.

OUR AGE FINDS DEATH HARD TO ACCEPT AND CONSTANTLY DENIES ITS REALITY.
- On the unconscious level each believes that others die, but “not me.”
- Death is more fearful for us because of danger of nuclear weapons and chemical warfare.
- And because modern medicine, while prolonging life has made death impersonal and undignified.

JESUS FACED HIS OWN DEATH IN A VERY HUMAN WAY.
- In the garden he experienced fear and agony and asked his Father to free him.
- In faith and trust he accepted the Father’s will – “Not my will but yours be done.”

JOHN IN HIS GOSPEL FOCUSES ON THE MEANING OF JESUS’ DEATH.
- His account of the “agony in the garden” contains no pain, no agony but rather the majesty that comes from accepting the Father’s will.
- Jesus speaks of his own death as the only way to new and greater life.
- He speaks of the daily ways in which one seems to die, but really lives more fully.
- The seed goes into the ground and seems to die, in order to produce more life.
- The selfish man, who refuses to give of himself for others, ultimately is destroyed by his selfishness.

IN THE END THE DEFINITIVE ACT OF DYING IS NO MORE DESTRUCTIVE TO ONE’S HUMAN PERSON THAN THE MANY DEATHS EACH DAY WHICH THE VERY ACT OF LIVING DEMANDS OF US.

Prayers for Worship

Father, Jesus our brother has promised that if he be lifted up he will draw all people to himself. When he was lifted up on the cross he shared our dying, but now that he is lifted up on high, raised up in glory, we ask to share his living.

We believe that he is “the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.”

And we ask your help, your gracious power to live the covenant of our baptism.
Theme/Call to Worship

The reading of the Passion reminds us that the God of Jesus, unlike the God of philosophers and conventional religion, is acquainted with our pain and our death.

Introduction to the Word

I. Isaiah 50:4-7. The third of those four mysterious passages in Second Isaiah we have come to call the Suffering Servant Songs. The passage speaks of one who is radically faithful to God even in the midst of extreme adversity. The primitive Church saw Jesus in these passages. For the first believers, these passages were the earliest accounts of the Passion.

II. Philippians 2:6-11. It is the common teaching among scripture scholars that this passage from Philippians is an already existing hymn that Paul adopts, adapts, and applies to Jesus. Paul adapts the hymn by way of addition, e.g., he specifies the death of Christ as “death on a cross.” We sense here Paul refusing to allow the death of Jesus to be rarefied in any way. In much the same way the reading of the Passion today is the Church refusing to allow the death of Christ to be rarefied.

III. Mark 14:1-15:47. Mark’s gospel has been called a Passion narrative with an extended introduction. When one reads the gospel one sees the inexorable journey of Jesus toward Jerusalem and death. In Mark’s view Jesus perceives his own death as a necessary part of his mission.
The following could be used in place of the homily as an extended introduction to the reading of the Passion according to Saint Mark.

Today we are departing from normal procedure in that we will read the Passion and not have a homily. It is important that we listen with our hearts to the Passion of Jesus at least once a year. The Passion brings us back to the basics of our faith, it brings us back to the core message of Jesus which says that life comes out of hideous death for those who trust in God.

The reading of the Passion can be comforting. We see in it the extent of God’s love for us. It is good to be comforted, but we must not be smothered. Being smothered by comfort is a constant danger in religion.

Let us shift our thinking as we listen to the Passion, shift it in the direction of which George MacLeod speaks when he says:

I simply argue that the cross be raised again at the center of the marketplace as well as on the steeple of the church. I am recovering the claim that Jesus was not crucified in a cathedral between two candles, but on a cross between two thieves; on the town garbage heap; at a crossroads so cosmopolitan that they had to write his title in Hebrew and in Latin and in Greek... at the kind of place where cynics talk smut, and thieves curse, and soldiers gamble. Because that is where he died. And that is what he died about. And that is where churchmen ought to be, and what churchmen ought to be about.

(George F. MacLeod, *Only One Way Left*)

We are the people of the Church. We raise the cross in the marketplace, in the really important areas of life, by holding fast to those most illogical of Jesus’ words. We would expect him to say: As I have loved you, so you must love me. But look at what we find him saying: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another” (John 15:12).

The cross is the measure of our obligation to everyone we meet on the way. As we listen to the story of the Passion according to Saint Mark, let us repeat over and over in our hearts the charge of Jesus to us: “As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”
A short homily for Passion Sunday or another Lenten sermon.

In 79 A.D., the city of Pompeii in southern Italy was destroyed in the eruption of nearby Mount Vesuvius. Less well known is another town, Herculaneum, which suffered in the same catastrophe. This town was a popular first century resort until that day Mount Vesuvius exploded and buried it under sixty-five feet of solidified mud and lava.

Herculaneum is interesting in that it was not a wealthy town like Pompeii. Excavations at the site have uncovered blocks of tenements in which the poor lived. The ruins of Herculaneum speak about the lives of ordinary people.

In one house uncovered in 1938, in a small room on the second floor of a tenement, there was found imbedded into a stucco wall panel a small cross. It is an important find because it is among the earliest evidence of the Christian religion in the Roman Empire.

The archeologist sees this cross and knows that a Christian lived here, a Christian who was very poor, a Christian who was almost isolated from the larger pagan community. Thus this cross is of some interest.

The believer sees this cross and begins to understand a great deal about this room and its occupant(s). There was hope in this tiny room, hope in the midst of what must have been a very meager existence. There was freedom, freedom from the Fates that ruled the lives of so many people in ancient days. There was light, light that comes from the knowledge that one is loved. For in this room lived a Christian, one who believed in Jesus, one who believed that the ultimate meaning of the universe is life-nourishing love. Could anything destroy this hope? could any form of prison destroy this freedom? could any darkness be total?

This ancient believer, while isolated within the larger community of Herculaneum, is not alone. We are one with this person in hope and freedom, we are one in the cross.
PASSION SUNDAY: 11 APRIL 1976

Prayers for Worship

(BEGINNING)

Father, we cannot measure the pain of your Son or his love for us but we can confess our sins and try to respond to his love by healing and helping each other.

May the story of his passion ever remind us that all life has come to us out of love and pain; remind us to use the gift of time to enter now upon eternal life. Through the crucified one we pray, through Christ who died for us. Amen.

(OVER THE GIFTS)

Lord, do not let our worship be one of words, words or stop with gifts like bread and wine. We ask that what we now do may be the offering of Christ who shares his life with us.

(GOING FORTH)

Jesus, Son of David, we give you more than glad hosannas; we try to give you the gift of a contrite heart.

Jesus, Son of David, we hail you as king, that our allegiance to you may keep us faithful to your church and your law of love may rule our lives.

Jesus, Son of David, make us unafraid to die, sharing your trust in the Father who never abandons us, who sent us yourself as the greatest proof of his love.
Theme/Call to Worship

It is Easter, it is morning after night — would anyone know we are celebrating the birthday of life itself? We say it, we sing it, we proclaim it: Christ is risen! Let us also spread the word by the way we live his risen life.

Introduction to the Word

I. Acts 10:34, 37-43. Peter builds a news event “reported all over Judea” into a biblical sermon. It is the heart or “kerygma” of the Good News: Jesus is risen, and we should change our lives. The prophet Hosea first spoke about “the third day” when he prophesied the restoration of Jerusalem. Now the Jewish followers of Jesus use this phrase to express their understanding of the Messiah. Jesus is the new Israel who once again occupies Jerusalem. But it is no longer a city; it is the world, where his resurrection takes hold in the hearts of those who build a kingdom of justice and peace.

II (a). Colossians 3:1-4. This passage should help us to understand a fundamental truth about Christianity: it calls upon us to die and live long before we come to the grave and the judgment. A life hidden in Christ is revealed in faith and good works. Easter isn’t just the heavens opening; it is new life beginning, life with Christ on earth.

II (b). I Corinthians 5:6-8. The scripture writers use many figures of speech; if we don’t like being called “sheep,” or “fish,” today we are compared to yeast! It is a lively metaphor, and a reminder that Christianity is something to live as well as learn. To be yeast is to be on the move, to be alive in Christ.

III. John 20:1-9. This dramatic, detailed account of an empty tomb, even a foot race to get there doesn’t convince those involved, the apostles, that Jesus is risen. Next week we will hear of them still fearful, holed up in a locked room. But the story represents the slow growth in their understanding as they attempted to piece events together and see them in the light of the scripture “which as yet they do not understand.” Their final conviction is all the more credible because they were hard to convince.

Homily Model

The Russian people who have kept the Christian faith have many different customs. One is their Easter greeting: “Alleluia, Christ is risen!” and the answer, “He is risen indeed!” It is a joyous exchange, never rehearsed, springing from the heart where belief is nourished. Anyone who has shared their paschal liturgy knows that it is still in use.
Many years ago this incident was reported. When the Communist leaders of Russia first attempted to eradicate religion they gathered the peasants for mass indoctrination in atheism. It was Easter time but there had been no celebration of Easter; the Church appeared already dead. A clever speaker, a learned lecturer from Moscow, explained to them that religion was a sham and God did not exist. His arguments seemed devastating; he reached a triumphant conclusion and waited for applause. There was a deep silence. Suddenly from the crowd a single voice boomed out, “Alleluia, Christ is risen!” And a thousand voices answered, “He is risen indeed!”

We share the same faith — but we do not have greetings like that, and we are the poorer for it. “Happy Easter” and “Merry Christmas” are as far as we go. Indeed the celebration of Easter poses an interesting question for us — what are the signs and symbols, the songs and customs, that express for us Christ’s victory? If we asked the question about Christmas the answers would be easy: there is the star, and the manger, and of course the Christmas carols; there is the Holy Family, the shepherds, the wise men. But Easter somehow is different. We have not built empty tombs in our homes and churches although we build Christmas cribs. And there are Easter carols but they have never caught on like the Christmas carols. The characters of the Easter gospels — Mary Magdalene, doubting Thomas, the puzzled apostles — have never been painted or portrayed with anything like the frequency of the Christmas story. Easter is the greatest feast — but it has not “caught on” to the same extent in art and custom.

And yet we are not devoid of symbols to express the Easter event. Look around. And listen. There are flowers. Bells. There is great music, triumphant hymns. There are Easter eggs. Easter bread, perhaps new clothes. And there is light — a light kindled in the dark. There is the great candle, the paschal candle, more striking for us than the Olympic torch, and likewise used to announce a victory.

Look at some of our Easter symbols more closely. Are they adequate; do we need something else? We use flowers, and we always speak of the Easter lily; by now this one flower is as much identified with Easter as the poinsettia is with Christmas. Any flower speaks of the victory of a seed that has been buried and comes to astonishing new life. But the lily has a special appeal to us; it is so dead — a dried-up bulb, like an old prune or dead root, that is put into the earth, and is transformed. Anyone can appreciate it as a sign, however limited, of Christ’s triumph over the grave.

But it is limited. All symbols point to a further reality; they express but cannot contain it. Flowers die; Christ dies no more. All this Easter beauty will be on the dust heap next week; even this world passes away, we solemnly say, but of this Jesus, now the Christ, we say that he is “yesterday, today, and forever.” All the flowers, bells, music, and lights are a glad part of the language of Easter; they help us to celebrate. But they are very limited. Is there no better sign of Christ’s victory?

Yes. Not one but two signs that we can think about. The first one should not surprise us. **The great sign of Christianity is always the cross. It is even the sign of Easter because it reminds us of the victory of love.** Usually we say it is the sign of Christ’s love for the brethren. It is indeed, but it is also the sign of the Father’s love for him. This is difficult but worth trying to understand. A father who allows his son to die, especially if he is all-powerful, doesn’t seem to fit our definition of loving. But
the scenario is more complex than this. The Christian story presents us with three insights into God. One is that God shares our human existence, even to suffering and death — this is the Son. Another is that God’s love for us is stronger even than this agony, which is finally vanquished by the power that raised Jesus — we are speaking of the Father, and the power is also called love. The third insight is that God shares this victory with us, and this is the Spirit — but more of that later. The cross reminds us, as great mystics and good theologians have struggled to explain, that although our life is not apart from the cross, it is sustained — the love that begot us is stronger than all the evil that seeks to destroy us.

Some have tried to make the cross the Easter standard by changing the crucifix into an image of the glorified Christ. This is a worthy design and was a favorite approach of the early Christians. They made jeweled crosses, and they were the first to portray Jesus not in agony but as a king, thus making the cross this throne. Or they showed him as a priest, thus making the cross his altar. These are not figures of speech. He who died there is both the high priest who offers our worship to the Father, and the one whom we hail as king of kings, kyrios, Lord.

Protestant Christians expressed the resurrection sometimes by using the cross without the body, as a sign that he is risen, and his body is now our body. His flesh is our flesh, and his Spirit lives in us. We grew up with a rather separatist idea, that Christ’s glorified body is in heaven — which is true, but we left out earth. To say he is in heaven means that Christ is greater than us, greater than the frame of human life and the cosmos. He is not limited by us but he does dwell in people; this is fundamental Christianity.

And that leads us to our second answer to the question: What is the best sign, the enduring and universal sign, of Christ’s victory? We are. It is us; it is people. Christians. It is the newly baptized and all the baptized. And it is all people alive and loving and working by his Spirit, whether or not they know his name. We are the sign; if the world does not know that he has risen, we can tell them, sing songs, light candles, and put on the Hallelujah chorus. But the world needs most of all the testimony of people who act as if life is stronger than death, who believe the grave is not our destiny, and the earth is worth redeeming.

Of course we should extend an Easter greeting! But more, we should lead a risen life.

More Homily Thoughts

Pet rocks may be just another fad, but in the Bible the symbolism of stones and rocks is pervasive. Biblical writers took advantage of Palestine’s rocky landscape to use rocks as metaphors of endurance and power, strength and permanence. Jacob used a stone for a pillow; Moses touched a rock and water gushed forth. Jesus spoke about the wise man who built his house on a foundation of rock, and he called Simon a rock after the apostle’s profession of faith. When the Pharisees told Jesus to restrain the cheers of his followers he answered, “If they were to keep silent I tell you the very stones would cry out.” And Jesus said of himself, “The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”
Once when the enemies of Jesus tried to stone him he walked away unharmed. But their time came. When he was crucified they buried him and sealed the entrance of his grave with a huge stone, hoping this would blot out his name and memory. But on the first Easter morning the stone that had sealed the tomb of Jesus had been rolled back by an angel, according to St. Matthew. If there are “sermons in stones” there’s one in the huge stone revealing the empty tomb. A star in the heavens once signalled his birth. Now a boulder on earth signals his rebirth; it is the first of many signs that led to the conviction, “He is risen; he is not here.”

We can be sealed in a tomb long before we die. You have heard the epitaph: “Dead at thirty, buried at sixty.” At the beginning of Lent the prophet Ezekiel pleaded with us to replace our hearts of stone with hearts of flesh. We have done so if we are able to love others, to forgive injuries, to be concerned. And then the resurrection has become personal for us. To love is to begin eternal life.

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Homily Overview

**THE RUSSIANS HAD AN EASTER GREETING TO EXPRESS THEIR FAITH – EVEN AGAINST ITS ENEMIES.**

– We are strangely lacking in Easter signs and customs.
– Easter is the greatest feast – but it has never expressed itself in culture and custom like Christmas.

**THERE ARE SOME EASTER SYMBOLS – FLOWERS, BELLS, MUSIC, LIGHT.**

– Flowers, especially the lily, express the victory of life over death.
– Earth is the burial place of seed. But it leads to transformation.

**ALL SYMBOLS, EVEN THOUGH THEY EXPRESS REALITY, ARE INCOMPLETE.**

– The Easter flowers will fade, but Christ is forever.
– Do we need better signs of his victory?

**WE HAVE TWO. THE FIRST IS THE CROSS, THE ENDURING SIGN OF CHRISTIANITY.**

– It speaks of Easter because it signals the victory of love.
– Not only the love of Christ but the love of the Father.
– This is the love in which Jesus trusted, which is the power that raised him.
– The cross reminds us that life is sustained, even with trials, even with death.

**THE GLORIFIED CROSS (NOT THE CRUCIFIX) IS ONE ATTEMPT TO EXPRESS THE EASTER VICTORY.**

– Christ is portrayed as priest or king (and the cross as altar or throne).
– Another method is to use the cross, not the crucifix.
– The message is that his body is now our body. He dwells in more than heaven.

**THE SECOND SIGN OF CHRIST’S VICTORY IS SIMPLE – AND FUNDAMENTAL. IT IS US.**

– The baptized, and also the good-willed, all who live by his Spirit.

**GIVE AN EASTER GREETING. LIVE A RISEN LIFE.**
Theme/Call to Worship

What does it mean to stand in the presence of the Risen Lord? Today we hear the story of Thomas and the apostles who had this experience. And today we gather as a believing community to share the same experience. It is Easter brought home to us, Christ seeking to enter our lives.

Introduction to the Word

I. Acts 4:32-35. This is an idealized account of the early Christian community which is still very practical for us. It could lead all Christians to ask, how sensitive are we to others’ needs? How much do we escape being owned by things, and use our possessions for the good of all? Above all, how much do we give testimony in power to the Risen Lord?

II. 1 John 5:1-6. The reference in this passage to water and blood refer either to baptism and death, or to the experience of the believer entering more deeply into Christ’s life through the sacraments of baptism and eucharist. The gospel also speaks of conquering the world. This doesn’t mean the earth, the good earth with which we should live in harmony. “World” is often used to mean the hostile powers of society which seek to destroy the life of the Spirit.

III. John 20:19-31. This gospel is very much a statement of the Easter faith of the apostles. For them Jesus is different but he is real, and really present. And his presence is not just something to marvel at; it is a communication of power. The gospel also leads us to understand that turning from sin brings about our personal participation in the new life which Easter communicates.

Homily Model

Surely this gospel is about the forgiveness of sins. The apostles share this power so that the resurrection may continue; to leave all the dark chambers of fear and anxiety, doubt and misdeed — all that we mean by sin — is truly to leave the grave. To rise. To begin to live freely.

But then, is not this gospel also about faith, and believing? Should we not strengthen our faith through this story of Thomas, and John’s report of the many signs recorded of Jesus’ victory?

The gospel is all these things; it is above all an Easter testimony, full of surprises.
There is a hidden meaning in the story of the apostles in their hiding place: it should thrill us profoundly to discover it, because this group of frightened and bewildered men represent the human situation, and what happens to them is a key to the Christian life. Even more fundamentally, what happens to them is a key to living at peace.

These are big promises! To talk of the “human situation” is to use a phrase that philosophers employ; what is that to us?

The phrase is used to describe the ups and downs of human existence. We don’t have to be philosophers or live very long before we realize that life, even for a child, is a mixture of joy and sorrow, and sometimes a bewildering proposition. Just as we seem to “have it all together” — family, job, future — it falls apart. And all of us, or most of us, go along serenely for a while and then upset for a time. There are days when we feel confident, good about ourselves; and other days when we are anxious, full of worry or the sense of failure. And always we are confronted by the unknown future with its threat of calamity and death. This is “the human situation.”

Consider the case of these twelve people, disciples of Jesus as we ourselves are trying to be. They are coping with the collapse of their plans, the closing off of their future (and very likely the threat of their own violent death). They knew only one thing for certain: Jesus was dead. But their depression also came from their guilt. They had failed him. In Matthew’s gospel those terrible words are recorded: “Then all his disciples deserted him and fled.” So they are hiding behind locked doors, fearful of their lives and uneasy in their conscience.

And what happens? He comes. He is there; they are standing in the presence of the one they love.

But more needs to be said. The presence of God can be a terrifying experience. When he appeared on Mount Sinai the people of Israel were forbidden to touch or even look upon the mountain under pain of death. When our Puritan ancestors thought of God’s presence they thought of an all-seeing eye, and even made an image of it for their houses, like the image we still see on our one-dollar bills. God was present all right, in every corner of our lives, but present like a watchdog or policeman. And God came above all as a judge, as the one who knows even our secret thoughts and who would certainly punish us for our sins. The old attitude was, “Watch out! God can see you. Be good!”

But here it is different. God in Christ is present to the apostles and they have not been good; they are sinners (which of us is not?). The message to them, and to us, is not to watch out but to discover that God still believes in us and we should believe in ourselves. What of our sins? They are forgiven. What about a wasted life? Start again. A few years ago we tried to say everywhere with a famous slogan on our banners that “today (not yesterday) is the first day of the rest of your life.” That is still the Easter message. Every day is more than a new date; it is a new page in what believers dare to call an adventure, even a love story.

For the early Christians the Risen Lord was not a judge. He did not come to reprove, blame, upbraid. No word of censure or reproach falls from his lips. Absolutely none is recorded in the Easter gospels except for a mild one about their failure to understand the scriptures.
In the garden he reproached them for sleeping instead of keeping watch. Now one might expect he would reprove them for running instead of holding their ground. He had been their teacher, and more: their friend; in his hour of need they had abandoned him. We can understand an ordinary person (like us) rejoining his group and saying, “So here you are!” or, “Well, look who’s here; I have a piece of my mind to give you.” Or simply, “You’ve had it; get out.” A company would fire us; an army would court-martial us. But from Jesus there are no words of dismissal or rebuke. Instead he gives the Jewish greeting of peace, “Peace be with you.” In his own language it is the single, beloved word, shalom.

The gospel adds that the disciples rejoiced at the sight of the Lord. Was their joy prompted because he was risen? Of course, but there is a second reason for their joy. He does not condemn or reject them, and they still belong. Jesus looks only to the future; he asks them to continue his work: the forgiveness of sins, the healing of human life.

We have heard a true story about a group of human beings, very much like us, beginning a new relationship with their beloved friend who was also God’s son. Can it not also be a true story updated for us? And more than edification, perhaps it can become an interpretation of where we are, a reason for us, too, to be at peace.

We live with our anxieties, griefs, and doubts. We think at times we have failed God—or our own potential. Which of us thinks he or she has been the parent, the son or daughter, the spouse, the worker, priest, minister or just the person he or she could have been in the past fifteen or fifty years? It’s not just our sins; it’s our frailty that still keeps us from standing into the wind. It’s then that we need to discover, as the apostles did, the presence of the Lord. He is living, and he is here. He comes when we need him. Locked doors will not keep him out; locked hearts might do it but even then God is patient; he waits. He waits to reveal himself and his healing love, perhaps through another person, through the human community. Grace uses all kinds of incarnations; as the apostle John said, there are many signs to help us believe. We may need him most of all in times of illness, anxiety, guilt. It is then that we should remember that his greeting to the apostles is not just a conventional phrase; it has a meaning deep as the sea. Peace should be with us because our God is with us, not to condemn but to heal. He invites us to live.

The homily could end here, or the following paragraph could be added (or expanded) on the much-neglected theme of joy in Christian life.

And many times as our biography unfolds we might pass over not merely from death to life and from anxiety to peace. We might even pass over from sadness or glumness to happiness and joy. The gospel says, “At the sight of the Lord the apostles rejoiced.” We might not think we see him, but at times we are just as close as they were; should we not also experience their joy? This is what it means to share the happiness of reunion, the joy of each other. This is what it should mean to participate in a good celebration of the eucharist or the sacrament of penance. Peace. Joy. Because the Risen Lord is with us, loving us. And assuring us that we still belong.

More Homily Thoughts

Perhaps it’s human nature, a cussed side of it, that we tend to remember the bad things more than the good. Take Thomas. He passes over into history and popular
speech as "doubting Thomas" — isn't that how you first heard of him? And yet Jesus
calls him a believer. And elsewhere in John's gospel (11:16) there is a touching
description of his courage. When Jesus is determined to go to Jerusalem, which by
this time was a seething cauldron full of plots to destroy him, it is Thomas who says,
"Let us go to Jerusalem also, to die with him."

We feel a kinship with this pragmatic, hard-to-convince apostle because we, too —
most of us — have our doubting moments or years. A tendency to turn from God,
or to stop believing "all that religious stuff," or to lose interest in prayer and
sacraments, is not uncommon, and doesn't mean we are evil, or lost. Sometimes this
attitude results from what we think is unanswered prayer, or what we know is
undeserved ill-fortune. Doubt and rejection may also happen when the living God
does not seem to speak to us through the liturgy or sermon or church. Doubting can
lead to believing on a deeper level than before. Once we were told that it was wrong
to doubt the truths of faith; they are revealed. They are. But now we emphasize that
they have to be accepted, not just revealed; they have to be "internalized," and for
this to be authentic we often have to struggle with our doubts. Thomas did. If Jesus
helped him to believe, we may expect that he will help us.

Homily Overview

THE EASTER GOSPELS EXPRESS THE FAITH AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE
EARLY CHURCH.
- The forgiveness of sin, i.e., makes the resurrection a personal event.
- John's story of the locked room has a special meaning for us.
- It portrays "the human situation" and gives a secret for living at peace.

THE HUMAN SITUATION SIMPLY MEANS THE VAGARIES, THE UPS AND
DOWNS, OF LIFE.
- Even if we escape many troubles we are finally confronted by death.

THE APOSTLES ARE DISMAYED, THREATENED, UNEASY IN CONSCIENCE.
- But Jesus, the beloved, comes into their midst.

THIS TIME THE PRESENCE OF GOD IS NOT A TERRIFYING EXPERIENCE.
- On Mount Sinai it meant death; for the Puritan God was an all-seeing eye.
- Here the message is that he believes in us, and we should believe in ourselves.
- He comes to them neither as critic nor judge.

ORDINARY MORTALS LIKE US WOULD "LAY INTO" DESERTERS, QUITTERS,
THE WEAK OF HEART.
- But Jesus comes as a friend. His greeting is "Peace."
- This acceptance, as well as his resurrection, is the secret of their sudden joy.

CAN THIS BE A TRUE STORY UPDATED FOR US?
- We have similar anxieties, and frequently a sense of failure.
- We need to discover, as they did, the presence of the Lord.
- He comes when we need him. Grace uses many incarnations.
- He invites us to live in peace. To be joyful. To know that we still belong.
April 4, (I), Jeremiah's great passage. The prophet is talking about true religion, which always goes beyond structures and “things,” even very precious things like church, communion, or bible, into presence, the presence of the living God. We then struggle for the words to express what it means, how it happens. Jeremiah speaks of a knowledge of the heart: “I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts.... All shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Some would call this an inner voice; others speak of a spiritual presence; St. Paul says that the Spirit within us is the same, and is in communion with, the Spirit above us. Leo Tolstoy put it simply when he wrote, “I believe in God, whom I comprehend as Spirit, as Love, as the Source of all. I believe that He is in me and I in Him.”

The real “good news” of the prophet is that this God who speaks within, who has become a part of life, not apart from it, is above all a forgiving God. We have heard this before; are we tired of the message? Or have we yet to take it in? Should we preach upon it? This passage and the gospel for II Easter (the apostles in the locked room) give us two opportunities to bring the new Rite of Penance into a rich scriptural context. “I will forgive their evildoing, and remember their sin no more,” says the Lord. Don’t we need to reciprocate by forgiving others and refusing to “dredge up” or fling out the past sins or slights that were done to us? How many relationships are shattered by a quarrel or misunderstanding, the memory of a harsh retort still hanging there like an icicle after the storm, while we are miserably wishing all the while we could put the friendship back together again! Dag Hammarskjold wrote in Markings (p. 124), “Forgiveness is the answer to the child’s dream of a miracle by which what is broken is made whole again.”

We should try to lay hold deeply, and offer our people more than once, this great passage of revelation. We speak in every Mass of a new covenant; here it is mentioned for the first time in the Old Testament; later Ezekiel, following the tradition begun by Jeremiah, will speak of an eternal covenant. The homily model today concludes with the reminder that the new covenant is Jesus himself. If we are “in him,” in communion, trying to be more of one mind and heart with him, we will be the sons and daughters of God who please the Father, responsive, and responsible. This reading from Jeremiah is set out in one of Lucien Deiss’ melodies; I have often used it for a Penance Service. When a cantor or schola sings the verses and the crowd sings the refrain, it can become very genuine worship; the Word of God is cherished and familiar, and the great message that he is at the heart of human life, telling us to forget our sins (because he does), and begin a new covenant — this begins to take hold of us. It would be a challenge to music composers to set this peak passage of revelation (and others) to very great music; until then, the Deiss antiphon can become a familiar parish ritual.

(III), Jesus’ stark words about loving life and losing it, hating life and preserving it, are not easy to take in (he helps us with his familiar example of the seed, which is easy to demonstrate to children). To speak of hating life in this world does not justify an other-worldly asceticism. How could we hate God’s gift, part of which is life in the world? To “hate life” is a Semitic phrase that means “to love less.” The gospel is telling us to love some things more than self-preservation, comfort, “going along,” “having it made,” existing. The phrase could be paraphrased; one who risks comfort, job, future, even health and perhaps life itself if he follows his conscience in opposing a police state, or seeking to deliver those unjustly bound, or resigning and exposing a corrupt corporation — in these cases such a person acts in truth and goodness. Jesus says there is one who is good, God; we do not “act” in truth and goodness without our “being” more “in God.” Human life is deepened or enriched until we are right to think it is divine; no wonder the scripture says of such a one that “he has attained eternal life.” Eternal life should not be equated with a final “jump to heaven”; it begins with this deepening, enriching process that draws us into the heart of goodness, or God.

G.K. Chesterton in Orthodoxy compares this passage on life and death to the courage of a man who saves his life precisely because he is willing to lose it, i.e., by daring death (or fire, or bullets, or the enemy lines).
He says, "He that will lose his life, the same shall save it," is not a piece of mysticism for saints and heroes. It is a piece of everyday advice for sailors or mountaineers. It might be printed in an Alpine guide, or a drill book. This paradox is the whole principle of courage. We can extend this to another virtue, faith. Thus, if we do not dare the abyss, confront the seeming emptiness of existence, the terrors of the night, then we do not yet possess deep faith. The one who takes this risk of looking right into life and death and the mystery of tomorrow, unafraid, such a one is responding to the gift of faith which enables us to give meaning to our existence, confront death, and face tomorrow (or today) in peace.

April 25, Second Easter. (I). The author of Acts waxes lyrical when he writes, "The community of believers were of one mind and heart." Can we really believe that any large group ever existed for long "of one mind and heart"? Perhaps. "One mind" could mean that a group holds certain principles in common (like the importance of worship, or giving social witness, or the need for free discussion, shared authority). It certainly should not mean one way of looking at things. Difference produces dialogue, and if there is "one heart" — good will — this kind of dissent can enlarge the mind and profit everyone. "One heart" reminds us that there is only one love; we reflect our love for God in the way we relate to our neighbors.

What about property? Would anyone today fit the description, "None of them ever claimed anything as his own; rather everything was held in common"? No. Even Communist societies allow private gardens and small ownership. There are communes in our country, and they are not all "far out"; students in particular have discovered that sharing a house and having an "extended family" can enable one to own in common expensive things like a washing machine. We all have to ask today, as consumerism consumes us, if we can continue each with his private big machinery. Some "exclusive" clubs and schools now share their swimming pools with the children of the city and the poor; perhaps we are slowly discovering that a totally private life-style is neither possible nor Christian.

"From each according to his ability; to each according to his needs." Who said that? It sounds very much like Acts today. A vital interpretation of this scripture would be that it is not so much an economic scheme as an attitude that should prevail in any economic scheme, a conviction that no one should go hungry in a land of plenty or go shivering when a person has a closetful of clothes. Are we really concerned for the needy? The Mormons are rightly praised for the pantries and storehouses they prepare in the good years to share with the less fortunate. Anyone in need means there should be a response from the human community — what about the Christian community, which has a special word and deed (the breaking or sharing of the bread) to remind its members that we are one family, and the pain of one is the pain of all?

One parish — and the only one that we ever heard of — tithed their considerable weekly income. This meant that three to five hundred dollars was sent each week to local, community, and world concerns. It also meant that the committee which made the choices, and through them the whole parish, got richly involved in the lives of people in far-off places like Bangladesh and Biafra, or those right around the corner, like the black community trying to eliminate sickle-cell anemia. Another parish we know collects and loans out, free, expensive convalescent items like hospital beds, wheelchairs, and walkers, and smaller ones like crutches, canes, heat packs and vibrators. These are often needed for a short time only — thank God; why keep them in closets? This same parish helps aliens to register and others to prepare job resumes.

Perhaps we still don't know the needy. A slumming trip or Caribbean cruise won't really suffice. There is a thoughtful story from the Talmud about the blind man who carried a flaming torch in the darkness of the night. An observer was puzzled, since day or night made no difference to the blind, and light couldn't help him. The blind man explained, "I don't carry the torch for myself, but for others. So long as this torch is in my hand, people see me and save me from the pits and thorns and the thistles." His torch was a sign to others that a needy man was here; those who believe in man or God should reach out to him. What kind of torch will help us to see? The sight of the starving or the victims of violence, has scarcely been a torch in the night for us; we become so insensitive that we can eat dinner while we see their misery on TV.

The Acts passage says this was a community of believers. These few lines tell us that to be a believer one must do more than study Talmud or scripture or church history. One must do more than worship around altars; one must seek out the needy. The deeds that help them are also divine services; they are religious acts. Religion means to bind or create a bond, and our good deeds bind us
to the living goodness which is God. Khalil Gibran expressed this in one of his aphorisms:

The sun which you drop into
The withered hand stretching toward
You is the only golden chain that
Binds your rich heart to the Loving heart of God....

(III). We should not be puzzled at the gift of the Spirit long before Pentecost. John works with a different emphasis than Luke; he wishes to show that the new creation has begun through Jesus, the new Adam. In the beginning the Spirit moved to bring out of chaos our universe, and now the Spirit moves to bring about a new age.

Unlike Thomas we do not see Jesus, and yet we are called to believe. But is it really true that we don’t see him, or is it just that we don’t recognize him? The Russian author Turgenev tells of standing in a crowd and becoming convinced that a man who had come up beside him was Christ. This was his first impression. The second was one of dismay when he looked at the man. His dismay did not come from thinking he was in error. No; he felt inescapably that this was the Christ; he was dismayed that he looked so ordinary, so unstriking. Then came that moment when truth lays hold. “Suddenly my heart sank,” he said, “and I came to myself. Only then I realized that just such a face — a face like all men’s faces — is the face of Christ.”

In the gospel John speaks of signs duly recorded that “Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through this faith you may have life in his name.” But he speaks of many other signs; in the homily model for Easter and the prayers for that day we stress that people are the best sign of Christ’s presence — indeed, of his resurrection. Do we yet understand how this works? It begins with a mother, mothers who take away the fears of the night, a child’s sudden fright or pain, who become the first sign or assurance that we are not alone in this perilous journey, that everything is all right. A mother thus “signifies” what God is. And the signs should continue. A father provides the whole framework for our early existence. A friend stands by, supports, makes life bearable. A friend endures our silence (and our moods), helps us to times of enjoyment. This is what God does for us — does through “signs” and one day “does to perfection” when old limitations have passed away.

Joseph T. Nolan

The following are offered as seed-thoughts for your Easter sermon or quotations for your Easter bulletin

On the third day the friends of Christ coming at daybreak to the place found the grave empty and the stone rolled away. In varying ways they realised the new wonder; but even they hardly realised that the world had died in the night. What they were looking it was the first day of a new creation, with a new heaven and a new earth; and in a semblance of the gardener God walked again n the garden, in the cool not of the evening out the dawn.

G.K. Chesterton, The Everlasting Man, p.261

“What does Easter mean to you?” I asked a child of six as she was hurrying to meet her friends in play. She beamed her reply; “It means the Easter bunny will bring me lots of candy and clothes.” I met a youth of sixteen. After a little thought he said: “It means that Christ rose from the dead.” The search for a better answer continued. A man of more than sixty gave me satisfaction with his words: “It means that I’ve only begun to live.”

Rev. Clyde G. Steels
The great Easter truth is not that we are to live newly after death — that is not the great thing — but that we are to be new here and now by the power of the resurrection; not so much that we are to live forever as that we are to, and may, live nobly now because we are to live forever.

Phillips Brooks

It is no trouble for us who live in the open country to believe in resurrection. To us Easter is a symbol of continuing life. Seeds so dry they rustle like paper need only to rest awhile in rich moist earth, and they spring forth deeply green, and full of vigor. Dull, lifeless bark opens to let pink-white blossoms push their way to the sun. This is how we know life does not end suddenly with the words “dust to dust...” ...I have always felt, as I listened to the familiar Easter story, that it rained the night before the Resurrection and that on the morning of mornings the earth shone new and clean. It is quite beyond my ability to explain such a thing as immortality, but at Eastertime in my garden, I know that it exists.

Roma Cain Carter, Farm Journal

Preaching in April — Scriptural Commentary

The Scripture readings for April are part of the seasonal rhythms of Lent and Easter. Hence they don’t fit into a “monthly” category. The readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent is a unit thematically with the first four Lenten Sundays (the Four Sundays of March this year). The Markan Passion narrative is read as part of the reading for the entire year, Mark’s gospel.

The readings for Easter Sunday and the following Sunday contain the principal elements of John’s “Easter Theology.”

FIRST SUNDAY OF APRIL.
John 12:20-33. Access to Jesus. This passage continues the theme of previous Lenten Sundays: how are we to regard Jesus? The Greek proselytes to Judaism would like to see Jesus, to have access to him, to know him more profoundly, in the depths of his being. Thus these Greeks represent all of us who would like to deepen our faith.

At this same time, this reading is the climax of Jesus’ public ministry in the Gospel of John. It is a worthy climax that involves Christ and the Father, Jews and Gentiles, the temple and the cross, death and life, humiliation and glory. As the climax of a richly articulated master work, many elements can be emphasized. These paragraphs represent only the tip of an iceberg!

In response to the question of access (vv. 20-22), Jesus informs us of the conditions of intimacy with him; and in telling us he reveals not only who he is but he reveals who we are meant to be. His hour is not only the hour of his passion, his suffering and glorification; it is also the hour of discernment and decision for us. Verse 23 (and again verse 31) is a summary of the gospel and of Christianity. God’s new order has come in Jesus (The Kingdom is at hand, says Mark); and this new era is inseparable from Jesus’ “lifting up,” his death and resurrection.

Jesus continues by revealing the manner or method of bringing about a new world: it is by dying. Paradoxically yet logically a new kind of life must be preceded
by death, death to the old forms of life. But death in whatever form it takes is not merely a casting away of life: it is death for the sake of others that reveals the new order and brings it about. This is what Jesus does; and this is the truth applicable to all who would follow him. Service means following him through the same experience; he extends to his followers the validity of verse 24 if they wish to cooperate in fulfilling the total work of Christ, the inauguration of a new era. Conversely Jesus’ exaltation occurs only in relationship to his followers. Only if there is a harvest does Jesus’ death make sense.

This leads Jesus (or the evangelist?) to the next consideration: should he avoid his hour of suffering? No, because his hour will glorify the Father. It will open the new era, generate new life. This is the hour that shapes the world’s destiny and this destiny is God’s glory.

Now believers can understand why it is also the hour of judgment. The old order outside the Father’s dominion is broken; and this “hour” is the hour of decision for all of us. It is the crisis of faith, for Jesus’ lifting up, the end of the old order, is on a cross. The new order, then, comes at a price; true freedom from uncontrolled power, Satan, evil, and all dark forces makes demands on faith — it will be costly for us. Jesus paid the price; but we must share with him his total experience of both death and resurrection to new life. If we are drawn to him, we will overcome death with the new life of a new era. The grain of wheat that dies issues in a harvest of freedom, re-creation, a new order, renewal of the earth, joy surpassing understanding. This is John’s ultimate answer to the Christological question: we would see Jesus!

SECOND SUNDAY OF APRIL
Passion Sunday. Mark 14:1-15:47. Mark’s Passion Narrative. (Preaching suggestion: In light of Mark’s theology, it might be well to allow Mark’s narrative to speak with power to the assembled community. The power of God’s word is sufficient in itself, and this relatively brief narrative should not be abbreviated for the community. Perhaps a few words of exegetical or theological location before the narrative will provide some assistance to the modern hearer.)

Mark’s passion story is read as part of the program of reading Mark’s gospel during this year. His account seems to be couched in relatively unemotional language because Mark is concerned with the religious meaning, the divine impact of these events on our lives and on the world. An overall theme in Mark’s Gospel (as we have seen in February Good News) is the question of power in our world. Jesus comes with power, but power leads to conflict, to opposition both within and without. Jesus’ power comes into the life of the individual Christian and into the world. This power is so unsettling, so shattering that it causes a crisis. This crisis forces the individual to a decision: to accept Jesus totally or to reject him. At the same time, for the world the crisis issues in the breakthrough of the Kingdom of God, God’s reign in power. The Resurrection is this breakthrough in power in our personal life and for the world.

EASTER SUNDAY. John 20:1-9. The empty tomb. Chapter 20 of John’s Gospel is the concluding unit of his work and contains his “Easter theology.” A homilist might want to read the whole chapter (at least privately) for its full implications. The striking feature of John’s Easter narrative is the gentleness and consideration that Jesus shows. This is striking because John’s gospel as a whole emphasizes the majesty and the glorification of Jesus; yet at the moment of glory it reveals Jesus at his most gentle. (In many ways we would expect this approach in Luke; and John’s narrative shows great resemblance to Luke’s.) There is, in this chapter, a gradual revealing of these marvelous events, a gentle breaking of the good news rather than a shattering judgment.

Two issues seem important in John’s narrative. First, as our belief becomes stronger, we can see Jesus more clearly. Belief precedes sight! Deeper faith will lead to deeper understanding and richer life. And secondly, Jesus’ resurrection establishes a new relationship with us, a loving relationship, a relationship of a brother who cares for and protects his younger and weaker brothers and sisters. Life takes on deeper meaning because of this faithful relationship.

This passage of the empty tomb is dramatically constructed to lead up to belief — belief that leads to the vision of understanding (next Sunday’s Gospel).

The action in this drama is clear. Mary discovers the entrance open and reports this to the disciples. Two of them, Peter and John, immediately run at top speed to the tomb. John arrives first, waits for Peter and they both enter, see the discarded burial linen, and believe. And what a gentle way to announce good news! The invitation to believe is not in overwhelming light but in the quiet of the empty tomb.

This drama is the drama of all
the followers of Jesus. We hear the report, we see with Peter and John, and we believe — we have faith in Jesus in the full sense. He has overcome darkness, he has overcome death, he has even overcome our disbelief so that we might live in the new era, so that we might enter upon a new life with him. The drama of all believers unfolds in what this Easter gospel reveals to us.

SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER. John 20:19-31. The Upper Room.
This passage really contains three separate elements: 1) Jesus comes to the disciples (vv. 19-23); 2) Thomas the Doubter (vv. 24-29); 3) the Conclusion of the Gospel (vv. 30-31).

The appearance to the ten (vv. 19-23). When Jesus comes to his followers, he comes with peace, gentleness, consideration. A great calm pervades these verses as he imparts his Spirit to his disciples. This is the assurance of his glorification: he gives his Spirit of peace and power. This gift is the only power that can bring peace; and peace is the one sure sign of the Spirit’s presence. When peace is present, the believer can be sure that the Spirit of Jesus is active. Peace in the power of the Spirit is what convinces us to believe, not the sight of pierced hands and side.

Beyond this, Jesus’ appearance is also a commission. The believer stands in relationship to Jesus as Jesus stands in relationship to the Father. Jesus breathes his Spirit out on his followers as the Spirit is poured out on him in glory. We share in his glorification; we live with the spirit of a new life. This is what Jesus’ appearance makes clear to believing followers.

Appearance to Thomas (vv. 24-29). This is the climax of John’s Easter narrative toward which he has carefully constructed the whole of Chapter 20. This is the Easter message according to John.

Thomas is offered the same evidence as the other disciples and makes a pronouncement: “My Lord and My God.” Jesus counters with his pronouncement, incautiously important for all who would follow, a “ninth beatitude”: “Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.”

Here the event as narrative is transcended, for Thomas is every believer who announces that Jesus is the center of a renewed life for him. The believer acknowledges that Jesus is glorified, is source of new life for all who wish it. Jesus, with that Easter consideration for generations and centuries of believers, pronounces that whoever believes is indeed fortunate, happy, endowed with peace and unending life. This is indeed the climax of the resurrection narrative, for every believer is assured that he shares with Jesus in the power and effects of the resurrection. Jesus’ power fills the believer with blessing, happiness, calm, and that peace beyond understanding which is the gift of abundant resurrection-life.

The conclusion of the Gospel (vv. 30-31). The conclusion to the gospel is characterized by the evangelist as “merely selective,” not comprehensive, but he declares the purpose of this composition. The whole range of Jesus’ activity, including the Easter events, are the “signs” that speak to us of life, the new life which his followers share with him. For this is the purpose of his book of signs, that believers may grow in faith. Faith is not something that the Christian has once and for all; each Christian must constantly and perpetually make sure that his faith is living; we must bear the word anew and believe again. And this is the meaning of faith: to have new life in his name. John’s conclusion announces the perpetual Easter that is the Christian life.

Benjamin Mariante
Music & Media

APRIL/MAY/JUNE 1976

TRADITIONAL SONGS FOR THE LITURGY prepared for GOOD NEWS by Roger Nachtway

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT (35-B) 4 April 76

WITH HEARTS RENEWED BY LIVING FAITH [BCW: 94] [CLB: 460] [FEL: 41]

PASSION SUNDAY [PALM SUNDAY] (37-38) 11 April 76

For the Procession:

RIDE ON! RIDE ON IN MAJESTY - Meter: L.M. [Pres: 563] [1940: 64] [SBH: 73] [USF: 277] [HAM: 99] [TEH: 620]

1. Ride on! Ride on in majesty! Hark! all the tribes “Hosanna” cry;
   Your humble beast pursues his way Where crowds the palms and garments lay. [CLB: 255]

2. Ride on! Ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;
   O Christ, your triumphs now begin O’er captive death and conquered sin.

3. Ride on! Ride on in majesty! The angel armies of the sky
   Look down with sad and wond’ring eyes To see that approaching sacrifice.

4. Ride on! Ride on in majesty! Your last and fiercest strife is nigh;
   The Father on his glorious throne Expects his own anointed Son.

5. Ride on! Ride on in majesty! In lowly pomp ride on to die;
   Bow your meek head to mortal pain. Then take, O Lord, your pow’r, and reign!

Henry H. Milman, 1827, alt. May be sung to “On Jordan’s Bank” or any “O Salutaris” melody

For Mass: See the hymns given for Good Friday.

HOLY THURSDAY 15 April 76

The Chrism Mass (39)

Re: Bishop’s address - “My brothers and sisters, pray for your priests.”


1. God of the prophets, bless the prophets’ sons; Elijah’s mantle o’er Elisha cast:
   Each age its solemn task may claim but once; Make each one nobler, stronger than the last.

2. Anoint them prophets! Make their ears attend To your most holy speech; their hearts awake
   To human need; their lips make eloquent For righteousness that shall all evil break.

3. Anoint them priests! Strong intercessors they For pardon, and for charity and peace!
   O that with them, the world, so far astray, Might pass within Christ’s life of sacrifice!

4. Anoint them kings! Yes, kingly kings, O Lord! Anoint them with the Spirit of your Son:
   Theirs not a jeweled crown, a blood-stained sword; Theirs, by the love of Christ, a kingdom won.

5. Make them apostles, heralds of your cross; May they go forth to tell all realms your grace:
   By you inspired, may they count all but loss, And stand at last with joy before your face.

Denis Wolffman, 1884, alt.

May be sung to the National Hymn, “God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand” or the tune of “Soul of My Savior”.

LORD OF THE LIVING HARVEST – Meter: 76. 76. D. [SBH: 304] [Luth: 492] [CLB: 398]

1. Lord of the living harvest That whitens o’er the plain, Where angels soon shall gather Their sheaves of golden grain,
   Accept these hands to labor, These hearts to trust and love; Be pleased through them to hasten Your kingdom from above.

2. As lab’rers in your vineyard, Lord, send them out anew; Content to bear the burden Of weary days for you;
   To ask no other wages, When you shall call them home, But to have shared the burden Which makes your kingdom come.

3. Be with them, God the Father; Be with them, God the Son; And God the Holy Spirit; Most blessed Three-in-One!
   Make them a royal priesthood, You rightly to adore, And fill them with your fulness Both now and evermore.

John Samuel Bewly Monsell, 1866, alt. May be sung to “O Sacred Head” or “The Church’s One Foundation”.

The Mass of the Lord’s Supper (40)

TWAS ON THAT DARK DISTRESSING NIGHT – Meter: L.M. [Luth: 164] [CLB: 257]

1. ’Twas on that dark, distressing night When pow’r’s of earth and hell arose
   Against the Son of God’s delight And friends betrayed him to his foes.
2. Before the mournful scene began, He took the bread and blessed and broke,  
    What love through all his actions ran! What wondrous words of grace he spoke!
3. “This is my body: broke for sin; Receive and eat the living food”:
    Then took the cup and blessed the wine: “It's the new co'v'nant in my blood.”
4. “Do this,” he said, “till time shall end, In mem’ry of your dying Friend.
    Meet at my table and record The love of your departed Lord.”
5. O Lord, your feast we celebrate; We show your death, we sing your name,
    Till you return and we shall eat The marriage supper of the Lamb.

Isaac Watts, 1709, cento

May be sung to “O Salutaris”, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow”, or “On Jordan's Bank”.

SEE ALSO:
- The Priesthood hymns given for the Christ Mass.
- LOOK BEYOND THE BREAD YOU EAT, by Darryl Ducote of the Dameans [HVC, Vol. II]
- LOVE ONE ANOTHER, by Germaine Habjan [HVC, Vol. I & II]
- LOVE IS THE WORD [CLB: 259]

GOOD FRIDAY (41) 16 April 76

The following is a metrical paraphrase of those verses of Psalm 31 used for today’s Responsorial Psalm:

IN YOU, O LORD, I PUT MY TRUST — Meter: C.M.

1. In you, O Lord, I put my trust: I call upon your name. O save me in your righteousness, Nor let me suffer shame.
2. Since you’re my fortress and my rock, My leader be, and guide; From all temptation rescue me, For you my strength abide.
3. To you my spirit I commend; Redemption comes from you, O mighty Yahweh, God of truth, My Lord and Savior true.
4. My foes have made me a reproach; My state my neighbors see. My friends, appalled at my approach, Turn quickly, and they flee.
5. But, Lord, in you I put my trust; “You are my God,” I cried. My life, my times are in your hand; In your strength I confide.
6. O smile upon your servant, Lord, And save me in your love. Be strong and let your hearts be bold, Who hope in God above.

May be sung to the tune of “Throughout These Forty Days” or “O God Our Help in Ages Past”.

A response to the reading of the Passion (or to the homily):

THRONED UPON THE AWFUL TREE — Meter: 77. 77. 77 [Pres: 605] [HAM: 119] [CLB: 263] [Luth: 174] [TEH: 116]

1. Throned upon the awful tree, Lamb of God, your grief we see.
   Darkness veils your anguished face; None of its lines of woe can trace.
   None can tell what pangs unknown Hold you silent and alone—
2. Silent through those dreadful hours, Wrestling with the evil pow'rs,
   Left alone with human sin, Gloom around you and within,
   Till th'appointed time is nigh, Till the Lamb of God may die,
3. Hear the cry that echoes loud Upward through the whelming cloud!
   You, the Father’s only Son, You, his own anointed one,
   You are asking—can it be?— “Why have you forsaken me?”
4. Lord, should fear and anguish roll Darkly o'er our sinful soul,
   You, who once were thus bereft That your own might not be left,
   Teach us by that bitter cry In the gloom to know you nigh.

John Ellerton, 1875, alt.  May be sung to “As with Gladness Men of Old” (For the Beauty of the Earth”).

During the presentation of the Cross:

IN THE CROSS OF CHRIST I GLORY — Meter: 87. 87 [Pres: 437] [CLB: 457] [USF: 293] [Luth: 354] [SBH: 64] [1940: 330]

1. In the cross of Christ I glory Tow'ring o'er the weeks of time;
   All the light of sacred story Gathers round its head sublime.
2. When the woes of life o'ertake me, Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
   Never shall the cross forsake me: See! it glows with peace and joy.
3. When the sun of bliss is beaming Light and love upon my way,
   From the cross the radiant streams Add more luster to the day.
4. Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure, By the cross are sanctified;
   Peace is there that knows no measure, Joys that through all time abide.
5. In the cross of Christ I glory Tow'ring o'er the weeks of time;
   All the light of sacred story Gathers round its head sublime.

John Bowring, 1825  May be sung to the tune of “Holy Mary, Now We Crown You”.

THE ROYAL BANNERS FORWARD GO — Meter: L.M. [CLB: 262]

1. The royal banners forward go The cross shines forth in mystic glow
   Where he, as man, who gave man breath, Now bows beneath the yoke of death.
2. There, while he hung, his sacred side By soldier's spear was opened wide,
   To cleanse us in the precious blood Of water mingled with his blood.
3. Fulfilled is all that David told In true prophetic song of old:
   “O'er all the nations, God,” said he, “Has reigned and triumphed from the tree.”
4. O lovely and resplendent tree, Adorned with purple majesty,
   You wood was chosen as the best On which his sacred limbs might rest—
5. On whose strong arms, so widely flung, The price of this world’s ransom hung,
   The beam on which his body lay To steal from hell its destined prey.

6. O cross, our one reliance, hail! Still may your pow’r with us avail
   More good for righteous souls to win, And save the sinner from his sin.

7. O Trinity, our praise we sing To you from whom all graces spring;
   The triumph of the cross bestow; Reward your faithful here below.
   Vexilla Regis Prodeunt, Venantius Fortunatus, 569; Tr., Composite
   May be sung to “O Salutaris”, “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” or “On Jordan’s Bank”.

SEE ALSO: Alone You Journey Forth [CLB: 261] [Pres: 294] [1940: 68]

EASTER VIGIL MASS and EASTER SUNDAY (42) (43) 18 April 76

Few of the well-known and otherwise fine Easter hymns give any emphasis to the Passover-Exodus-Resurrection connection. Therefore we suggest the following two hymns, which may be very fitly used at the Vigil following the baptisms, during the “Asperges” following the renewal of vows, or at the offertory of the Mass, which immediately follows.

THROUGH THE RED SEA BROUGHT AT LAST [West: 57] [CLB: 271]

COME, O FAITHFUL, SING THE HYMN — Meter: 76. 76. D (trotchaie) [1940: 94] [CLB: 276] [Pres: 344]

1. Come, O faithful, sing the hymn Of triumphant gladness;
   God has brought his Israel Into joy from sadness;
   Loosed from Pharaoh’s bitter yoke Jacob’s sons and daughters;
   Led them all completely dry Through the Red Sea waters.

2. ’Tis the spring of souls today: Christ has burst his prison
   And from three days’ sleep in death As a sun has risen;
   All the winter of our sins, Long and dark, is flying
   From his light, to whom we give Song and praise undying.

3. Now the queen of seasons, bright With the day of splendor,
   With the royal feast of feasts, Comes its joy to render;
   Comes to glad Jerusalem, Who with true affection
   Welcomes with uniting praise Jesus’ resurrection.

4. Neither could the gates of death, Nor the tomb’s dark portal,
   Nor the watchers, nor the seal, Hold you as a mortal:
   But today amid your own You have stood, bestowing
   Your own peace which evermore Passes human knowing,
   Aposten Pastes Laol, St. John of Damascus, 6th cent., Tr., John Mason Neale, 1859, alt.

There are comparatively few hymn tunes of this meter; fewer well known. However, all congregations will be able to sing this text to the tune of “Good King Wenceslas Looked Out on the Feast of Stephen”. It may seem strange, at first thought, to use on Easter a tune so closely connected with the Christmas season. But it might be useful to note that this is quite an ancient melody, well known before its first known printed version in 1582. For centuries it was sung with the words of the Latin springtime carol, “Tempus Adest Floridum” and is therefore quite fitting for use with St. John’s Easter hymn. It was not until 1853 that John Mason Neale (who also translated the above) adapted his metrical version of the legend of “Good King Wenceslas” to this tune. The editors of the Oxford Book of Carols enlisted everyone’s efforts to re-associate this tune with the Easter Season, and they dissuade its use with the Wenceslas hymn. The following hymn is a fine translation of “Tempus Adest Floridum” and is one of the finest hymns for the Easter Season.

SPRING HAS NOW UNWRAPPED THE FLOWERS [Oxford Book of Carols] [Catholic Liturgy Book, No. 283]

CHRIST, THE LORD, IS RISEN TODAY — Meter 77. 77. D. [CLB: 268]

1. Christ, the Lord, is ris’n today; Christians, haste your vows to pay;
   Make your joy and praises known At the Paschal Victim’s throne.
   For the sheep the Lamb has bled, Sinless in the sinners’ stead.
   Christ, the Lord, is ris’n on high; Now he lives, no more to die!

2. Christ, the Victim underlaid, God and man has reconciled,
   When in closest and aweful strife Met together death and life.
   Christians, on this happy day Raise your hearts with joy and say:
   “Christ, the Lord, is ris’n on high; Now he lives no more to die!”

3. Say, O wond’ring Mary, say What you saw along the way,
   “I beheld two angels bright, Empty tomb, and wrappings white;
   I beheld the glory bright Of the rising Lord of Light.
   Christ, my Hope, is ris’n for me And goes now to Galilee.”

4. Christ, who once for sinners bled, Now the first-born from the dead,
   Throned in glorious majesty, Reigns through all eternity.
   Grant us mercy, Victor-King, As to your praise we sing.
   Hail, O Prince of Life adored! Help us, save us, gracious Lord!
   Victima Paschali Laudes, ascribed to Wipo of Burgundy, c. 1030; Tr., Jane E. Leeson, 1851, alt.

This hymn (a translation of the Easter Sequence) had once been known to most of our Catholic people, together with the melody traditionally associated with it. However, few hymnals included the entire text of the sequence. Instead of having the people recite the rather poor “Official” translation, it would be much better to have them sing this translation to the traditional melody. The traditional melody of this hymn as given in the OLD St. Basil Hymnal (with the dotted rhythms) is much more suitable than the “evened-off” version in the new St. Basil, Parish Liturgy, and other sources. If the melody is no longer known or available, this hymn may be sung to the tune of “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing"
SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER (45-B) 25 April 76

O SONS AND Daughters of the LORD
Refrain: Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!
1. O sons and daughters of the Lord, The King of glory, King adored, From death to life has been restored. Alleluia! Refrain
2. While the disciples hid in fear, Their Christ among them did appear: He said: "My peace be with you here," Alleluia! Refrain
3. When Thomas heard what had been said, That Christ was risen from the dead, It entered not his heart or head. Alleluia! Refrain
4. "O Thomas, see my side," said he; "My hands, my feet, my body see. No longer doubt; believe in me." Alleluia! Refrain
5. When Thomas saw the wounded side, The truth no longer he denied; "You are my Lord and God," he cried. Alleluia! Refrain
6. "Oh, blest are they who do not see Their Lord, but yet believe in me: Life shall be theirs eternally." Alleluia! Refrain
7. On this most holy feast let's raise Our hearts to God in hymns of praise, And let us bless the Lord always. Alleluia! Refrain
8. Our humble thanks to God let's show And fitting praise on him bestow For Paschal blessings here below! Alleluia! Refrain
O Fili et Filiae, Jean Tisserand, d. 1494; Tr., E. Caswall, J. M. Neale, et al., alt.

WITH HEARTS RENEWED BY LIVING FAITH [BCW: 94] [CLB: 460] [FEL: 41]

FOURTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (51-B) 9 May 76

1. At the Name of Jesus Ev'ry knee shall bow, Ev'ry tongue confess him King of glory now, 'Tis the Father's pleasure We should call him Lord, Who from the beginning Was the mighty Word.
2. Haunted for a season, To receive a Name From the lips of sinners, Unto whom he came, Faithfully he bore it Spotless to the last, Brought it back victorious, When from death he passed.
3. Bore it up triumphant, With its human light, Through all ranks of creatures, To the central height, To the throne of Godhead, To the Father's breast, Filled it with the glory Of that perfect rest.
4. In your hearts enthrone him; There let him subdue All that is not holy, All that is not true: Crown him as your Captain In temptation's hour; Let his will enfold you In its light and power.
5. Brothers, this Lord Jesus Shall return again, With his Father's glory O'er the earth to reign; For all wreaths of empire Meet upon his brow, And our hearts confess him King of glory now.
Caroline Maria Noel, 1870 May be sung to the tune of "Praise the Lord of Heaven; Praise Him in the Height!"

ALL HAIL THE POWER OF JESUS' NAME [USF: 278] [Pres: 286] [1940: 355] [CLB: 453]

THE KING OF LOVE MY SHEPHERD IS [CLB: 490] [Pres: 590] [1940: 345]

THE LORD IS MY TRUE SHEPHERD [USF: 98] [HYC I: 88] [HYC II: 200]

MY SHEPHERD WILL SUPPLY MY NEED — Meter: C.M. or C.M.D. [Pres: 477]
1. My Shepherd will supply my need, And Yahweh is his name: In pastures fresh he makes me feed Beside the living stream.
2. He brings my wand'ring spirit back When I forsake his ways; He leads me, for his mercy's sake, In paths of truth and grace.
3. When I walk through the shades of death, His presence is my stay; One word of his supporting breath Drives all my fears away.
4. His hand, in sight of all my foes, Does still my table spread; My cup with blessings overflow; His oil anoints my head.
5. The sure provisions of my God Attend me all my days; Oh, may his house be my abode, And all my work be praise.
6. There would I find a settled rest, While others go and come; No more a stranger or a guest, But like a child at home.
Paraphrase of Psalm 23 by Isaac Watts, 1719, alt.
This hymn may be sung to the tune of "O God, Our Help In Ages Past", or the stanzas may be joined and sung to the tune of "O Beautiful for Spacious Skies".

FIFTH & SIXTH SUNDAYS OF EASTER (54-B) (57-B) 16 & 23 May 76

LOVE ONE ANOTHER [HYC I: 23] [HYC II: 14]

LOVE IS HIS WORD [CLB: 259]

COME, HOLY GHOST or any other hymn invoking the presence of the Holy Spirit

THE ASCENSION (59) 27 May 76

One of the finest Ascension hymns is "Alleluia! Sing to Jesus", available in most hymnals and miscellanea.
The following hymn may be sung to the same melody, or to that of "Sing of Mary", "Daily, Daily Sing to Mary", Thence from Beethoven's Ninth, or "Alleluia, Alleluia! Let the Holy Anthem Rise."

1. See, the Conqu'ror mounts in triumph; See the King in royal state, Riding on the clouds, his chariot, To his heav'nly palace gate!
2. Hark! the choirs of angel voices Joyful alleluias sing, And the portals high are lifted To receive their heav'nly King.
2. He who on the cross did suffer, He who from the grave arose, He has conquered sin and Satan And by death despoiled his foes, While he lifts his hand in blessing, He is parted from his friends; While their eager eyes behold him, He upon the clouds ascends.
3. He has raised our human nature On the clouds to God’s right hand: There we sit in heavenly places, There with him in glory stand, Jesus reigns, adored by angels; Man with God is on his throne; Mighty Lord, in your ascension, We by faith behold our own.

4. See him who is gone before us Heavenly mansions to prepare; See him who is ever pleading For us with prevailing prayer; See him who with sound of trumpet And with his angelic train Summoning the world to judgment, On the clouds will come again.

5. Glory be to God the Father; Glory be to God the Son, Dying, rising, ascending for us, Who the heavenly realm has won; Glory to the Holy Spirit: To one God in persons three Glory both in earth and heaven, Glory, endless glory be. (Amen)

Christopher Wordsworth, 1862, alt.

SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER (61-B) 30 May 76

See the hymns suggested for the 5th and 6th Sundays of Easter; also:

WITH HEARTS RENEWED BY LIVING FAITH [BCW: 94] [CLB: 460] [FEL: 41]

PENTECOST (63) (64) 6 June 76

HAIL THIS JOYFUL DAY’S RETURN – Meter: 77. 77. D. [CLB: 295] [West: 65]

1. Hail this joyful day’s return, Hail the Pentecostal morn, Morn when our ascended Head On his Church his Spirit shed! Like to cloven tongues of flame On the twelve the Spirit came— Tongues, that earth might hear their call, Fire, that love might burn in all.

2. Hear the speech before unknown; Trembling crowds the wonder own; What though hardened some abide And the holy work deride? Mystic hour, when Easter’s sun Sees’ time sev’n its course has run; Church of God, from debt made free, Hail your day of jubilee!

3. Lord, to you your people bend: Unto us your Spirit send; Blessings of this sacred day Grant us, dearest Lord, we pray. To our fathers you were guide; With your children still abide; Grant us pardon, grant us peace, Till our earthly wand’ring cease

Beata Nobis Gaudia, ascribed to St. Hilary of Poitiers, d. 386; Tr., Robert Campbell, 1814-68, alt.

This hymn may be sung to the melody of “At the Lamb’s High Feast We Sing”, “Come, Ye Thankful People, Come”, or “Christ the Lord is Risen Today; Christians, haste your Vows to Pay”.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY per annum (99-B) 27 June 76

WITH HEARTS RENEWED BY LIVING FAITH [BCW: 94] [CLB: 460] [FEL: 41]

THE DAY OF RESURRECTION – Meter 76. 76. D. [CLB: 280] [USF: 307] [1940: 96] [Pres: 584]

1. The day of resurrection! Earth, tell it out abroad! The Passover of gladness, The Passover of God. From death to life eternal, From this world to the sky, Our Christ has brought us over With violet hymns on high!

2. Our hearts be pure from evil, That we may see aright The Lord in rays eternal Of resurrection light, And, list’ning to his accents, May hear so calm and clear His own “All hail!” and, hearing, Repeat for all to hear.

3. Now let the heav’n be joyful, Let earth its song begin, Let all the world keep triumph And all that is therein; Let all things seen and unseen Their notes of gladness blend, For Christ the Lord has risen, Our joy that has no end.

Anastasius Hemera, St. John of Damascus, c. 750; Tr., John Mason Neale, 1862, alt.

This hymn may be sung to the tune of “Lead On, O King Eternal”, “The Church’s One Foundation”, “I’ll Sing a Hymn to Mary”, “To Jesus’ Heart All Burning”, “O Sacred Head”, or “All Glory Praise, and Honor to You, Redeemer King”.

HYMNAL REFERENCES THROUGHOUT:
CLB The Catholic Liturgy Book, Helicon Press, 1975
Pres The Worshipbook of the Presbyterian Church, Westminster Press, 1972
1940 The Hymnal, 1940, of the Episcopal Church, The Church Pension Fund
SBH The Service Book and Hymnal, 1958, of the Lutheran Church in America
BCW The Book of Catholic Worship, Helicon Press, 1966
Luth The Lutheran Hymnal, Concordia Press, 1940
HAM Hymns Ancient and Modern, London 1906, and subsequent editions
FEL The F.E.L. Hymnal, F.E.L. Publications, Ltd., 1968
TEH The English Hymnal, Oxford University Press, 1906, 1933, and subsequent editions
West The Westminster Hymnal, Burns, Oates & Washbourne, Ltd., 1953
CONTEMPORARY SONGS FOR THE LITURGY prepared for GOOD NEWS by Joanne McPortland

April 11, Palm (Passion) Sunday
A simple song, excellent for use in today’s processions, is HEY SANTA, HO SANTA from the rock opera JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR. Since the congregation will probably sing only the chorus, the choir or music leader might want to compose verses more appropriate to scriptural or community concerns.

Holy Week
In recent years contemporary music has been put to good use during Holy Week. Many parishes sponsor two Good Friday liturgies, one following the traditional ritual and the other incorporating contemporary music and poetry, along with visual media.

For Holy Thursday, an almost perfect contemporary liturgical song is the Weston Monks’ THE LORD JESUS.

The Lord Jesus, after eating with his friends
Washed their feet and said to them,
“Do you know what I, your Lord, have done for you?”
I have given you example
That so you also should do.”

For Good Friday, Paul Simon’s SILENT EYES is a threefold echo of Jesus’ lament for Jerusalem, the sorrow of the crucifixion, and the current Middle East agonies.

Silent Eyes, no one will comfort her.
Jerusalem weeps alone.
She is sorrow, sorrow.
She burns like a flame, and she calls my name

...And we shall all be called as witnesses,
Each and every one to stand before the eyes of God
And speak what was done.

April 17/18, The Easter Vigil/Easter Sunday
If you choose to provide a musical atmosphere for the Easter Vigil’s theme of light triumphant over darkness, a longish instrumental piece played (on tape) in a darkened church can supplement the readings beautifully. Try the first movement of Beethoven’s 6th Symphony (the Pastoral), or (more modern) Tim Weisburg’s flute rendition of NIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN.

As a communion meditation on Easter Sunday, ask a female soloist to sing MARY’S SONG (from the Weston Monks).

The flowers, the garden,
The sun so softly rising
Remind me of the morning
When he came into my life....

April 25/May 16, 2nd through 5th Sundays of Easter
The Gospel readings for the Sundays following Easter reveal several of the most powerful images of Jesus: the Risen Lord, touched by Thomas; the bread-breaker of Emmaus; the Good Shepherd; and the Vine. They are all images of love and concern which a good contemporary love song can underline. Try this one (especially for Doubting — and touching — Thomas):

I WON’T LAST A DAY WITHOUT YOU (Paul Williams/The Carpenters)

Touch me and I end up singing,
Troubles seem to up and disappear
You touch me with all the love you’re bringing,
I can’t really lose when you’re near.

You might want to do a dramatic presentation of the Emmaus reading, with this song as a thematic interlude:
WOODSTOCK (Joni Mitchell/Crosby, Stills & Nash)

I came upon a child of God,
He was walking along the road
And I asked him "Where are you going?"
This he told me...
We are stardust, we are golden,
And we've got to get ourselves back to the Garden.

May 27, Ascension Thursday

Paul Williams is one of the finest writers of contemporary love songs. This one is great for an "ascending" liturgy (use helium balloons and other "airy" decorations).

BORN TO FLY (Paul Williams)

If what you shared has gone
But you feel like holding on,
Realize that long goodbyes are bound to make you sad.
Look around for something new
And treasure what you had,
It isn't always easy but we're still supposed to try.
Even if we fail
We were born to fly.

May 23/June 27, 6th Sunday of Easter through
13th Sunday of the Year
(including June 6, Pentecost Sunday)

The readings for this group of Sundays stress the disciples' mission to carry on Jesus' work. Pentecost, of course, celebrates that mission's blessing by the Spirit. These songs can be used interchangeably for these Sundays.

CARRY IT ON (Joan Baez)

There's a man by my side walking,
There's a voice within me talking,

There's a spirit always saying,
"Carry it on, carry it on..."

MY MAN (The Eagles)

My man's got it made —
He's gone far beyond the pain.
But we who must remain
Go on living just the same.

DRIFTWOOD (Paul Williams)

We are footprints quickly washed away.
Yes the man has come and gone
But the love and light he felt is left to stay.
We are becalmed by too many years of dissonance and solitude
But harmony and love can move our souls.

And don't forget that Bob Dylan's old standard, BLOWING IN THE WIND, makes a very appropriate Pentecost song.

MEDIA prepared for GOOD NEWS by Corinne Hart

April looks forward to Holy Week and Easter. A well executed filmstrip appropriate to this time is OUT OF DARKNESS (Kiise). The meaning that Christ's death and resurrection gives to our lives is the theme of this presentation which also emphasizes how we as individual members of the believing community are called to bear witness to the risen Christ. The filmstrip package includes a competent guide which supplies theological commentary, scripture references and a bibliography of related sources.

Also a rich resource for the Easter-Pentecost season are the thematic slide programs distributed by Mark IV Presentations. Each program contains twenty slides and several separate guides that describe how to use the slides for scriptural enrichment, catechesis, liturgical celebrations and prayer. There are also additional lesson plans on how to create and use media in general as well as a supplementary list of related films and popular music. These slide programs are well packaged.
to encourage prolonged exploration of a single theme. Two of these Mark IV slide sets, SPIRIT and DEATH AND RESURRECTION, are especially appropriate to the Easter season.

The death-resurrection theme as it is reflected in the lives of the elderly is the thrust of the inspirational filmstrip BLESSED ARE THE LOVERS (National Catholic Reporter). This is a prayerful meditation on the richness of old age and the wealth that the aging have to share with those who will take the time. The audio track combines music and lyrical prose to evoke a positive response toward old age.

With the feast of Corpus Christi and preparation for the Eucharistic Congress as part of June activities, media relating to the sacrament and to the Congress theme “the hungers of man” come to mind. In fact, a parish might wish to become involved in a mini-Eucharistic Congress at the local level. Here are a few ideas of TeleKETICS media which could be utilized for such a project:

Re: the hungers of man
1. hunger for life: TeleSLIDES 3 song-slide presentation “Right To Live.”
2. hunger for survival and sustenance: a WORLD HUNGRY, a five filmstrip program on the issues, responses and life-style changes involved in attacking the problem of world hunger. Also TeleSLIDES 3 song-slide presentation “He Is Your Brother.”
3. hunger for dignity and self-respect: the filmstrip documentary on Mother Teresa of Calcutta THEY ARE MY PEOPLE. The film WITH JUST A LITTLE TRUST (15 min.), is a moving, dramatic experience about hope in facing the daily pressures of the urban ghetto and welfare life-style.
4. hunger for love and forgiveness: the film NAMES OF SIN (10 min.), an exploration of a child’s first awareness of personal sin and the need for self-acceptance and forgiveness. THE WAY HOME (15 min.), a film adaptation of the Prodigal Son in a modern setting, a sensitive, powerful experience in what loving is all about.
5. hunger for God: the filmstrip IN SEARCH OF GOD, a meditative slide presentation on the way in which God leads us to a deeper, more personal yet universal understanding of the divine presence.

Re: the Eucharist.
1. the changes in the Liturgy since Vatican II: A two-set filmstrip THE NEW MASS: HOW ARE WE DOING? WHERE ARE WE GOING? (Kline) provides a kind of examination of conscience regarding our progress and attitude concerning Eucharistic worship.
2. the Eucharist as celebration of community: the filmstrip THE KINGDOM IN YOUR MIDST depicts five diverse people from different walks of life as they are brought together at the Eucharistic table.
3. Eucharistic symbols: the film BREAD AND WINE (5 min.), celebrates the joy of human toil and creativity involved in making bread and wine and the joy of a family feast.
4. the history of the Eucharist: the filmstrip WORSHIPING WILMA, a factual history given perspective by a whimsical art that makes understanding change come more easily.

Any or all of these media could enhance a local parish’s involvement and understanding of the significance of the 1976 Eucharistic Congress.

Sources:
Thomas Klise, P.O. Box 3418, Peoria, IL 61614
Mark IV Presentations, LoSolette Center, Attleboro, MA 02703
National Catholic Reporter Publishing Co., P.O. Box 281, Kansas City, MO 64141
TeleKETICS, Franciscan Communications Center, 1229 S. Santee, Los Angeles, CA 90015
would rather have the Passion presented by one or two teams which volunteer to take more than one Mass. Could not this become a high point of a lector program, something anticipated each year, a special gift by three parishioners to the Holy Week worship?

Easter Dawns

We would like to recommend again a proper psychological approach in presenting the liturgy of Easter morning. The Easter Vigil is the greatest liturgy but our pastoral common sense should tell us that the greatest number is still there Easter morning. What are some of the suggestions and past practices that help? Begin low key; hold off the music and triumphant procession; build up to the gospel and make it a real proclamation. Then sound the trumpets and the organ and sing out the Alleluia; light the Paschal candle and renew the vows. Christ is risen! You might also study rearranging the readings this day. The first one makes a good commentary on the gospel (it was originally an Easter sermon). The sequence could be sung as a congregational hymn; see Roger Nachtwy’s comment in Music and Media this month. If you prefer to stay with the regular order of the Service of the Word, at least try music or singing after the gospel. The final hymn for an Easter Mass should be well-known; it’s no time for a thin response. ‘Crown Him With Many Crowns’ or ‘On This Day the First of Days’ are often used too much, but they could be sung with new fervor on this, the New Day.

You help us, but much more, you help each other by writing with suggestions and “things that work.” One priest mentioned how often a clergyman is called upon for benedictions, invocations, and “a few words” at dedications, banquets, and civic invocations; he asks GOOD NEWS readers to share some of their best. Send them; we’ll mail or print them. Another pastor asks for more funeral sermons like the “Thoughts for a Funeral” feature in January. More coming. Meanwhile mark up this copy of GOOD NEWS for funeral sermon ideas; you’ll find many of them — stories, quotes, and thoughts to develop.

I hope you take Easter Monday off (we used to call it Emmaus Day, and go on a trip). Wherever you break bread, may He be with you.

Sincerely

[Signature]

[Note: The signature is not legible.]