

in focus

708 West Main Street

Urbana, Illinois

Vol. 5, No. 3

Our Pastor Shares . . . Thoughts On Christian Initiation

Lent is a memorial or preparation for baptism and a time of penance. It renews the community of the faithful together with the catechumens and makes them ready to celebrate the paschal mystery.

--Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, #21

Each Lent the Church, that is, you and I, we, quicken our prayer support and encouragement for those seeking to join our community. These catechumens (the non-baptized) and candidates (those already baptized and asking for full communion with the Catholic Church) prepare for Baptism and/or Confirmation and their first sharing in the Eucharistic banquet. They look to us for models of Christian Catholic living. They look not for perfection but for welcome and warmth, for faith and hope and love, for sharing of the broken and bruised, graced and glorious humanity that God has claimed and called to be His people.

These catechumens and candidates stand among us, not as outsiders or as different from the rest of us, but as a part of us--mirrors reflecting who we are, recalling the baptismal dignity we share, reminding us of the journey of life and faith we make with them.

This Lent we hope to incorporate some of the rites of the Church that were part of the early catechumenate and have been restored in recent years. We will formally enroll our catechumens and candidates on the first Sunday of Lent, pray the "Scrutinies" on the fourth Sunday of Lent, and dismiss them after the homily on all five Sundays. (The dismissal provides them with an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the Scriptures of that week in preparation for the Vigil of Easter and the sacraments of Baptism and/or Confirmation. In no way does it imply that they are unwelcome in our midst.)

These rites are meant to make us more aware of the catechumens and candidates who choose to join our community and to make us more aware of our own initiation through Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist. "Are you not aware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?... His death was death to sin, once for all; his life is life for God. In the same way, you must consider yourselves dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus." (Romans 6:3,10-11)

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"What Is It Like?" We Asked

In the late spring of 1984, a basic class in Roman Catholicism offered at St. Patrick's brought together a variety of people for a series of special discussions about our faith. The weekly meetings covered the "history of religion" during the summer and "policies and procedures" of the Catholic Church during the fall. Although these sessions were not part of the ordinary catechumenate program, culminating in Confirmation at Easter, several of the participants were motivated to be confirmed in the Catholic faith that fall.

Among those confirmed were Rilla O'Shaughnessy, Sandy Mann, Jim Spese, and Shirley Guldbrandsen. They recently passed the first anniversary of that special occasion.

Rilla O'Shaughnessy was a member of the Disciples of Christ Church, then of the Twin City Bible Church in Urbana before she joined our faith community. Her husband, Bill, is a lifelong Catholic. They started attending St. Patrick's together around the time they were married.

Rilla is now a member of the choir that sings at the 10:30 a.m. Mass. Love of the music she heard at that Mass was one of the things that drew her to St. Patrick's. She also likes the fact that it is a young and active church community.

She feels that becoming a Catholic has drawn her closer to her husband as well as closer to the Lord.

Sandy Mann is a registered nurse at Carle Foundation Hospital. She was a Methodist when she took nursing at St. Francis in Peoria, graduating in 1960. She chose to remain Methodist at that time. When she started attending St. Patrick's with a friend six years ago, she liked many of the ways in which the Church had changed since the 1950s.

Sandy enjoyed the informal atmosphere of the classes. She felt free to ask any kind of question and appreciated the nonjudgmental attitude evidenced throughout the classes.

Jim Spese works at the University of Illinois Nuclear Physics Lab in Champaign. He came from Coal City, Ill., 13 years ago, where he was a Methodist. He has been attending Catholic churches in Champaign-Urbana ever since. He enjoyed the "history of religion" classes, while the "policies and procedures" sessions contained little he was not already familiar with from his long association with the Church.

The timing of this class was special for Jim because both of his children completed their first reconciliation within that same year. The family had not planned it that way, but it felt right at the time for him to join the Church just at that time.

Shirley Guldbrandsen is a teller at Busey First National Bank. She was an active member of the Church of Christ before her involvement with the Catholic Church. Her husband, Eugene, is a lifelong Catholic. She attended St. Patrick's for about a year with him, liked it, and decided to join.

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Lent challenges us to deepen our baptismal identity, to die more and more to sin in our lives, to live more and more for God. That is the goal of Lent. The program of prayer and penance to seek that goal will differ for each of us according to our needs and circumstances. But if that is the story of our Lent, each of us, catechumen, candidate, or fully initiated Catholic, will drink deeply of the joy of Easter and Pentecost.

To Give Or Not To Give Up

In what now seems the distant past, children were indoctrinated during Lent with "Thou shalt give up...", and many did--at least for the very first day. The strong and brave gave their candy money to save pagan babies, ate saltless eggs or spinach, turned off "The Green Hornet" or "Inner Sanctum." The very stalwart promised not to fidget during the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary.

Today many of the Roaring Twenties folks hear that candy and salt are not good for their health and spinach is. "The Green Hornet" and "Inner Sanctum" have passed on. And some are probably just too weary to fidget. What do they do for Lent?

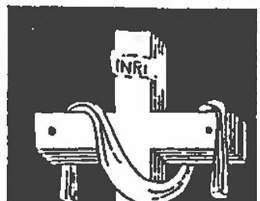
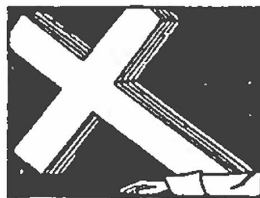
The widowed, looking out at a snow-covered garden once shared with a loved one, may ask still, "Why me?" Parents seeing the violence in Rome and Vienna remember Korea and Vietnam and do not ask, "Why him?" The abandoned spouse or parent, feeling betrayed, does not ask, "Why me?"

Those touched by loneliness, fear, illness, or discouragement reflect on the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary and are reaffirmed in their sharing of Jesus' redemptive suffering. Their faith and hope and love are energized. They do not give up.

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Shirley was very active in the Church of Christ and was a regular church-goer. She feels that St. Patrick's is not too much of a change from the Church of Christ and finds it very satisfying for her.

The people who attended these classes regularly came to know each other well. That was an unexpected bonus for each of the participants. In fact, that can be a bonus for participants in any of the activities at St. Patrick's--as Rilla O'Shaughnessy remarked, "St. Patrick's is a large, friendly church, but it can still be difficult to get to know people. To do that, you have to be involved."



Walking The Way Of The Cross

From the very early days of Christianity the Way of the Cross has been a widely practiced method of meditating on the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. People came to Jerusalem from all over the world to recall events in the life of Jesus, to walk where he walked in his final hours of suffering.

In time the route became fixed; it finally included 14 stops, or stations, commemorating events derived from tradition and from scripture.

During the crusades, Franciscans serving in the embattled Holy Land provided food, care, and shelter to both Christian and Moslem alike. They were eventually recognized as representatives of the Church there, and the Way of the Cross (or the Way of Sorrows, as it was known) came under their care.

In Europe, meanwhile, the making of pilgrimages became a regular part of the religious life of the people. The Franciscans began placing Stations of the Cross in churches so the faithful could go on pilgrimage at home.

Today, although the Stations of the Cross are generally represented by pictures or statues, each incorporates a cross--and it is the cross rather than the picture or statue that marks the station. The Way of Sorrows is still a pilgrimage, also. Unless prevented by poor health or the number or participants, pilgrims of today are to walk from station to station.

At St. Patrick's, the Stations of the Cross are marked by crosses mounted on the wall and identified by roman numerals. Those who walk the Way of Sorrows can consult the Worship II hymnal (1103) for the event in Christ's passion each commemorates.

On the Fridays of Lent the parish community gathers at 5:15 p.m. to walk with the Lord on his Way of Sorrows. For those who make this journey on their own, a variety of booklets placed in the church vestibule may aid in personal reflection and a prayerful response to these events in Jesus' journey, a journey that leads not only to the cross but also to an empty tomb.



St. Patrick's Celebrates Passover

COME SHARE SEDER MEAL

"And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron...Speak to the whole assembly of the children of Israel, and say to them:...Let every one take a lamb by their families and houses. If the number be less than may suffice to eat the lamb, they shall take their neighbor to their house....And they shall take the blood, and put it on...the doorposts of their houses....And they shall eat the flesh that night roasted at the fire, and unleavened bread with wild lettuce....You shall eat in haste: for it is the Passover of the Lord.... And I will pass through the land of Egypt that night and...I will execute judgments: I am the Lord. And this day shall be a memorial to you: and you shall keep it a feast to the Lord in your generations with an everlasting observance." (Exodus, 12:1-14)

Passover is one of the most important Jewish festivals. In pre-Mosaic times, it may have been a spring festival. In its present observance it commemorates deliverance from Egypt. The ceremonial evening meal, called "Seder" from Hebrew sedher, meaning "order," is conducted on the first evening of Passover.

At this meal special dishes are served symbolizing the hardships of the Israelites during their bondage in Egypt. The Exodus narrative, the Haggadah, is recited, and praise is given for the deliverance. Only unleavened bread (matzo) is eaten, recalling that the Jews, hastening from Egypt, had no time to leaven their bread.

The date of our Christian feast of Easter is calculated from the Passover, and we celebrate Christ's gift to us--of life through death--by participating in our own Seder meal at St. Patrick's. Seder symbols are rich in meaning for us: unleavened bread, the blood of the lamb, deliverance through sacrifice of the paschal victim. Come and join in the Seder meal at the parish center on March 26 to commemorate our deliverance and share in the communion of life in the spring of our year.



"God Is In The Nursery!"

"Jeremy, who is God?" a mother asked her almost-three-year-old.

No response. She probes: "Who is Jesus?"

Jeremy looked at her with that "Are you nuts, Mom?" look that only a pre-schooler can have and responds, "God is God."

"Where is God?" (She pursues this idea further.)

After a brief pause, he answers, "God is in the nursery!"

This bit of theology was shared at a recent Mother's Dialogue Group meeting, where the topic was children and church. During the discussion some suggestions were made that might help parents and their pre-schoolers in worshipping together:

1. If you can, bring your pre-schooler to the church when it is not in use. Then you will have time to explore the building and answer your child's questions about candles, holy water, the tabernacle, the altar, and the like. Together you might light a votive candle and say a little prayer, and you might bless each other with holy water when you leave.

2. Make a prayer book with and for your child to take to church. This book could include magazine pictures of animals, nature, and people--all elements of God's creation. A snapshot of your child's baptism would be a great addition, as would any pictures of liturgical celebrations.



3. Preview the Sunday readings (they are listed in the Sunday bulletin), and explain the reading in a way that your child will be able to understand. You might suggest a key word in the readings for your child to listen for as a way of providing a focus for attention during this quiet time.

4. In church, sit close to the front or on the aisle, if possible, so your child can see the proceedings.

5. If your child has questions during the service, indicate quietly that you will answer the questions after Mass. And remember later to answer the questions, even if your child does not ask again.

6. Encourage participation in as much of the liturgy as you can. You might help your child learn to join in saying the Lord's Prayer, holding hands if appropriate, exchange a sign of peace with you and others in the congregation, and accompany you to communion.

7. Help your child to see that you consider Mass important. You are your child's primary religious educator!

A reminder: A co-op nursery for the under-four-year-old population is available during the 9:00 and 10:30 a.m. Sunday Masses. As young Jeremy observed, God lives in the nursery, too! The nursery can provide young children with their very first experience of Church--Church as a loving, caring, joyful community.



Irene Bullard reads to Katie Bullard, 6.

Photographs by Mary Creswell

Preparing For Easter: A Spiritual Renewal Retreat Weekend

A weekend retreat for both men and women of St. Patrick's is scheduled for March 1 and 2 (Saturday and Sunday) at East Bay Camp near Bloomington, Illinois. The theme for this weekend is "Preparing for Easter" and is focused on the Scripture readings for the first five Sundays of Lent.

The retreat combines some aspects of a traditional retreat and some elements of the Christ Renews His Parish weekend. It is intended to be flexible enough to accommodate the different needs of the participants (for example, providing for those who wish to go off by themselves for reflection or prayer as well as for those who prefer to share their reflections with others).

Participants will gather on Saturday morning at the Parish Center, where a car pool will be arranged to take them to East Bay Camp. On Saturday evening those who wish can celebrate the sacrament of Reconciliation. The weekend will conclude early Sunday afternoon with Mass. The retreat provides an excellent opportunity to concentrate more

fully on our relationship with the Lord as we prepare for Easter.

The idea for this weekend arose in response to spiritual needs expressed by members of the parish, by those who have not participated in a CRHP weekend as well as by those who have. Following an open meeting held last summer the Spiritual Renewal Team was formed to plan various events in response to the needs expressed, drawing on the resources of the parish community. The first event planned by the team was the half-day of spiritual renewal on October 13. Another currently in the planning stage is a workshop in April; watch for information in future Sunday bulletins.

For more information about the March 1-2 weekend, contact Pat and Paul Doebel (367-0629), Fr. Doug Hennessy (367-2665), or Ellen and Joe Abell (367-5648). To register for the weekend, call the parish office (367-2665); please indicate whether you can provide or need transportation.



Social Action Committee

Seeks Host Families For Refugees

Individuals and families are being sought to provide assistance to people seeking political asylum in Canada.

The "Overground Railroad" is part of a network of churches in the United States that aids refugees from Central America who are seeking safety in Canada.

Host families are asked to provide shelter, food, and other necessities to the refugees. Others in the community who cannot take in a refugee may help financially or in some other way.

Families seeking asylum generally stay no more than from 2 to 8 weeks while they await word from the Canadian government on their petition. This aid is legal, in that it is given while refugees await a ruling on their application.

For more information, call a member of the Social Action Committee (co-chaired by Sharon Monday Dorsey, 356-0027, and Brendan McKiernan, 384-5809) or leave a note in the committee's mailbox in the Parish Center. A meeting may be arranged if there is sufficient interest in the program.

Reflecting On The Christ-In-Us

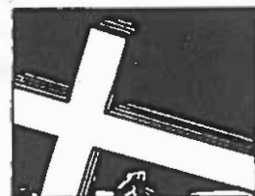
The more we know of sorrow and pain, the more difficult it becomes to think about the pain and sorrow of Christ. As we come to experience how real Christ is and what suffering really is, we begin to suffer with him. More than that, Christ suffers in us; we become one in that suffering.

If it were not for this presence of Christ, we could not bear the sufferings that burden us. We can bear them only because the Christ-in-us has suffered and overcome all that we suffer or ever can suffer.

The tears we shed blind *his* eyes, the constriction of our hearts constricts *his* heart as well. He knows every kind of fear we know, and there is no loneliness or agony of separation that is not his. Not one of us dies but it is *Christ* who dies--and in his resurrection *we* know the joy of new life.

He who faces all these sufferings in and with us has overcome them all and made them holy by his limitless love. It is this love that made his passion redeeming, healing, life-giving.

This Christ-love is ours, too, just as his suffering is ours. Every moment of his passion is informed by love. Our work is to love too, to love always, to love everyone, to love to the end--in and with the Christ-in-us: one in suffering, one in love, one in the joy of the resurrection, his and ours.



Since You Asked

How is the date of Easter calculated?

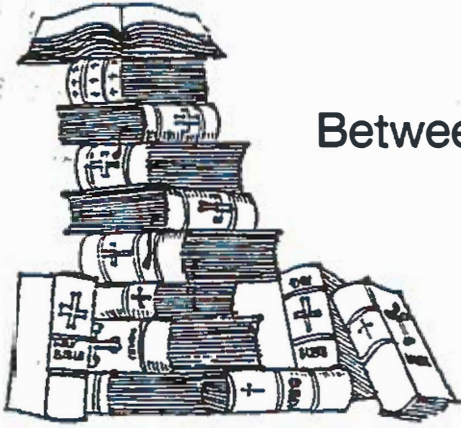
Hardly anyone today would wish to debate about the fixation of the date for Easter--with the possible exception of clothing merchants! In the early centuries of Christianity, however, this was a point of spirited argument.

Christians desired to celebrate the day of Jesus' resurrection on the third day following the Jewish Passover (remember, early Christians were Jews), which began on the 14th day of Nisan, calculated by the springtime full moon. The early churches of Asia Minor chose to celebrate on the 17th day of Nisan, which usually fell on a weekday. Other churches thought it should be celebrated on a Sunday, since the Resurrection was said to have occurred on a Sunday.

After a great deal of discussion and variant practices, the first Ecumenical Council of the Church, convoked at Nicea after the Roman persecution of the Church ceased, caused the date to be fixed as *the first Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox*--usually March 21 (or thereabouts).

In 1986 the first full moon after the vernal equinox occurs March 25, so this year Easter is celebrated on Sunday, March 30.

Now, aren't you glad you asked?



Between The Bookends

Lent is a time for listening and renewal--for listening with renewed attention to the word of God, and for meditating on how this word affects our life. While meditation is a spiritual matter, it also aims at integrating our prayer more deeply into our daily routine. The following books may be helpful guides. Taking different paths, both show a faith alive in mundane work as well as in silent prayer.

Karl Rahner's *Encounters with Silence* is a meditative prayer-monolog exploring various meanings of God: "God of my life," "God of knowledge," "God of my daily routine." By patiently probing thoughts, feelings, questions, and doubts, Rahner expands our ways to think about and relate to God. Thus he opens our understanding for God's silent presence in the midst of our lives. (Other books by Karl Rahner in our parish library: *Belief Today*, *Do You Believe in God?* *The Church and the Sacraments*, *Answers for the Future*.)

Esther de Waal's *Seeking God: The Way of St. Benedict* offers an engaging explanation of the Rule of St. Benedict, both in its historical-cultural roots and in its application to modern secular life. De Waal shows how Benedict's terse, often pedantic regulations of daily life and prayer foster that reverence toward all tasks that is rooted in a hidden, yet constant attention to God. Each chapter closes with "thoughts and prayers" as well as notes on further readings.

Mark Your Calendars

Be sure to check the weekly bulletins for further information on these and other events at St. Patrick's.

Feb. 12: Ash Wednesday. Masses at 7:00 a.m., 12:10 p.m., and 5:15 p.m.

Feb. 14 (and each Friday of Lent): Stations of the Cross, 5:15 p.m.

Feb. 16: Rite of Enrollment for those to be baptized or confirmed at Easter

Feb. 19 (and each Wednesday of Lent): Meager Meal and Evening Prayer, beginning at 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 21: Pre-Cana, 7:00-10:00 p.m.

Feb. 23: Pre-Cana, 2:00-7:30 p.m.
Over 50s Club, 6:00 p.m.

Mar. 1-2: Spiritual Renewal retreat weekend, East Bay Camp, Bloomington, Ill.

Mar. 4: First Communion class preparation meeting, 7:00-8:15 p.m.

Mar. 23: Passion (Palm) Sunday

Mar. 24: Communal celebration of reconciliation, St. Matthews, 7:30 p.m.

Mar. 25: Communal celebration of reconciliation, St. Patrick's, 7:30 p.m.

Mar. 26: Seder Supper, 6:00 p.m.
Communal celebration of reconciliation, Holy Cross, 7:30 p.m.

Mar. 27: Holy Thursday. Morning Prayer, 7:00 a.m.; Mass, 7:30 p.m.; veneration of the Blessed Sacrament until midnight.

Mar. 28: Good Friday. Morning Prayer, 7:00 a.m.; Stations of the Cross, 3:00 p.m.; Liturgy, 7:30 p.m.

Mar. 29: Holy Saturday. Morning Prayer, 8:00 a.m.; Easter Vigil begins, 7:30 p.m.; reception for newly received adults and their families following Easter Vigil services

Mar. 30: Easter

Apr. 1, 8: First Communion class preparation meeting, 7:00-8:15 p.m.

Apr. 9: Mystagogia--gathering of the newly baptized and confirmed adults and sponsors, 7:30 p.m.

Apr. 13: First Communion Mass, 2:00 p.m.

Apr. 16: Mystagogia, 7:30 p.m.

Apr. 27: Over 50s Club, 6:00 p.m.



Fr. John And The Moving Mountain

"How does one talk with an internationally known writer, lecturer, missionary? How do we help him feel at home?" These are questions Gary Laumann asked himself on the way to Willard Airport to meet Fr. John Walsh, M.M., who was to conduct a workshop at St. Patrick's on November 23. It was soon apparent that Fr. John did not need prompting--he made himself at home immediately with everyone he met. As speaker he was interesting and fact-filled and witty. During the breaks he listened, he talked, and he laughed with those who surrounded him--he seemed to love being here and being with us. His presence spoke of his model, Christ. His words continually focused on how we grow in faith in today's world.

"Climbing the mountain to God" is one of the ways Fr. John described our growth in faith. After his experiences as a Maryknoll missionary in Japan and his return to ministry in the United States, however, he began to recognize that the mountain itself was moving. The mountain still leads to God, but the climb is different and we start from a different place. Addressing participants in the workshop, Walsh said, "You are the first generation in 400 years not to be able to pass your faith on to your children in the way you received your faith."

After traveling to many parts of the world, he concludes that Christianity all over the world is experiencing this shift--the movement of the mountain. "This does not mean," he said, "that we will reject out of hand the faith system we had. It means we have to go through a reappraisal in order to authenticate and personalize what we had."

In order to become a people who can help faith grow as the mountain moves, Walsh prescribed a spiritual progression that moves from "people sharing their hearts' desires" to people finding these in the Christ of Scripture, Christ in the praying community, Christ in the community that serves. A growing faith, he insisted, has to reach out in care to those near at hand as well as to those in Africa, Asia, and Central America.

For all his good cheer and Irish wit, Fr. John delivered a serious message. He calls all to fullness of life and offers the way of Christ. He had a decidedly positive impact on those who spent the day with him. Ask the people who were there--or inquire about the books, audio cassettes, and videotapes that convey something of his energy and message. Ask Gary Laumann.

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Editorial staff: Communications Committee, with articles contributed by staff and other members of the parish community.
