

THE RECTOR'S CHRONICLE

A NEWSLETTER OF THE CHURCH OF ST MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

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Dear Parishioners and Friends,

“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written of the Son of Man shall be accomplished.” Jesus said this to His disciples as they journeyed from Galilee to Judea. We hear the same words addressed to us on Quinquagesima at the threshold of Lent. Lent is going up to Jerusalem (in spirit) for our Lord's passion and resurrection. He graciously allows us to accompany those original disciples, and partake with them of the experience and the benefits of being with Him in these crucial times.

We prepare for Holy Week by fasting, prayer and almsgiving: the disciplines and self-denial of the Lenten season. We seek God's grace to cut down “self” to make more room for Christ in our hearts. To help this along, we have the Lenten Quiet Day coming up on March 6th at All Saints', on Montgomery Avenue in Wynnewood. The Quiet Day follows the usual format: Mass at 9:30 with a light breakfast (and talking) following. Silence begins with the first address, and continues until we conclude at 2. Please bring lunch. If you need directions or details or transportation, please ask. As always, the quiet day is an opportunity to draw apart from our usual worldly routines and busyness to spend some quiet time with our Lord.

We also have special observances on the Fridays in Lent. Just as Sundays are always feasts of the Resurrection, so too Fridays are always commemorations of the Passion (this is the reason for the Friday abstinence throughout the year). During Lent, we have devotions each Friday evening at 7:30, alternating Stations of the Cross at All Saints, and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (with devotions) at the rectory Oratory. Stations will be on March 12th and 26th. Benediction will be on March 5th and 19th. On the 5th and 19th, you are invited to a Lenten supper at 6:30 before the service. Please sign the sheet in the Chapel porch the previous Sunday if you will be at the supper, so we'll be able to plan. There will be a short address each Friday (whether Stations or Benediction). While it often takes a special effort to attend these services, it is worth the effort – as those who have come will attest.

We do well to remember that Lent, like Christian life generally, is about love. Principally, it is about Christ's love for us, which is manifested in His forty-day fast and most strikingly in His Passion. He goes to the Cross so that we can go to be with Him in heaven and not to the hell which we deserve. “O Love, how deep, how broad, how high, How passing thought and fantasy!” The love poured out on the Cross, He continues to pour out upon us day by day. Lent, in drawing our attention to His love, draws us to love Him back, with something of the same selfless ardor with which He loves us.

Holy Week

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, which this year is on March 28th. The services of Holy Week are demanding, both in terms of time and in terms of spiritual effort. So start planning now to set aside the time to be in church, and so far as possible, arrange your other commitments to free up the week for spiritual things.

On **Palm Sunday**, palms are blessed before each Mass, and there is the procession at the ten o'clock Mass, commemorating our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The tone of the service changes however, since the Mass is a Mass of the Passion, centered upon the reading of the St Matthew Passion. This reminds us of the fickleness of the crowds in Jerusalem – and our own inconstancy. It also highlights Christ's faithfulness and constancy in His love for us, even in the face of human rejection. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday in Holy Week, there are low Masses at the rectory Oratory: 6 p.m. on Monday and Tuesday, 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

On **Maundy Thursday**, April 1st, there will be a Sung Mass at West Laurel Hill at 6:30 p.m., followed by the Procession to the Altar of Repose and stripping of the Altar. The tone of the Mass is again somewhat mixed: there is the joy of the Last Supper commemoration of the Passover deliverance from slavery. We give thanks for the institution of the Eucharist, but are also humbled by Jesus' washing His disciples' feet and predicting Judas' betrayal and their abandonment of Him. The Watch before the Altar of Repose will be on Friday morning only, beginning at 8 and lasting until the Good Friday service at noon. A sign-up sheet is in the porch on Sundays: please sign up for an hour now, so that we can be sure we have the people to do this. The Watch, as you recall, commemorates Jesus' time in the Garden of Gethsemane, when He asked Peter, James and John, to watch while He prayed – and they fell asleep. It is a wonderful time of great intimacy with our Lord, and if you have never tried it, I encourage you to do so.

Good Friday (April 2nd) is a day when we should all be in church, even if it means taking a vacation day from work. The service is at noon at West Laurel Hill, and consists of the Good Friday Liturgy (lessons and reading of the Passion, Solemn Collects, Veneration of the Cross and Mass of the Pre-sanctified), followed by hymns and preaching on the Seven Last Words from the Cross. At three hours, it is the longest service of the year. But don't let that deter you! From gratitude and love if not from duty, we should be there to observe with the Church the decisive events of our redemption.

On **Holy Saturday** (April 3rd), there is the short Altar Service at 10 a.m. at the rectory Oratory. Then the Easter Vigil begins at 8:30 p.m. at All Saints', Wynnewood. This is in many ways the primary service of Easter, providing the transition from the tomb to the resurrection. It begins in darkness with the lighting of the new fire and the Paschal Candle. The Candle is blessed with the singing of the Exsultet. Old Testament lessons are read, including the creation story, the sacrifice of Isaac, the crossing of the Red Sea, and Ezekiel's vision in the valley of the dry bones – all of which point us to the resurrection. The font is then solemnly blessed (with litanies during the processions). Baptism has long been associated with Easter, because it is through baptism that we are raised from death to life with Christ. Then comes the First Mass of Easter, and with it the beginning of Paschaltide. Clergy and people from two other parishes which do not have a Vigil service are planning to join us for the Vigil this year. I hope many of you will be here to welcome them. The Masses are on the usual schedule for **Easter Sunday** (April 4th). At a minimum, you should plan to attend the services Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil, as well as Palm Sunday and Easter. The more devout try to be at Mass every day during Holy Week. West Laurel Hill Cemetery is undertaking some reconstruction on the crematory and Chapel of Peace this spring, as I mentioned last month. It looks like this will not start until after Holy Week, so it should not affect our observances. I would also guess that given the timing of Holy Week this year, the April *Rector's Chronicle* will be somewhat later than usual.

Coming Events

The weeknight School of Religion on the (Roman Catholic) *Catechism of the Catholic Church* will have its first meeting on Tuesday, April 13th at 7. Since we want to read through the *Catechism* together, and discuss (principally) the areas of concern for Anglicans, we thought it best to get a head start on the reading. It is a long book, after all. If you would like to be a part of the discussion, please obtain a copy and start reading. Please speak to me for further details.

I would also invite you to join in another Anglican Day of Fasting and Prayer on Friday, March 26th. Thanks to all who prayed and fasted last month. This is a way of letting God have His way with us, of surrendering to His will. Corporately as well as personally, we make a mess of things when we take matters into our own hands. No doubt this is a significant factor in the mess which the Anglican way is in in America. Godly sorrow is the foundation for godly joy: that is the foundation we seek to lay with the Day of Fasting and Prayer. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth on his way weeping and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, bearing his sheaves with him."

The Wednesday Bible Study continues, now studying the prophet Isaiah. The schedule alters a little the end of this month. The class which would normally be on March 24th will be held on Thursday, March 25th, which is the Feast of the Annunciation. There will be a Mass at 10 that day (as well as 6), and moving it will make it more convenient for people to be at Mass as well as Bible study on that important feast. There will be no Bible studies in Holy Week or Easter Week (March 31st and April 7th).

I would also invite your support of a project of our youth group: to put felt pads on the bottoms of the legs of the chairs in the Chapel of Peace. This will both reduce the noise when the chairs slide around (as they inevitably do sometimes during Mass), and reduce the wear and tear on the floor, especially since it is to be re-finished later this year. The installation will be a youth group service project. We will need to provide the 400 pads. If you would like to sponsor a chair for \$1, that would be great. No memorial plaque included, though you might get to sit in "your" chair. No labor required either.

We will also be supporting the Whosoever Gospel Mission this month with a food and clothing drive. The Alan Shawn Feinstein Foundation will match gifts of cash and food made during March and April. (Food items are valued at \$1 each or per pound.) Between now and April 11th (Low Sunday) we (St Michael's) will be collecting non-perishable food items and canned goods on Sunday at West Laurel Hill and during the week at the rectory. A list of recommended items is posted in both places. Not only with this help feed the homeless men at the Mission, but it will raise funds from the Foundation matching grant. The Mission is also in need of good used clothing for their thrift shops, so we will accept donations of such clothing as well, as we have in past years. Speak with me or with Beth if you have questions. Thanks!

Kudos

Thanks goes this month to:

- my mother for doing the last *Chronicle* mailing.
- To all who attended the (rescheduled) annual meeting, and to John Hansell and Pat Lincoln, this year's Unsung Heroes.
- James Altena and John McCann, who, having completed two terms on the vestry, have now rotated off. They have both served faithfully on St Michael's vestry since St Michael's began, and on the St James vestry before that.

Faithfully,

David Cosby