

## CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)  
Week of 19 April, 2009

To my Catholic brothers and sisters in the Corps:

As I write this, it seems that Spring has finally made a dent in the vestiges of a Winter that just wouldn't go away.

It makes sense to pray about the miracle:

It is SPRING, Lord,  
and something stirs in me,  
reaching, stretching,  
groping for words,  
peeking through my defenses,  
beckoning in my laughter,  
riding on past my fears,  
and pulsing in my music.

There is a promise in the season,  
and I know no name for it except  
LIFE.

Be with me in my reaching,  
so I will touch or be touched by  
a grace, a warmth,  
a light...  
to unfold my life to a new beginning,  
a fresh budding,  
a SPRING within as well as around me.

O Lord, you have sketched the lines of SPRING.  
Be with me in my unfolding,  
my longing,  
my reaching.

May the stress of the moment not keep you from seeing the beauty of this season of GRACE.

THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

0630 MASS  
is offered every weekday in the Chaplain's Office.  
Everyone is invited.

## A THOUGHT FOR EASTER:

From the writings of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen, a popular Catholic preacher of the 1940s and 1950s:

I recall the legend of two brothers,  
one of whom was very good  
while the other became very wicked.  
One day, the wicked brothers ran home,  
and the robe he wore was spotted with blood.  
He said: "I've just killed a man".  
And his brother said: "I'll take your robe,  
and you take mine. You leave".  
The guilty brother left.  
Then the police came and arrested  
the one who wore the bloody robe,  
and he was condemned to death.  
When he was dying, he sent a message to his brother.  
He said: "I'm sending you a white robe.  
Remember that I die to save you.".  
That's precisely what the Lord did for us.  
He wore our robe of sin.

As the good brother took upon himself  
the fate of the wicked brother,  
so the Lord took upon himself  
all the discord and disharmonies,  
all the sins and guilt of men and women  
as if he himself were guilty.

As gold is sucked into the furnace  
to have its dross burned away,  
so God takes our human nature and plunges it into Calvary  
to have our sins burned away.

Or, to change the figure:  
since sin is in the blood,  
Jesus poured out his blood for redemption,  
for without the shedding of blood,  
there is no remission of sins.

And then, on Easter Sunday, he rose again  
with his glorified, sinless human nature.

And this becomes the first note of the new creation,  
the beginning of the new symphony  
which will be played again and again by the Divine Conductor.

How are the notes added?

We are the other notes,  
if – like Mary – we really consent to be added  
to that first note.

How do we become added?

We become added by Baptism  
by which each of us dies to the old Adam  
and are thus incorporated to the New Adam, Christ.

All these notes that are added to the first note  
constitute the New Body of Christ –  
that which is known as his Mystical Body – the Church.

That is what it means to be a Christian.

## DID YOU KNOW?

23 April (next Thursday) is the Feast of ST GEORGE.  
He's the patron of ARMOR.

And here's the poop:

In the Canon of Pope Gelasius (who died in 496 AD), St. George is mentioned in a list of those “whose names are justly revered among men, but whose acts are known only to God”.

And actually, the only reliable historical stuff about George is that he was a martyr for the Faith.

The rest is a combination of tradition and legend, and it goes like this:

Supposedly, he was from Lydda in Palestine, and after his death, his remains were brought back there. A certain deacon Theodosius (530 AD or so) mentioned George's tomb in Lydda.

Eusebius of Caesarea (an early Christian historian around 322 AD) wrote about a noble soldier who confessed his faith before the Emperor Diocletian and was put to death as a result. But he never mentioned the soldier's name. Other popular tradition gave this soldier the name “George”.

Other stories about him include the traditions that he rapidly rose to high military rank, that he organized the Christian community in Urmiah (modern-day Iran) and that he visited Britain on an imperial expedition (which is why he's one of Britain's patron-saints).

He was also supposed to have fought a dragon and to have saved a virgin from the beast. This tradition can be found as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but it probably arose from a confusion with the Greek mythical hero Perseus, who slew a sea-monster at Jaffa (near Lydda, where George was from) to save the virgin Andromeda.

St. George was popular in the Middle East, and his popularity caused the crusaders in the 1100s and 1200s to “import” his popularity to Europe.

King Edward III of England declared him the patron-saint of that country, and he was (is) also the patron of Portugal, Aragon, Catalonia, Georgia and Lithuania.

Until recently, he played a most important role in popular feasts, and the date of his festival was connected with the arrival of Spring.

## GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Why do Catholics think that “traditions” of the Church are so important? Isn’t it enough to rely only on the Bible.

A: Short answer: No, it isn’t enough to rely only on the Bible...because the Bible, too, is a part of the Tradition of the Church, but not the only part.

Longer answer: your use of the word “traditions” is not accurate in describing what Catholics believe. Catholics use the word with a capital “T”.

We believe in “Tradition”...and we believe that the Tradition of the Church is God’s process of preserving and communicating revelation throughout the ages. As I mentioned, the Bible is a big part of the Tradition.

After all, the Apostles are dead now, and with their deaths, the Church was forced to worry about how best to continue their preaching and interpreting without losing or changing the message of Jesus. So, over the course of several centuries, the Church compiled the collection of sacred writings that we now call “The Bible”. By doing this – under the prompting of the Holy Spirit – the Church felt that it was doing its best to preserve the message of revelation and was also learning how to apply that message to every age.

And Jesus promised that he would remain with the Church in its mission, so by acting as a “church” – as an “inspired group” – the Catholic Church believes that it preserves the message of Christ, which has become the faith of the Church itself.

Unfortunately, the word “Tradition” (which describes all this) has become a dirty word for some people. They seem to believe that “Tradition” somehow contradicts the message of revelation.

The trouble is, such people forget that the Bible itself is a part of the Church Tradition. It was compiled over the centuries, collected for use in the Church and preserved throughout the ages.

So, for Catholics, Tradition is a sacred reality: it’s the Spirit of God within the Church of every age, preserving and applying the message of Jesus as we have understood that message from the beginning. It really is a “process of discernment”, a constant movement of the Holy Spirit working in the community of believers from the beginning.

This “process” resulted in the formation of “The Bible”, and it also resulted in the interpretation of Jesus’ intent as expressed by the Bible, which has formed the belief-system of the Church over the centuries.

And when Catholics put their belief in something that has been held in the Church from the beginning, we believe that the belief is preserved from error by the power of Jesus’ Spirit remaining with and in the Church. This is called the “infallibility of the Church”...best seen in Jesus’ words from Matthew (28:20): “...And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age”.

Examples of the Tradition would be the Bible itself, the Apostles’ Creed, Baptism, the Eucharist.

On the other hand “traditions” (with a small “t”) are another matter. They are local customs or private exercises which may or may not come from the Tradition of the Church. A good example would be the Rosary. It is simply a form of personal prayer, and while the Scripture urges us to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), there is no

obligation to use the Rosary as the only form of prayer. It works well for some but not for everyone.

So, it's crucial to understand the differences between "Tradition" and traditions. The Catholic Church doesn't believe that it has "invented" anything, but in its Tradition, it preserves and applies and interprets the revelation of Christ for every age.

## THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

### RESURRECTION OF THE BODY:

EASTER meant a "resurrection" for Jesus...  
a resurrection from death,  
a resurrection of both "soul" and "body".  
And it means the same thing for us.

For him, it meant

not just overcoming death in some esoteric "spiritual" way.

It also meant that he did some "bodily" things:

He ate fish with his followers (Luke 24);

He invited Thomas to feel the nail-prints in his hands

and to insert his fist into the wound in his side (John 20);

He used his voice to speak to Mary Magdalene (John 20); and

He gave little speeches to his disciples,

commissioning them to be his witnesses (Luke 24; Mark 16; Matthew 28).

That's why a portion of our CREED professes our belief  
in the RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

Some people think that after death, we simply become ANGELS –  
disembodied spirits.

Some people think that the human body is a PRISON,  
and the sooner we're rid of it, the better.

Some people think that it's somehow better to be a purely  
SPIRITUAL BEING.

Some people think that when the body is lowered into the grave,  
that's pretty much the end of the whole matter.

None of this is CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity believes that in the end,

we will all be united with our bodies,

that those bodies will be glorified (like Jesus' body)

and that until this happens, we will not be complete.

Thomas Aquinas (a 13<sup>th</sup>-century theologian) mentioned that  
after his EARTHLY death, his SOUL might be in heaven,  
but he himself wouldn't be.

His point was that he himself wouldn't be in heaven

until his SOUL and BODY were reunited on the last day  
and he became a COMPLETE human being again.

In I Corinthians (chapter 15), St. Paul devoted some space to his thoughts  
about “What will the new body be like”.

He didn’t claim to have all the details,  
but he believed that it would be such a wonderful reality  
that he would scarcely be able to comprehend it.

He compared it to a kernel and a stalk of wheat.

No one who looks at a majestic stalk of full-grown wheat  
could ever imagine that it came  
from a single, dry-brown kernel (I Corinthians 15:35ff).

The kernel of wheat had to die  
before it became something new and wonderful.  
It’s something like that with the HUMAN BODY.

So, for the Christian,  
the body is not an ACCIDENT  
nor a non-essential entity.  
It’s an essential part of our nature.  
It’s destined for GLORY.

UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

“What people don’t recognize is how much religion costs.  
They think faith is a big electric blanket.  
when, of course, it is the CROSS.  
It’s much harder to believe than not to believe.  
Don’t expect faith to clear things up for you.  
It is TRUST, not CERTAINTY.”

Flannery O’Connor  
American Catholic author

And that’s the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and  
illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

May your EASTER Season be an overflowing  
of God’s power,  
and may you all know intimately  
the happiness of life in the Risen Savior.

Woodie