Good Friday Meditation

O crown of thorns—
What cruel whim
Would fashion pain
Meant just for Him?

How helplessly
We view the scene,
Not one stepped forth
To intervene.

Can we amend
Such heinous crime?
We only have
The rest of time.

By Dorothy M. Colgan

(Dorothy M. Colgan is a member of St. Meinrad Parish in St. Meinrad.)
For Pope John Paul II, beatification process may be on final lap

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Just hours after an earthquake hit the city and province of L’Aquila in central Italy, causing 207 people to be confirmed dead and 15 people to be unharmed, the Vatican could not promise a timetable for a final decision on sainthood.

The fourth anniversary of the death of Pope John Paul II on April 2 was marked by a sense of anticipation following reports that the late pontiff would be beatified on the fifth anniversary next year.

The Vatican has played down those rumors. But it is among the thousands who flocked to his tomb and gathered in St. Peter’s Basilica for a memorial Mass, the feeling was strongly hopeful.

The two legacies at stake are Pope John Paul the “saint” and Pope Benedict XVI the “living saint” and for many, the pope who paved the way for the beatification of the late pope and his own papacy. Then, in the April 3 issue of The Criterion, the Vatican newspaper, Cardinal Dziwisz, in Rome for the beatification, said in a telegram to Archbishop Giuseppe M. Milani of L’Aquila, the late pontiff’s archbishop, that there will be no need to wait more than six years after his death for a decision on the beatification process.

That seemed to respond to the “santo subito!” (“Sainthood now!”) banners that were held aloft at Pope John Paul’s funeral.

The initial diocesan phase of the cause was completed in the 2,000-page “positio,” the document that makes the case for beatification, according to a cardinal’s aide Amauro Mola, head of the congregation.

A cardinal’s aide told Vatican Radio that once the theological study of the “positio” is completed, the cause will be considered by the cardinal and bishops of the congregation. If approved, it will then go to the pope for a final decision on a decree of “venerability,” which means that the person lived according to Christian virtues.

A pope, meanwhile, a presumed miracle through the intercession of the late pope—involving a French nun said to have been cured of Parkinson’s disease—is being studied in a five-step process that involves medical experts, a medical board, theological consultants, the members of the congregation and, finally, the pope.

With the decree of “venerability” and a confirmed miracle, beatification can take place.

A cardinal’s aide emphasized that the Vatican could not promise a timetable for all this. The fact that the Vatican is expediting the cause doesn’t mean the process will be any faster or superfluffity, but on the contrary demands methodical attention to detail, he said.

Five years from the date of beatification may not strike people as “subito,” but it would be a modern record in the Church. Even for Blessed Teresa of Calcutta, who was described by many as a “living saint,” and for whom the waiting was also watered, it took six years to complete the process.

Still, the Vatican loves anniversaries, and no one has ruled out next April 2 as the big day.

Pope Benedict XVI said in April 2007, “St. John Paul II’s tomb in St. Peter’s Basilica is really the tomb of all those who love him and his memory. The same article related an interesting anecdote about the relationship between Pope John Paul and Pope Benedict who, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, served more than 23 years under the late pope as head of the doctrinal congregations.

When meeting to review the drafts of important documents with his top collaborators, it said, Pope John Paul would sometimes sit back at the end of a conversation and say, “We need to go back to this topic again. From his expression, I can see that Cardinal Ratzinger is not fully convinced. We need to reflect some more.”

At the memorial Mass, Pope Benedict underlined the thematic continuity between the two popes and his own pontificate. Then, like many before him, he went down to the pope’s tomb and knelt in prayer.

Pope offers condolences and prayers for victims of Italian earthquake

VATICAN CITY (CNS)—Just hours after an earthquake hit the city and province of L’Aquila in central Italy, causing more than 200 deaths and major damage to churches and other buildings, Pope Benedict XVI offered his prayers for the dead and the injured.

The quake struck on April 6 at 3:30 a.m. local time and was felt strongly even in Rome, about 70 miles west of L’Aquila.

The Vatican newspaper, L’Osservatore Romano, has marked this year’s anniversary of the papacy, the beatification process was completed in a few months.

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Reaction to Notre Dame’s choice of Obama for commencement continues

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Bishops from across the country continued their disapproval of the University of Notre Dame’s choice of President Barack Obama as the May 17 commencement speaker.

Their comments, in publicly released letters to Holy Cross Father John J. Jenkins, president of the private Indiana university, have used words such as “travesty,” “disappointment” and “scandal” that Obama would not only address, graduates, but would also be given an honorary degree.

Critics of Obama said his support of legal abortion and embryonic stem-cell research make him an inappropriate choice to be commencement speaker at a Catholic university.

In criticizing Notre Dame’s decision, announced on March 20, most of the bishops referred to their 2004 document, “Catholics in Political Life,” which states in part that “the Catholic community and Catholic institutions should not honor those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles. They should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions.”

Joseph M. D’Arcy of Fort Wayne-South Bend—the diocese where Notre Dame is located—said he would not attend the graduation in protest of Obama’s policies regarding life issues.

Phoenix Bishop Thomas J. Olmsted said the university’s decision “is a public act of disobedience to the bishops of the United States.”

Some U.S. bishops have urged Father Jenkins to rescind the offer to Obama. Among them are Archbishop John C. Nienstedt of St. Paul and Minneapolis, Bishop Edward J. Slattery of Tulsa, Okla., and Bishop Thomas G. Doran of Rockford, Ill.

Father Jenkins has not issued any statements beyond what he said on March 23 when he said the invitation to Obama “should not be taken as condoning or endorsing his positions on specific issues regarding the protection of human life, including abortion and embryonic stem-cell research.”

He also said the university community sees “his visit as a basis for further positive engagement.”

Cardinal Francis E. George of Chicago, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in an April 2 letter to the U.S. bishops that he has requested a meeting to discuss the issue with Father Jenkins and Holy Cross Father David Tyson, superior of the Indiana province of the Congregation of Holy Cross as well as Richard N. Wrbka, chairman of Notre Dame’s board of trustees.

The cardinal said he wrote to Father Jenkins to express his “dismay about the action of Notre Dame, taken without consultation or consideration of the consequences for the wider Church.”

During an archdiocesan-sponsored conference in Chicago on March 28, the cardinal called Notre Dame’s decision an “extreme embarrassment” to Catholics. He also said university officials “did not understand what it means to be Catholic when they issued this invitation, and didn’t appreciate the kind of upshot that would be consequent to the decision.”

A video of the cardinal’s remarks was posted on www.LifeSiteNews.com.

Cardinal George urged people “to call, to e-mail, to write letters of protest,” but he also said Notre Dame was not likely to “disinvite” the president of the United States.

“What happens around the ceremony is sticky to many people,” he said, without elaborating.

Retired Archbishop John R. Quinn of San Francisco questioned whether a rescinded invitation would do more harm than good.

In a March 30 editorial in Jetsetting America magazine, he said, “We must weigh very seriously the consequences if the American bishops are seen as the agents of the public embarrassment of the newly elected president by forcing him to withdraw from an appearance at a distinguished Catholic university.

“It is in the interests of both the Church and the nation if both work together in civility, honesty and friendship for the common good, even where there are grave divisions, as there are on abortion,” he added.

Bishop Robert N. Lynch of St. Petersburg, Fla., said in a March 27 blog entry on the diocesan Web site that the university “may have acted way too early and too generously” in its invitation to Obama.

However, he said he was “more alarmed that the rhetoric being employed is so uncivil and venomous that it weakens the case we place before our fellow citizens, alienates young college-age students who believe the older generation is behaving like an uppity adult child and they do not wish to be any part of that, and ill-serves the cause of life.”

A poll of 7, the Cardinal Newman Society—A Massachusetts, Va.-based Catholic college watchdog group—had received more than 242,000 signatures for an online petition calling for Notre Dame to rescind its invitation to Obama.

On campus, about a dozen student groups formed a coalition called Notre Dame Response to express their opposition and held a prayer rally on April 5.

At the event attended by 400 people, Chris Labade, a senior majoring in theology and chairman of Notre Dame Response, called university administrators to task for not only inviting Obama to speak, but for plans to confer upon him an honorary doctorate of law degree.

“Obama is a Notre Dame law degree to a lawyer and politician who has used the law to deny equality to the unborn diminishes the value of the degree itself,” Labade said. “And so we pledge ourselves to acts of witness that will be characterized by respect, prayerfulness, outspoken fidelity to the Church and true concern for the good of our university.”

St. Joseph County Right to Life president Tom Gill was among those who attended the campus rally. He commended the Notre Dame students, and said his group would be following their lead and suggested that other pro-life supporters do the same.

“Get on their Web site,” Gill said, referring to www.ndresponse.com, “so you can receive e-mails from them. I think they have things planned irregularity from break to graduation.”

Charles Rice, professor emeritus of law, who is on the law school faculty, wrote in The Atrium newsletter, the student newspaper, that “on-site demonstrations would be counterproductive,”

“The University of Notre Dame should never have presented the school to the pro-life community,” he said. “Never. The administration might be able to save face by praying the rosary at the campus Grotto during the commencement.”

The Associated Press reported that, less than a week after the university announced its commencement speaker, Notre Dame’s student newspaper received more than 600 letters—almost equally divided among alumni and current students—about it.

Seventy percent of the alumni letters said they opposed the invitation to Obama, and 73 percent of students supported it. Of the 95 seniors who wrote to the paper, 97 percent supported the school’s decision.

Volunteers are needed to assist at 175th anniversary Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis still needs volunteers to help at the May 3 Mass celebrating the archdiocese’s 175th anniversary.

About 300 people are needed to carry out a variety of ministries during the Mass to be celebrated at 3 p.m. at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, said Stephen James, director of the archdiocesan Office of Purchasing, who is coordinating the recruitment of volunteers.

Volunteers are needed to help with most aspects of the Mass, including assisting the bishops with confirmation. Ushers, sign bearers and Communion guides are also needed.

Volunteers will need to be able to walk up and down stairs, James noted. Jobs will be assigned to individuals when they arrive at Lucas Oil Stadium.

FREE BOOK
about
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You have seen the movie, now read what Jesus says about the meaning of His Passion as dictated to stigmatist, Catalina Rivas. This 48 page book has the “Imprintature” and is recommended for meditation. Mrs. Rivas was featured in the recent FOX-TV special, “Signs from God,” that was broadcast worldwide.

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Volunteers are encouraged to register online at www.archindy.org/175th. Look for the volunteers’ section: If you have registered online in the past two weeks and have not heard back from the archdiocese, please e-mail Steve James at sjderocher@indy.rr.com, or to St. Alphonsus Liguori Church, 1870 West Oak St., Zionsville, IN 46077, attention Sonya Deroscher.
Jesus’ seven last words

If you were unable to get to a Good Friday liturgy today, we hope you will spend some time meditating on Jesus’ crucifixion. We suggest you read Chapters 18 and 19 of John’s Gospel, which was proclaimed during today’s liturgy. Or perhaps you could pray the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary, make the Way of the Cross or meditate on Jesus’ seven last words.

They weren’t just seven words, but seven things that the Gospel writers quoted Jesus saying as he hung on the cross. We’re not sure exactly how long he hung on the cross. Mark’s Gospel says, “It was nine o’clock in the morning when they crucified him” (Mk 15:24) while John’s Gospel says “it was about noon” (Jn 19:14) when Pilate handed Jesus over to be crucified.

None of the four evangelists quoted all the words we think of as Jesus’ last words, but those they considered, for their own reasons, as the most important.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). Jesus asked for forgiveness for the soldiers who had nailed him to the cross. They were carrying out their orders, not knowing who Jesus was. Indeed, they were instrumental in carrying out our redemption.

“Today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). This is a lesson to us that it is never too late to repent.

“Woman, behold your son” (Jn 19:26). Jesus said to his mother, referring to John, and “Behold your mother” (Jn 19:27) to John. This scene has been interpreted both literally, as Jesus’ concern for his mother, and symbolically with Mary as a symbol for the Church. If Jesus was only concerned about his mother, he could have made arrangements for her at any time, not waiting until he was on the cross. Mary was given as the mother of us all.

As Jesus hung on the cross, the mockery by those passing by continued:

“He saved others but can’t save himself,” and “Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him” (Mt 27:42). How is the temptation must have to do exactly that! But Jesus had said earlier, at the time of his arrest, “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me with this at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:53). We should remember Jesus’ concern for his mother, and has been interpreted both literally, as referring to John, and, “Behold your mother” (Jn 19:26), Jesus said to his mother, “I will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels!” (Mt 26:53).

“Thy God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Ps 22:1). I thirst” (Jn 19:28), Jesus said, “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28).” Jesus said, “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). Said Jesus, “I thirst” (Jn 19:28). “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). Jesus was saying that he was thirsty. He was suffering from thirst.

How accurately the psalm described what was happening: “All who see me mock me; they hurl their lips and sneer” (Ps 22:6). “They tear holes in my clothing they cast lots” (Ps. 22:19). “My garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Ps 22:19). “I thirst” (Jn 19:28), Jesus said, “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). Jesus was suffering from thirst.

“Forget my astonishment at first hearing how strong the temptation must have been to do exactly that! But Jesus had said earlier, at the time of his arrest, “Do you think that I cannot call upon my Father and he will not provide me with this at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Mt 26:53). We should remember Jesus’ concern for his mother, and has been interpreted both literally, as referring to John, and, “Behold your mother” (Jn 19:26), Jesus said to his mother, “I will not provide me at this moment with more than twelve legions of angels!” (Mt 26:53).

“In my hands and feet” (Ps 22:19). “They tear holes in my clothing they cast lots” (Ps 22:19). “My garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots” (Ps 22:19). “I thirst” (Jn 19:28), Jesus said, “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). “I am thirsty” (Jn 19:28). Jesus was suffering from thirst.

It was with great sadness that I read in The Criterion that President Barack Obama has been invited to speak at Notre Dame’s commencement this year. I commend and thank Bishop John D’Arcy of the Fort Wayne-South Bend Diocese for his public statement denouncing this decision and his refusal to attend the commencement address.

Two years ago, our son, a Notre Dame scholar, voluntarily withdrew from the University of Notre Dame for just such reasons. He stated that the Catholic Church he had known and loved during his parochial high school years was “not” the Church that he found at Notre Dame.

I hope that this situation will be gracefully disillusions in the hypocrisy he found on that campus. We supported him in his difficult decision to leave, and he is now very happy at a secular university.

As followers of Jesus, it is vital that we be able to discern truth from false teaching. In Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned of false teachers that everyone who believes in him might come into your kingdom” (Lk 23:42).

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Los testigos de una fe sencilla pueden ser instrumentos de evangelización

Archbishop/Bishop Daniel M. Buechlein, O.S.B.

ARCHBISHOP/ARZOBISPO DANIEL M. BUECHELIN, O.S.B.

SEEKING THE FACE OF THE LORD

BUSCANDO LA CARA DEL SEÑOR

Witnesses of simple faith can be instruments of evangelization

Así que ahora nos encontramos en el respiro crepuscular de la soledad de la Pascua. También vivimos con un cierto realismo cristiano en cuanto al juicio a la Resurrección. Durante las semanas conducentes a la Pascua experimenté una alegría tan profunda como la familia asociado con nuestra fe. En uno de los ritos de elección de los catecúmenos y candidatos para ser reciclados en nuestra iglesia de este año, me sentí movido por la idea de una familia de creyentes que buscan aprender a caminar como si no fuera un problema.

Me abrazó, no rencionando para una foto individual más.

Los testigos de una fe sencilla pueden ser instrumentos de evangelización...
April 10
Our Lady of Peace Cemetery, Macon Road, 900 N. Haaverstick Road, Indianapolis. Stations of the Cross, Mgr. Joseph F. Schaefer, vicar general, presider, 2 p.m. Information: 317-574-7800 or www.catholiccemeteries.com
St. Monica Parish, 6131 N. Michigan Road, Indianapolis. Living Stations of the Cross, performed by St. Monica School eighth-grade class, 9 a.m. Information: 317-255-7153.
St. Joan of Arc Parish, 4217 N. Central Ave., Indianapolis. Rosary, 6:30 p.m., Stations of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-283-5508.
St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, 4312 N. College Ave., Indianapolis. Fish fry, 4-8 p.m. Information: 317-546-1511.
St. Pius X Parish, 2720 Sarto Drive, Indianapolis. Fish fry, 5-8 p.m., $8 per person. Information: 317-255-6534.
St. Mary Parish, 221 Washington St., North Vernon. St. Mary Youth Ministry, Living Way of the Cross, 7 p.m. Information: 317-346-3604.
April 11
St. Lawrence Parish, 6444 E. 46th St., Indianapolis. Easter Egg Hunt and breakfast, breakfast with the bunny, 9-11 a.m., $5 per person, children 3 years and under free, Easter egg hunt and activities, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m., children 10 years and under, bring your own basket. Information: Michele Kolosso @ dioceseindy.org.
St. Gabriel the Archangel Parish, 5000 W. 34th St., Indianapolis. Easter Egg Hunt, 9:30 a.m., children 10 years and under, bring your own basket. Information: 317-297-7034 or www.agbpl.org.
St. Roch Parish, Family Center, 3630 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Single Seniors, meeting, 1 p.m., age 50 and over. Information: 317-761-4207.
April 12
M/V S, Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross, operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, 1.8 mile east of 422 South and 12 miles south of Versailles. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the rosary, Marian Way, 1 p.m., prayer group, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3591.
April 13
April 14
April 15
Vito’s on Penn, 20 N. Pennsylvania St., Indianapolis. Theology on Tap, “Show Me the Money,” Father Eimer Eicher, vicar general, presenter. Information: indiana@theologyontap.org.
April 16
Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 S. 71st St., Indianapolis. Catholic Business Exchange, Mass. 6:30 a.m., followed by breakfast buffet, Lori Borman, speaker. Information: Please call $14 member, $20 non-member Information and registration on www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.
April 17
April 18
St. Roch Parish, Family Center, 3630 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Single Seniors, meeting, 1 p.m., age 50 and over. Information: 317-761-4207.
April 19
Benedictine Father Jeremy King, presenter. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., $35 includes continental breakfast and lunch. Information: 812-367-1411 or spirituality@thedome.org.
April 20
St. Roch Parish, Family Center, 3630 S. Meridian St., Indianapolis. Good Friday prayer service, Mass, noon, on Good Friday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the rosary, Mariant Way, 1 p.m., prayer group, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3591.
April 21
April 22
April 23
Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 S. 71st St., Indianapolis. Catholic Business Exchange, Mass. 6:30 a.m., followed by breakfast buffet, Lori Borman, speaker. Information: Please call $14 member, $20 non-member Information and registration on www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.
April 24
April 25
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April 27
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April 30
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May 1
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May 2
May 3
May 4
Northside Knights of Columbus Hall, 2100 S. 71st St., Indianapolis. Catholic Business Exchange, Mass. 6:30 a.m., followed by breakfast buffet, Lori Borman, speaker. Information: Please call $14 member, $20 non-member Information and registration on www.catholicbusinessexchange.org.
May 5
May 6
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May 7
M/V S, Divine Mercy and Glorious Cross, operated by the Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy, 1.8 mile east of 422 South and 12 miles south of Versailles. Mass, noon, on third Sunday holy hour and pitch-in, groups of 10 pray the rosary, Mariant Way, 1 p.m., prayer group, celebrant. Information: 812-689-3591.
May 8
Church must take a consistent stand on its no honorary degree for President Obama

Memo to Notre Dame: If address must be given, the petition (www.notredamescandal.com) the golden dome ego so big that invitation to President Barack Obama: Is opposing the president's visit was at more U.S. Catholic bishops, which states: “The University of Notre Dame, really think Congress will deliver to his desk. Freedom of Choice Act, which he hopes around the world.

Offering great honors to a man who wants them to conduct research, but he could have executive order that now allows the creation innocent human life.”

Church. "Our children are all willing to help sitting out there in the pews. "Our children are all willing to help our religion—abroad to those of us still to live by faith. "None" Does Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, really think President Obama the DoD.

“None" Does Holy Cross Father John Jenkins, president of the University of Notre Dame, really think President Obama the DoD.

Letters to the Editor

Retreat for caregivers is set for April 30 in Beech Grove

By Mary Ann Wyand

It was a priceless gift, even a miracle.

Jerry Erlenbaugh somehow managed to sign his name several times in that quirky script on an anniversary card for his longtime wife, Mary.

He was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease three years ago, but experienced a brief, lucid moment that enabled him to write and spell his name correctly on the greeting card purchased by his daughter, Jan Erlenbaugh Gaddis.

As a part-time parish nurse and a volunteer at crossroads of Indianapolis, Erlenbaugh Gaddis has helped many families cope with a variety of health challenges that change all the dynamics of their daily life together.

But everything is different, she said, when your father is the patient and your mother is the full-time primary caregiver.

Erlenbaugh Gaddis is happy to see a mother will participate in “Seeking Serenity Step by Step—A Caregivers Retreat” on April 30 at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center, 1402 Southern Ave., in Beech Grove.

Her 13 years of experience in parish nursing helped with planning the retreat, which focuses on 12 steps for caregivers and the Serenity Prayer as well as ways they can gain protective, comfort and insights that can’t be changed and author Father Lawrence Foerker, pastor of Holy Cross Parish in Indianapolis, will discuss an overview of the Serenity Prayer and 12-step spirituality as it relates to caregiving.

Presentations include talks by Michael Heinz, Ph.D., a psychology professor who will talk about "Finding God on having the wisdom to take care of yourself."

Jerry and Mary Erlenbaugh are longtime members of St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) Parish in Indianapolis. They were married in the parish church on Valentine’s Day in 1953, and raised their seven children in a neighborhood near the church.

He worked as a builder, and she kept busy as a volunteer or go shopping and take care of her husband on Wednesdays so she can have a break from her busy schedule.

"If you don’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of the person that you’re caring for. You need that time off so you’ll be more relaxed, invigorated and refreshed when it’s over, and you can be better equipped to come back home." — Mary Erlenbaugh

St. Therese of the Infant Jesus (Little Flower) parishioners Jerry and Mary Erlenbaugh of Indianapolis have seen their marriage and daily life change dramatically since he was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease in 2006. She is looking forward to attending a retreat for caregivers based on the Serenity Prayer from 8 a.m. to 3:10 p.m. on April 30 at the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center in Beech Grove.

The retreat is for both personal and professional caregivers.

She didn’t need to provide constant caregiving for her husband and only had to watch him more closely.

"It’s only been since we moved here [to the apartment a year and a half ago] that he has progressively gotten worse," she said. "His balance is bad now, and it’s a 24/7 job caring for him. I stay close to him. He’s not talking him what to do, and he has trouble walking." She will be 76 in April and he will celebrate his 79th birthday in August. A magically, he could still swim in the ski at 70, but now he can’t keep his baby off when he tries to walk.

TV programs help entertain him as do arranging blocks and working on puzzles. "He sleeps a lot during the day," M ary Erlenbaugh said. "I sit with a book and read. That’s what I do for enjoyment and relaxation.

A professional caregiver stays with her husband on Wednesdays so she can volunteer or go shopping and take care of business.

"He has been such a good husband," she said, even as their roles have shifted.

"He’s not the same person anymore," she explained, "but he’s still in there. He took care of me and our children for over 50 years so I can take care of him now.

The caregivers retreat will be a relaxing break from her busy schedule.

"If you don’t take care of yourself, you can’t take care of the person that you’re caring for," she said. "You need that time off so you’ll be more relaxed, invigorated and refreshed when it’s over, and you can be better equipped to come back home. It will be nice to get away and renew myself."

(To register for the Retreats for caregivers, call the Benedict Inn Retreat and Conference Center at 317-788-7551 or log on to the Web site at www.benedictinn.org before the April 22 registration deadline.)
General Assembly considers child poverty commission

By Brigid Curtis Ayer

The words “child poverty” may conjure up an image of a youngster from a developing country, not a child from the heartland of the United States. But Indiana has its share of child poverty—as high as 28 percent in some counties, according to U.S. Census information compiled by the Indiana Youth Institute.

Of the 92 counties in Indiana, 83 of them have at least a 10 percent rate or higher of children ages 0-17 in poverty. Eighteen counties have a 10 percent to 15.2 percent child poverty rate. 47 counties have a 15.2 percent to 20.1 percent child poverty rate, and 18 counties have a 20.1 percent to 28.1 percent child poverty rate, according to the Indiana Youth Institute.

Why is the child poverty rate in Indiana so high?

Lawmakers in the Indiana Senate overwhelmingly supported a bill to investigate the problem by creating a two-year government commission to study the issue, and make recommendations that will combat the situation affecting Indiana’s children.

The proposal, Senate Bill 260, authored by Sen. Dennis Kruse (R-Auburn) and passed in the Senate by a 41-7 vote, would create a 23-member panel composed of child poverty experts from governmental agencies, non-profit advocacy groups, faith-based community groups and area academies from Indiana University, the University of Notre Dame and Purdue University.

The goal of the panel is to design a plan with biannual benchmarks to achieve a 50 percent reduction in childhood poverty in Indiana by 2020. The bill requires the commission to issue a final report by 2021.

The plan also must incorporate provisions which assist the parents of children living in poverty, including workforce training, educational opportunities, affordable housing, child care and early education programs, after-school and mentoring programs, and access to affordable healthcare, including access to mental health and substance abuse programs.

Sen. Kruse said he got involved with the issue in June 2008 when he, along with four other state lawmakers, attended a conference hosted by the National Conference of State Legislatures and learned about the problems facing the working poor in America. Following the conference, the lawmakers divided the legislative tasks, and Sen. Kruse’s assignment was to address childhood poverty.

“The purpose of the bill is to keep the children of poverty before the Indiana General Assembly. Poverty has been with us since the beginning of man and will probably always be with us, but that doesn’t mean we ignore it or accept it.” —Sen. Dennis Kruse

“The commission, which will be composed of the real experts in child poverty, like those from our own Catholic Charities, academia, governmental agencies and community outreach organizations, are precisely the group best equipped to address the heart of the problem and address the full range of issues contributing to childhood poverty,” Tebbe said. “Issues like employment, career development, access to health care and affordable housing must be addressed in addition to family fragmentation. This comprehensive approach provides Hoosier families in poverty the best opportunity to get out of poverty.”

A legislative study committee as set forth in Senate Current Resolution 26 is composed exclusively of lawmakers. The panel would begin its work in July and make a recommendation to the General Assembly prior to the 2020 legislative session.

“The vast majority are favoring it,” Sen. Kruse said. “My anticipation is that the bill will pass this year and become law, and the governor will hopefully sign it.”

The bill now moves to the full House for approval. The last day that the bill will pass this year and become law, Sen. Kruse said that while there has been some opposition to his bill, it has been limited.

“‘The vast majority are favoring it.’ Sen. Kruse said. ‘My anticipation is that the bill will pass this year and become law, and the governor will hopefully sign it.’

The bill now moves to the full House for approval. The last day that the House or Senate can approve bills sent over by the opposite chamber is April 13.

The Indiana General Assembly must adjourn by April 29.

(Brigid Curtis Ayer is a correspondent for The Criterion. To learn more about the Indiana Catholic Conference, log on to www.indianaconf.org.)

Catholic radio provides weekly legislative updates

As in years past, Glenn Tebbe, Indiana Catholic Conference executive director, will provide weekly legislative updates on Indiana Catholic Radio.

They are broadcast at 11:05 a.m. on Saturday and Sunday mornings on WSPM 89.1 FM following Archbishop Daniel M. Buechlein’s weekly radio broadcast. Indianapolis Catholic Radio also streams on the Internet and can be heard statewide by logging on to www.catholicradioindy.org and clicking on the “Listen Now” button.

Our Lady of Fatima Retreat House

“Reflections on Mary”

with Fr. Jim Farrell
Director of Fatima Retreat House

May 13, 2009
8:30 am - 2:30 pm

Fr. Jim looks forward to celebrating the feast day of Our Lady of Fatima with each of you, spending time in prayer and reflection on Our Lady. The day will include registration and continental breakfast from 8:30-9:00 am, Mass and a lunch buffet. Cost is $35 per person. Please join us for this special day!

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The Resurrection is depicted in this Renaissance fresco from the Chapel of St. Sebastian in Lanslevillard, France. Easter, the feast of the Resurrection, is April 12 in the Latin rite this year.
By John F. Fink

My name is Marcus Aurelius. I’m an old man now, a retired soldier of the Roman Empire. I’d like to tell you about something that happened years ago when I was only XIX (19) and a soldier for only a year. I was sent to Palestine in the Middle East, where I was assigned to the forces commanded by the governor there, a man named Pontius Pilate. It was, quite frankly, a terrible assignment because Palestine’s residents, who called the place Israel, were Jews who greatly resented us Romans. Of course, you could hardly blame them since they considered us as occupiers of their country and they wanted their freedom.

Every now and then, one of their leaders would start an uprising and the soldiers who were there ahead of me would have to put it down. It always ended with the leader’s crucifixion—a horrible way to die but the common Roman form of capital punishment.

We were usually stationed in Caesarea M-artima on the Mediterranean coast. It was a magnificent city built by King Herod the Great, but he had been dead for XXIV (34) years when I arrived. That’s where Governor Pilate lived most of the time.

However, every year, during the spring, Pilate moved to the praetorium in Jerusalem, the Jews’ principal city, and, of course, our whole cohort—about DC (600) soldiers—went with him. We went there because Jews from all over the Middle East congregated there to celebrate their Passover, and the arrival of so many pilgrims in the city posed a danger of riots. We had to be prepared just in case.

The first year I was there, the day before that feast of Passover, the leaders of the Jews brought a man named Jesus to Governor Pilate. They said that he was claiming to be the king of the Jews. It seemed strange to me because there hadn’t been any signs of an uprising that we soldiers heard about.

Nevertheless, Jesus was brought before Pilate and those Jewish leaders demanded that Pilate put him to death. I wasn’t present during Pilate’s questioning of Jesus, but I got the impression that Pilate thought that he was innocent of the charges.

I was standing guard, though, when Pilate brought Jesus out to the court that had gathered at the praetorium. The crowd, urged by their chief priests, demanded that Jesus be crucified.

Finally, Pilate acquiesced to their demands. We soldiers thought it was good that he did since a riot seemed about to break out. Pilate proclaimed his innocence by asking for a form of capital punishment. It can sometimes take a long time for a man to die by crucifixion. He is either tied or nailed to the cross in such a way that he can keep pushing himself up with his feet so he can breathe. But as his legs cramp so he can no longer push himself up. To hurry it along, we sometimes break the man’s legs with a heavy sledge hammer.

After the men were hanging on the cross for about three hours, our centurion ordered me and another soldier to break their legs. It seems that the Jewish elders didn’t want the bodies hanging on the cross during Passover.

So we broke the legs of the other two men. But it was obvious that Jesus was already dead so we didn’t break his legs. I did, though, take a lance and thrust it into his side. I saw blood and water flow out. I knew for certain that he was dead.

We took the bodies down from the cross. There wasn’t anybody there to claim the other two bodies, but several men and some women took Jesus’ body and buried it in a tomb that happened to be in a nearby garden. I thought that was the end of it. Frankly, I was glad it was over. However, the next morning, I was called for a new assignment. The Jewish chief priests and some of their people called the Pharisees went to Pilate and asked for soldiers to guard the tomb. Yes, guard a tomb, of all things!

It seems they remembered that, while Jesus was alive, he predicted that he would be killed, but then said that, after three days, he would be raised up. So these priests wanted the tomb to be guarded so that Jesus’ disciples couldn’t steal the body and then say that he had been raised from the dead.

So Governor Pilate told them that his guard was theirs. Since this wasn’t exactly a plum assignment, my centurion selected me and several others of the younger men to guard the tomb.

It was a boring assignment at first, but then the most amazing thing happened, the reason I’m writing this account. First, there was a great earthquake. Then we all saw a man whose appearance was like lightning, with clothing as white as snow. All of us were scared to death as he approached and rolled back the stone that was covering the entrance to the tomb. When he did so, we could see that the tomb was empty!

Several women approached, who were planning to anoint Jesus’ body. The man with the shining clothing just sat on the stone and told the women that Jesus wasn’t in the tomb because he had been raised from the dead.

They quickly ran away to tell Jesus’ disciples while we just stood there dumbfounded. But we saw Jesus—the man who I was sure was dead when I pierced his side with a lance—meet the women. They were too far away, though, for us to hear what he said to them.

Finally, coming out of our trance, we had to go into Jerusalem and tell the chief priests what had happened. Frankly, we were afraid that we might be court-martialed. But the opposite happened. We were actually given a large sum of money and told to keep quiet. We were told, if anyone should ask us what happened, to say that Jesus’ disciples stole his body while we were asleep. Of course, this was a lie, but we did what we were instructed.

That’s not quite the end of my story. After a couple years in Palestine, I served in many other parts of the Roman Empire, including Africa and Spain, before retiring. When I returned to Rome, I was surprised to find a group of people who called themselves Christians, followers of that man Jesus.

They believe that he was crucified in order to redeem the world and that he had risen from the dead. I didn’t know about the redemption part, but I was sure about the resurrection part because I was there. I didn’t see Jesus rise, but I did see the empty tomb. I’m positive that his dead body had been in it and I saw him alive, talking to those women.

I have been a Christian for about XX (20) years now.
Resurrection is not to be confused with resuscitation

By David Gibson  
Catholic News Service

A father told me that his child died for a few moments after failing seriously ill and being rushed to the hospital, where the child's vital signs were revived. After a recovery period, the child's life journey resumed.

Such accounts no longer are rare. Contemporary medicine sometimes restores life and sometimes extends it. Patients are enabled to continue the life they have known.

Was Jesus' resurrection like that? Did life continue as before? Not exactly.

The early Christians saw Easter as the day of new life. A new creation was born with Jesus' death—and resurrection!

The new creation even gained a title as "the eighth day." If a seven-day week characterized our world's original creation, the eighth day signified that time itself now was transformed.

Passionist Father Donald Senior, in a 2008 speech, discussed bodily resurrection—including the resurrection of the dead—that all Christians anticipate.

Christian faith affirms, Father Senior said, that "Jesus, who truly died, who lost his life, was transformed by the power of God and given renewed life, new corporal, bodily life.* Yes, this still was Jesus, but his "body-spirit is transformed and has new power.*

No wonder the early Christians took Jesus' death and resurrection seriously! Like Christians today, early Christians struggled with Easter's implications—what it meant for Jesus and them. But they grasped that he had risen and that they shared in his new, transformed life.

So Easter was to become an annual celebration not solely of what happened "to" Jesus long ago. Easter would be the premier time of year for baptisms, a development that makes complete sense. Isn't baptism the sacrament of new life in Christ, who died and rose? St. Paul wrote that Christians were incorporated by baptism into Christ's body. Though members of the community differed in ethnicity or talents or wealth, each one was a valued, needed part of Christ's body.

That Christians are joined with Christ's body is no small statement to make. Christ's life, this suggests, gives baptized Christians vitality. My wife and I photographed the "old creation"—stunning mountain settings and glistening waterways—when we visited Alaska on a recent vacation.

The new creation, however, is visible whenever God, neighbors and enemies are loved. Christ's new life is glimpsed when people sacrifice, live simply, act selflessly and serve as healing agents in troubled situations.

The new creation's horizons are wide. Participants in Christ's new life, his body's members, are impelled to serve life, transform it and not give up on it, even in highly difficult circumstances. In the new creation, life often is restored and revitalized, but not just in order to continue as before.

(David Gibson served on the Catholic News Service editorial staff for 37 years.)

*Easter also would become the premier time of year for baptisms, a development that makes complete sense,* notes David Gibson. *Isn't baptism the sacrament of new life in Christ, who died and rose?*
By Sheila E. McGinn

Catholic News Service

“All I’ll tell you is, he’s risen! The Lord is risen indeed, alleluia!”

This paschal acclamation of the ever-ancient, ever-new mystery of the dying and rising of the Lord Jesus Christ derives from the earliest Easter proclamation. The heart of the Christian faith, this resurrection message forms the basis for the earliest and most fundamental of Christian creeds: “Jesus is Lord.”

When the Resurrection, Jesus of Nazareth would have been merely one more Jew killed by gentile rulers and Christianity would never have existed.

Christ’s resurrection changed everything.

Through the Resurrection, God manifested to the entire world that Jesus is Lord, the goal for which creation groans in labor and toward which the universe is being drawn enticingly, ineluctably, until it reaches its ultimate fulfillment in God. Many of us focus on Jesus’ death; more or less ignore the Resurrection.

When reading the First Letter to the Corinthians, we often find that the Corinthians have redefined “resurrection” exactly as did that early Church, spiritualizing a very “earthy” claim about human life to the nearly ubiquitous notion of a radically transformed spiritual afterlife. Paul refutes both misunderstandings.

Two common misunderstandings would be: First, belief in a disembodied, spiritual afterlife, but rather its ultimate affirmation.

Resurrection is the reality of a truly human life, body and soul, transformed and restored to the fulness of the divine image in Christ. Think about that the next time you are saying the creed. (Sheila E. McGinn is a professor of biblical studies and early Christianity at John Carroll University in Cleveland.)

A ‘phone call’ from God and a faith-filled message for Easter Catholics

By Dan Morris

Catholic News Service

The Catholic community has long been a bit conflicted about what they call Easter and Christmas Catholics.

One school of thought seems to say, “Nice to see you, but why don’t you attend as during the rest of the year?”

A nother school appears more hopeful and charitable. “Nice to see you at Easter. May we hope that you will return next week, and the week after that and the week after that.”

Still, a soft condemnation or judgmental attitude colors the greeting. Unspoken is the opinion that, “We kind of expected to see you here again before Christmas.” Or, perhaps even, “You are less than we are if you don’t come to weekly Mass.”

A lot of us find ourselves in both schools of thought, say many parish leaders, notably pastors and others who are frontline evangelizers. They tell stories of hurt, disenfranchised or poorly catechized Catholics who have found their way back to full participation in the life of the Church, for example, as the Easter liturgy’s light of love and hope illuminates their faces.

The keyholes to those moments are often associated with tangibles, such as a homily, children’s choir, a welcome greeting or caring remark. The conduits to grace are mysterious and myriad, say parishioners, catechists and other ministry volunteers.

They consistently underscore that the potential impact of an Easter or Christmas homily cannot be overstated.

Now-retired Father Miles Riley of the San Francisco Archdiocese recalls vividly an Easter homily that he delivered many years ago before the advent of the cell phone.

“I was casting about for some modern symbol as a reminder of the risen Christ,” he said. “I came up with a telephone. A radio station engineer I know rigged the phone so that it would ring when I turned on a switch in the pulpit.

“I set it up by asking: ‘Wouldn’t it be great if the risen Lord could actually contact us, talk to us, even call us on the phone?’”

Father Riley smiled. “And then the ‘God phone’ begins to ring, and I ask the congregation, ‘Should I answer it?’

‘God phone’ begins to ring, and I ask the congregation, ‘Should I answer it?’

And, of course, all the kids are cheering, ‘Answer the phone, answer the phone!” A and, eventually, I do.

And in the hushed silence, the priest continued, “I say, ‘Hello, Jesus.’ And then I proceed to have a great 10-minute conversation about everything from baseball to church-going.”

He shakes his head. “I’m not kidding. People remember that sermon now 30 to 40 years later, and tell me that the humor and hope they experienced then renewed their faith in the oh-so-human Church that Jesus established 2,000 years ago.”

When he recalls the impact of that homily, Father Riley says, he often leaves out a touching postscript. A little girl of 7 or 8 came up to him after that Easter homily and asked, “Father, what did Jesus sound like?”

“She caught me completely off guard,” he laughed. “I slammed and then replied, ‘Well, he sounded Jewish,’ which completely befuddled the little child, but it was the only answer I could come up with!”

(Dan Morris is a veteran Catholic journalist in Anacortes, Wash.)

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Women were first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus

By Joseph F. Kelly
Catholic News Service

The Gospel narratives of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead contain accounts of his appearances to several of his followers—those on the road to Emmaus and doubting Thomas. These stories are well-known. Less well-known, however, is that all four Gospels recount that the first witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection were all women.

This may surprise some people today. In the ancient world, it would have stunned everyone. Women played a diminished role in ancient society. They were considered weaker and less intelligent than men. They could not hold public office, nor could they bear witness in court by themselves. Their testimony had validity only if it was validated by their husbands or other men.

Yet the Gospels affirm that women were the first witnesses to the Resurrection.

This leads to two other points about women in the Gospels.

First, the Gospels speak of the Twelve Apostles, but they also speak in general of “disciples” whose ranks included women. These women played a great role in supporting Jesus and in his Apostles. The Gospel of Luke tells us, for example, that women “provided for them out of their own resources” by helping pay for the lodging and food that a group constantly on the move would need.

The second and far more important point about women in the Gospels is that Jesus rose above the prejudices of his day, prejudices shared even by those closest to him. In his account of Jesus and the Samaritan woman, the evangelist John tells us that the Apostles “were amazed that he was talking with a woman.” But to Jesus, all people were equal.

Luke’s Gospel also emphasizes the role that Jesus’ mother, Mary, played in the economy of salvation when she accepts the angel’s announcement that she is to become the mother of the Lord. As such, a woman active decisively when he began his salvific mission to humanity, and the evangelists recount how several women acted decisively when Jesus completed his salvific mission, which he would soon turn over to his Church.

The four Gospel accounts do not agree exactly on all the details, but the combined accounts are of pious Jewish women who wanted to anoint Jesus’ body, a ritual honoring the deceased.

Women were first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

This is a central theme of John’s Gospel. People like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, for example, do not initially understand Jesus, but in faith they come to know who he really is.

Thus, Mary Magdalene represents all believers for whom accepting the risen Christ is a challenge.

Mary Magdalene encounters the risen Jesus, but she does not recognize him and thinks he is the gardener. Mary Magdalene represents all believers for whom accepting the risen Christ is a challenge.

But instead of finding a closed tomb, they encounter an empty tomb and a heavenly being who informs them that Jesus has risen from the dead and that they should inform his other disciples.

Women were the first people commissioned to accept and report the good news of Christ’s resurrection.

Consider the description of Mary Magdalene’s response in John’s Gospel.

Mary Magdalene encounters Jesus, but does not recognize him. She thinks that he is a gardener.

This follows a central theme of John’s Gospel. People like Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman, for example, do not initially understand Jesus, but in faith they come to know who he really is.

Thus, Mary Magdalene represents all believers for whom accepting the risen Christ is a challenge. But God’s gift of faith enables us to embrace that challenge.

Joseph F. Kelly chairs the Department of Religious Studies at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

Women were first witnesses of the resurrected Jesus.

By Fr. Dale Laundevelle, O.S.B.
Catholic News Service

When the resurrected Jesus appears to the Apostles, he imparts to them a profound experience of his glorified, bodily presence.

This encounter not only gives them courage, but also moves them to reflect on who Jesus is. During his earthly life, Jesus walked this body and shared a wide range of experiences with them. These types of human interactions are the privileged places in which God quietly leads us humans know that he is with us.

The Apostles were in the unique position of being able to make known the continuity between the earthly and the resurrected Jesus. They are the chosen ones who are to testify by their word and actions that Jesus is still present among them in the Spirit.

The resurrected Jesus’ body is transformed, but still bears the marks of his earthly identity and experience because he eats and drinks with his Apostles.

This reality of Jesus’ ongoing presence in the world is made known by the acts of faith, hope and love of the Apostles.

The resurrected Jesus’ Easter proclamation by embracing this Jesus who longs to be present with us. The truth of this proclamation becomes more vivid and persuasive as our way of life manifests the presence of the Spirit of Jesus and his Father.

As Jesus’ resurrected body becomes incarnated in the community of believers, it becomes the primary place in which we acknowledge God’s desire to draw us into the sphere of divine love.

The Apostles already saw Jesus miraculous healings and the powerful impact of his preaching. But more importantly, they heard his prophecy that he had to suffer, die and rise from the dead, and now saw it fulfilled.

Their earlier expectation for a triumphant, earthly Messiah who would crush his opponents was transformed into an abiding hope that the resurrected Jesus conquered death and is imparting to them a love that is stronger than death.

This conviction that Jesus has opened a way through death to new life is strengthened by the Apostles’ failing to one another that this reality of the resurrected Jesus is a tangible reality and not simply a fitting of their imaginations.

The resurrection of Jesus’ body not only gives hope of a life after death, it also raises the value that we ascribe to the human body.

This body is a privileged place in which we come to know God. God not only challenges us through physical trials, but also communicates his love to us through our interactions with others and through our bodily perception of his divine presence.

With Jesus’ resurrection, we learn that our bodies will be raised in a transformed state and will come to deeper communion with God. We do not simply discard our bodies at death, but continue to exist with Jesus in a physically transformed way.

Our experience of aging raises questions about who we are and what will become of our bodies.

At times, Jesus’ dramatic triumph over death seems almost too good to be true. His resurrected reality seems to be a stumbling block along with his difficult message of loving one’s enemies, and his claim that God’s kingdom is at hand and is breaking into our lives even now.

The earthly and the resurrected Jesus is a paradoxical figure. He challenges the sufficiency of the judgments of our common sense. His submission to the forces of violence goes contrary to typical ways of human behavior, and so he becomes a stone rejected by those who would build up their lives only with materials they can control.

But the truth of Jesus’ paradoxical way of living is confirmed through his resurrection. “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Ps 118:22).

We join in the Apostles’ Easter proclamation by embracing this Jesus who longs to be present in our midst. We do not simply discard our bodies at death, nor do we simply discard our bodies at death, but continue to exist with Jesus in a physically transformed way.

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The truth of this proclamation becomes more vivid and persuasive as our way of life manifests the presence of the Spirit of Jesus and his Father.

Benedictine Father Dale Laundevelle is a Scripture scholar at St. John’s University in Collegeville, Minn.
Self-sacrifice is key to Christian life, pope says on Palm Sunday

“Sacrifice and renunciation belong to the just life. No successful life exists without sacrifice. When I look back on my personal life, I have to say that precisely the times when I said ‘Yes’ to a sacrifice were the greatest and most important moments of my life,” he said.

The pope said the days Jesus spent in Jerusalem also highlight the fact that self-sacrifice produces inner doubt and anguish. Even Jesus asked whether he should turn to God and say: “Father, save me from this hour” (Jn 12:27).

Jesus asked whether he should turn to God and say: “Father, save me from this hour” (Jn 12:27). That Jesus suffered in this way offers an insight into the way, which sometimes involves questioning and lament in the face of suffering and injustice, the pope said. Everyone can and should pray this way, he said. “Before God, we shouldn’t take refuge in pious phrases, in a fictitious world. To pray always signifies stretching with God, too,” he said.

At the end of the liturgy, the Australian young people transferred the tall wooden cross and an icon of Mary to a group of young Spaniards, who were taking the two symbols on a spiritual pilgrimage ahead of the next World Youth Day international gathering in Madrid in 2011.

The pope recalled that he presided over World Youth Day events in Sydney, Australia, last summer. He said the cross’s pilgrimage was deeply symbolic. “The cross is in movement from one side of the world to the other, from sea to sea. And we are accompanying it,” he said.

A group of 150 Spanish Catholics—bishops, priests and young people—were in Rome for preliminary planning meetings for the 2011 youth encounter. They cheered and waved Spanish flags when the pope, speaking after the Mass, encouraged them to prepare a spiritual path toward the international gathering. T he 2011 encounter has as its theme “Rooted and built up in Jesus Christ, firm in the faith.” The quotation is taken from Chapter 2 of St. Paul’s Letter to the Colossians.

On April 6, the pope met with some 7,000 young Spaniards who traveled to Rome for the Palm Sunday liturgy, and spoke about World Youth Day as an opportunity to experience the joy of belonging to the Church. “The World Youth Days demonstrate the dynamism of the Church and its eternal youth. Whoever loves Christ loves the Church with the same passion because it allows us to live in a close relationship with the Lord,” he said.
Our Lord has promised us a great harvest as Easter people

My grandfather died when I was 9. He was an Iowa farmer, and on one December afternoon he climbed to the top of a grain bin on the family farm. It was something he always did when the temperature was below freezing. He would take a wrench and break the crust that formed on the top of the corn so that the dryer could work more efficiently. But something went wrong that day. Whether he had a stroke and fell in or simply lost his balance, we never knew for sure. He suffocated in the grain bin, surrounded by the year’s harvest.

I remember standing with my family at the funeral home a day or two later and seeing his body. All I could think about were the Bible stories about Jesus raising people from the dead. So I prayed, “Even now, in your mercy, I trust that you will raise this person I love.” But the miracle didn’t happen. I don’t expect my loved one to sit up and start talking to me like I did as a child. Instead, I think of Easter promises.

It is odd—and fitting at the same time—that my grandfather died in a grain bin full of harvested corn. Jesus told his disciples that, “Unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit” (Jn 12:24).

We forget, sometimes, that there is a powerful intercession. And you know that nothing is impossible for the God who made everything. He could do it. He could bring Grandpa back to life.

We understand Easter more fully when we encounter loss. We realize more deeply that fruit comes from death. A crop is harvested so that the next one can be planted. Not just a replacement, not just having something new to take our mind off the old. No, it is life coming out of death. We see it all around us as winter gives way to spring. We see it when we consider the saints, and we witness their powerful intercession.

I’ve lost many family members since that December of 1973. But I think the death that revealed this reality the most was the death of our beloved Pope John Paul II. We forget, sometimes, that there is a promise with the death of a holy one. We sort through the harvested crop and find the good seed. With God’s help, we plant that seed, tend it and watch it grow. Death is swallowed up in victory.

How long has it been since you asked a loved one who died to intercede for you? How long has it been since you implored our beloved Pope John Paul II to help with the new harvest? How long has it been since you knelt and said the words, “Even now you can raise him, Jesus.”

And then you went into the fields and got busy rather than sitting down and dwelling on the loss? We are not meant to hold the seed in our hands and grieve forever. We are meant to get on with planting.

There are souls in need of intercession. There are saints ready to intercede. And Our Lord has promised us a great harvest.

Blessed Easter! Alleluia! Amen!

(Denise Bossert lives in Wentzville, Mo., and has written for numerous diocesan newspapers and Catholic magazines. You can read her previous “Catholic by Grace” columns at www.catholicbygrace.blogspot.com.)
Is the Easter Bunny a distraction from the true Easter story?

By Louise McNulty
Catholic News Service

It seems that just after parents fought to put Christ above Santa Claus in their children’s holiday hierarchy then along comes the Easter Bunny.

Unlike Santa, whose origin can be traced to the person of St. Nicholas, the fourth-century bishop of Myra in Lycia, Asia Minor, the mythical creature that delivers colored eggs, candy and toys to children on the night before Easter is a rabbit with human qualities.

Talking to a couple of different generations of Catholic parents, it is somewhat surprising that most mothers and fathers don’t believe that the Easter Bunny detracts from the most important Church celebration of the year.

Joan Treadaway of Middletown, Del., who was born and raised in New Orleans, is the mother of seven adult children and 11 grandchildren.

“We had a great advantage growing up,” she explained, “because 95 percent of the people around us were Catholics.” So observing nonreligious traditions in no way seemed to threaten or interfere with religious traditions and celebrations.

“We went to Mass on Easter just like we did every week,” Treadaway recalled. “Then we had an Easter egg hunt.” She continued that tradition with her children and grandchildren, and doesn’t see a conflict.

“I set at the Resurrection is a celebration of a new life in Christ,” she explained, “the egg represents new life [in nature]. ... We always go to church for the religious part, and then we have the baskets and the egg hunt for the kids. I think [the Easter Bunny tradition] is a fun thing for children.”

Sheri Gaines of Torrance, Calif., said that as a child she never thought the religious aspect of the holy day and the treat baskets were even related.

“I was raised in a nonreligious home and always found a basket on my bed on Easter morning,” Gaines said. “It was like Christmas to me. There was no religious meaning. Both days were about the presents.”

But things changed when she converted to Catholicism, her husband’s religion, five years ago.

Their children were 13, 10 and 6 at the time, and she continued the Easter basket tradition. Becoming Catholic “opened up the Lenten season to me and I’ve tried to pass that on to my kids,” she added. Now Gaines’ oldest daughter watches The Passion of the Christ on Good Friday.

Michele and Steve Lauerstein of Mequon, Wis., are the parents of children aged 9, 10 and 12. Their children now know that the Easter Bunny is a myth, but the family still enjoys the nonreligious aspects of holidays together and plan to have Easter baskets this year.

“My philosophy is that kids at a young age are not excited about Christ’s birth or resurrection,” Michele Lauerstein said. “But Santa and the Easter Bunny get them very excited.”

As their children get older and learn what’s real and what isn’t, “they can transfer that excitement to the real meaning of those holidays,” she said. “The magic stays with them.”

She knows people who were raised Catholic, but refuse to ever let their children believe in Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny.

“I think that makes it sad,” she said, “and boring for the kids.”

As far as when parents should tell children the true story behind the fantasies they have enjoyed, Michele Lauerstein said, she believes in waiting until children ask if these mythical figures are real.

And in Mequon, which is about 60 percent Catholic, she said it’s not hard to reinforce the religious traditions.

(Louise McNulty is a freelance writer in Akron, Ohio.)
For Missionary Benedictine Sisters, first the waiting then comes the joy!

By Mary Eileen Andreasen
Catholic News Service

Easter Sunday’s Gospel reading (Jn 20:1-9) tells us that the stone that sealed the tomb of Christ is moved aside. This means that the stones that sealed us in our own dark tombs have been removed as well.

How appropriate it is that the sisters’ time of freedom has come around Easter when we recall that, like Lazarus, we were dead spiritually, in need of God’s mercy and our Savior’s voice.

But now that the wait is almost over, a committee has gathered to plan the monastery’s visit to rededicate the monastery. An invitation list has been started. The sisters have a chance to get a first glimpse of their new rooms. And the maintenance crew is itching to start moving furniture back in. The new carpet smells wonderful.

One elderly sister smiled and said to me very softly, “It will be so wonderful, you know, to finally go home.”

I paused a moment to ponder what she meant. She betrayed longing and even a hint of desperation.

Another sister who was placed in a nursing home during the renovation greeted every visitor with, “Is it ready yet?”

One sister who was eager to participate in Mass once more in the monastery.

The sisters’ excitement builds when plans for their new spirituality center are discussed, and the anticipation leaves people breathless. It’s been a long, irritating wait, but definitely worth every moment.

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Jesus instructed those mourning and even a hint of desperation.

For the sisters, the anticipated homecoming has given them a renewed desire to undertake the Good News of Christ as they serve the rural community around them. Local residents also are eager to participate in Mass once more in the monastery.

The Lord shouted, “Lazarus, come out!” Then Jesus instructed those mourning Lazarus to “take away the stone.” The Lord said, “Lazarus, come out!” Then Jesus urged spectators to “untie him and let him go” (Jn 11:39-44).

It’s been a long Lent that was challenging, to say the least. Their lives have been full of architects and contractors. New furnaces, boilers and bathrooms were installed. The chapel was to get new tile, but the company sent the wrong color.

Members of the community learned to wear hard hats over their veils when visiting the renovation site. I chuckled at this sight one day as they were walking with the work crew down dusty, gutted hallways with electrical wires hanging everywhere.

For Missionary Benedictine Sisters, first the waiting then comes the joy!
Jingle writers say their ‘Rosary Tapes’ encourage hope, prayer

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Jingle writers John Giaier and Bill Gildenstern have put a new spin on the rosary by combining the traditional mysteries and meditations with contemporary music.

Their product is called the “Rosary Tapes,” and is made up of four compact discs, one for each of the rosary’s four sets of mysteries.

“When Bill came up with the idea, at the time I thought he was kind of nutty,” Giaier said, joking.

To change Giaier’s mind, Gildenstern set of mysteries. Pope John Paul II added the luminous mysteries, or the mysteries of light, in 2002. During his pontificate, Giaier and Gildenstern received a letter sent on the pope’s behalf thanking them for their work on the rosary CDs. They also have received an apostolic blessing from Pope Benedict XVI.

Gildenstern and Giaier, who are Catholic, hope the “Rosary Tapes” will encourage people of all Christian denominations to pray more often.

“I’m trying to sell the rosary. To me, it’s the perfect prayer,” Gildenstern told CNS.

“It’s a Christian prayer, not just a Catholic prayer. We want you to be comfortable with Jesus,” he added.

Gildenstern suggested prayer as a way to find comfort during these tough economic times.

“It really goes past the ‘Rosary Tapes.’ It’s all about hope,” Gildenstern said.

“We have to work to overcome our problems. We have to put our hands to the plow, but in the same token, we’ve got to be praying like crazy. If we don’t pray, it’ll just be a mess,” he said.

The four-CD “Rosary Tapes” set is available for $39.95 online at www.rosarytapes.com. Each order includes a fifth CD that contains only the songs from the other four albums.

John Giaier and Bill Gildenstern have developed a product called “Rosary Tapes,” a set of four compact discs, one for each of the rosary’s mysteries: joyful, sorrowful, glorious and luminous.

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Easter is our compass for Christian life and mission

By James M. Schellman

The four Gospels differ on many details of Jesus’ life and ministry. Strikingly, they all agree that Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday, the first day of the week. The Lord’s appearances to the disciples described in the Gospels typically take place on the first day and are often accompanied by a meal, evidently similar to the Last Supper that the Lord shared with them on the night before his death (see Lk 24:13-35).

From the Gospels, we learn that from their very beginnings Christians assembled on Sunday, the day of Christ’s resurrection and the day we gather to celebrate the Lord’s paschal through death to life. As it was for those first disciples, Sunday is the pre-eminent day of Eucharist. Easter Sunday is the original feast day among all the feast days and Sundays of our Christian year. It concludes the great Easter Triduum and inaugurates the season of Easter. We begin Easter Sunday with the Easter Vigil, where we baptize and confirm our neophytes with us for the Eucharist of the Easter Vigil.

In the grace of these central mysteries of faith, we open the Easter season with all the power of the life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit.

As the first Sunday of the Easter season, Easter Sunday points us toward what follows—Christian life and mission. This is the whole point of our baptismal covenant. The readings and prayers offer a kind of template for the great 50 days of Easter that follow. This is the only season in which the first reading for each Sunday is drawn from the Acts of the Apostles. Acts should be understood less as historical accounts of events than as an inspired view of the work of the Spirit in the early growth of the Christian mission. Acts was likely written during the first couple of decades following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (70 A.D.).

Acts reflects the struggle of our early ancestors in faith to understand the destruction, the resistance and persecution being experienced by the mission, as well as the authenticity of the mission, not only to the Jews but also to the gentiles.

In the first Easter Sunday reading (Acts 10:34a, 37-43), Peter testifies to what he has learned through his dream about the “unclean” animals and his experience with the faith-filled gentile, Cornelius. Peter announces courageously the breadth of God’s grace and the necessity of preaching Christ to whomever God chooses.

As Catholics, do we place limits on God’s generosity and inclusivity? How easily do we avoid the necessity to witness to Christ by word and example in the daily realities of our lives? Is our sense of mission limited to Sunday Mass, a kind of willingness to “talk the talk,” but not “walk the walk”? Psalm 118 is the great psalm of Easter rejecting. It is central to our understanding of Christ as the stone rejected by the builders—now “becomes the cornerstone”—and may be used throughout the Easter season. Is the Lord the cornerstone in our lives, the one who anchors our life’s story?

Even when we reject Christ, he invites us back to his central role in our lives. The second reading on Easter Sunday (Col 3:1-4) invites us as individuals and communities to embrace what God has accomplished for us in the resurrection of Christ. It claims for us a kind of resurrection. The resurrected life begins now with our eyes raised high.

The fullness of Christ’s resurrection, which we all await together, includes even those who have gone before us through death marked with the sign of faith. It is promised at the end of time when Christ returns and brings the great story of redemption to fulfillment. Thus, “When Christ, your life appear, then you too will appear with him in glory” (Col 3:4).

Do we long for that coming with all our heart? Do we allow the brokenness of our world and the suffering of the innocent to speak to us so deeply that we cry out with heartfelt longing, “Dying you destroyed our death, rising you restored our life, Lord Jesus come in glory!”

The Gospel for Easter Sunday is from St. John. In a few brief lines, the story reveals the mystery of the disciples coming to faith in the resurrected Christ. They saw, but only the beloved disciple believed. The other disciples needed more encounters and the opening of their hearts and minds to understand the Scriptures about Christ.

A longing for such understanding must be at the heart of Christian lives. We are never done. And so much of what we think we understand we come later to realize that we have barely begun to make our own. So with the father of the boy possessed of a demon (Mk 9:24) whom Jesus drove out, we say, “I do believe, help my unbelieving heart!”

| Discussion Point |

Scipture describes the Resurrection

This Week’s Question: How do you believe in Christ’s resurrection without being given physical proof?

“I believe in the teaching of the Church. That’s No. 1. A lot, I believe that the Bible is the inspired work of the Holy Spirit, and the teaching of the Church agrees with the Bible. … There were people present at the time Christ was resurrected who told others.” (Eleanor Willett, Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio)

“My belief comes through the Eucharist, prayer, through the understanding of the Holy Spirit has brought [to me], … even through life itself. We have a time when we go through a period of death … experiences like job losses, marriage ending in divorce, addictions and actual death. Hopefully, we survive to new life … our resurrection. Even without proof, I go through that process and I have that faith.” (Monte Hauserman, West Des Moines, Iowa)

“My belief in the Resurrection comes from that belief in Christ and the Church he started. It has had the same unchanging beliefs for 2,000 years, despite martyrdom, corruption and persecution. I can’t believe people close to Jesus would have gone to their deaths unless there was a resurrection.” (Cory Ruefer, Baraboo, Wis.)

“Mediation and prayer and feeling that connectedness to Jesus make me believe. Through prayer, I feel I gain more faith. It’s something I carry within me in my heart. And even though it’s hard to express, somewhere deep down I feel a certainty.” (Simone Conney, Oceanport, N.J.)

Land Us Your Voice

An upcoming edition asks: Do you see the Church in Europe dying off? Will more Europeans return to the Church?

To respond for possible publication, send an e-mail to cgreene@catholicnews.com or write to Faith Alive! at 3211 Fourth St. N.E., Washington, D.C. 20017-1100.
Easter is the only hope for the human condition

The insignificance of the human creature was made more apparent to me recently when I received an e-mail video from a niece.

In it, the narrator talked about the vastness of the universe, described in a cartoon, and the capture of cosmic distances and light years and time. It really put me in my place, namely hanging by a thread at the bottom of an intricate creation.

Of course, it reinforced my conviction that there is a God. But it also made me wonder why God would bother not only to make pitiful creatures like us, but also to love us unconditionally.

It’s easy to fall into the trap of thinking that what we do with our time feels the same regardless of whether our actions are driven by faith or not. What makes what we do with our time feel worthwhile.

I’m the typical young adult—for most days, life feels gray and predictable: work, work, work. But when we think about the history of time and the size and complexity of God’s universe, we realize how limited we are as human beings. Time on Earth is relatively short, and our skills do not extend to perfection. When we add in our faults and foibles, we are even more limited. We gain dignity only through the goodness of time and the size and complexity of the universe. Happy Easter! Happy hope!"
Feast of the Resurrection of the Lord/Easter

The Sunday Readings

Sunday, April 12, 2009

• Acts of the Apostles 10:34a, 37-43
• 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8
• John 20:1-9

A variety of biblical readings occur in the course of liturgical celebrations for Easter. Nevertheless, all the readings center upon the event of the Resurrection itself. These reflections refer to the liturgy for Masses during the day on Easter Sunday rather than the readings for the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday. The first reading is from the Acts of the Apostles. It will begin a pattern for the Easter Season. Throughout this season, the Church will draw from Acts its first Scriptural readings.

In this reading for Easter, Peter addresses a crowd. His sermon, one of several in the early chapters of Acts, summarized the Gospel message. Jesus is Lord. John the Baptist foretold the coming of Jesus, Jesus was the gift and representative of God. Jesus died on Calvary for the sins of all humanity.

However, after dying on Calvary, Jesus rose and was seen by witnesses. The Lord commissioned the surviving Apostles to proclaim the Gospel as they went to places far and near. The reading, while crisp and not too long, focuses attention upon the Lord and upon the basic message of the Christian Gospel. Jesus is the Savior. Jesus is God. His death redeemed the world since it showed perfect obedience to God. He rose from the dead. This all was in space and time. Human witnesses actually saw the Risen Lord.

St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians provides the second reading. It is short, but it is firm and insistent. Paul calls the Christian Corinthians to turn to Jesus. They are with the Lord. The Lord is with them. Such is the effect of the Incarnation, of the Redemption and of the personal decision to turn to God. Death is everywhere. It is the universal human experience. Jesus vanquishes death.

Because of Jesus, we Christians also have defeated death eternal. The Gospel of John furnishes the last reading. It triumphantly, it reveals the excitement in which it was written as well as the sense that the Resurrection of Jesus was an event that was unique in earthly history, but ultimately it proclaims the Lord’s victory over death and over sin.

These disciples who were near to the Lord first experienced the meaning of the Resurrection. Mary Magdalenial, forever faithful, actually discovered that the tomb was empty. She alerted Peter and the other Apostles to her discovery. Peter and the Beloved Disciple hurried to see for themselves. The Beloved Disciple saw the empty tomb and remembered the Lord’s prophecy of rising from the dead.

Reflection

This weekend, celebrating the Lord’s Resurrection, the Church rejoices in the greatest triumph of Jesus over death and evil.

Is he risen?

The second reading from Paul’s first letter to Corinth sets the stage. The Resurrection of Jesus has profound implications for each human being.

St. Paul was justifiably and totally taken by the realization that through the Incarnation—the fact that in the one person of Jesus the nature of God and human nature co-exist—we humans commune with God. If we willfully turn ourselves to God, He will always be with us. So the Church calls us to be joyful. United with Christ in the Incarnation, in our faith, we need not fear death. Death has been defeated. We can live eternally. The key to life eternal is in our will to love God.

We continue to meet God, drawing from God strength and courage, and we learn of God from the Church. The audience that heard Peter’s sermon, repeated in Acts in the first reading, was typical of what we are. We are sinners.

Still, through Jesus, God touches us. Jesus revealed God most especially to the Apostles, of whom Peter was the chief. Peter spoke for them all. Through him, therefore, Christ spoke again.

Christ speaks still through the Apostles led by Peter. Christ lives!†

Questions

1. In a conversation about changes in the Church during the past 50 years, someone remarked that many of these changes involved teachings that some pope, or maybe more than one pope, had said was “irreformable.” We’re confused. How can something one pope says is permanent be changed by another pope? (New York)

A One must understand what the word “irreformable” means in Church documents. Its wide use developed in relatively modern times in response to something that was happening in the secular world. During approximately nine centuries, particularly in what is often called the Christian Europe of the second millennium, popes were commonly considered, even by themselves, as supreme over all other countries and governments.

Anyone who knows history is aware that this claim of supremacy rarely matched what was really happening, but it was there at least in theory. Later on, this perception of who had what power changed dramatically, especially under the influence of such movements as the Enlightenment and the French Revolution in the late 1700s.

Political decisions of nations began to be seen as actions of the people of that region, which could not be changed even by the pope. Such actions were called “irreformable.” For these and other reasons, the influence of the Church, the papacy, even in religious matters, weakened enormously.

Their desire for greater religious “security” and independence led to that in civil society. Christian— and particularly Catholic—people and leaders looked for ways to assure something similar to this civil authority for the Church. It was in this light that popes characterized their decisions and statements as “irreformable.” This meant that no other authority outside the Church was competent to change them. It did not mean that national papers or councils or particular Catholic—people and leaders looked for ways to assure something similar to this civil authority for the Church.

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Readers may submit prose or poetry for faith column

The Criterion invites readers to submit original prose or poetry relating to faith or experiences of prayer for possible publication in the “My journey to God” column. Several reflections also are appreciated. Please include name, address, parish and telephone number with submissions.

Send material for consideration to “My journey to God,” The Criterion, P.O. Box 1717, Indianapolis, IN 46206 or e-mail to criterion@archindy.org.
A human life is miraculous. It’s a simple, ordinary fact that’s easy to miss if you’re not paying attention. From the new mother holding her baby for the first time to the nurse who comes back at the end of his shift to sit beside a bed and pray, we see wonders all around us, every day. We lift up and celebrate the precious beauty of everyday life. And it does make us different.

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