

# CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

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## An Easter Parable

(First of two parts)

In the midst of their spiritual wilderness The Old Woman stood at the doors of the Sacred Space and beckoned everyone to enter. To some it looked like a church. To others it resembled a large tomb. On the first day, a Wednesday, huge crowds filled the chamber, eager to receive the sign of the ashes. She looked tenderly into the eyes of each person with the haunting reminder, "Remember that you are dust. And unto dust you shall return." The Old Woman, whose memory embraced centuries, thought of all those on whom she had imposed ashes just last year for whom these words had become a reality. She turned the stories of their lives over in her heart and pondered them. For the next forty days she stood at the massive doors and urged, even begged, everyone to enter. "Come, join with your sisters and brothers and prepare to celebrate the mysteries by which we are reborn. Pray for those who will be initiated into our fellowship at the all-night Vigil when we celebrate the New Life of the One who is our Light."

She stressed that all were welcome! Women and men, young and old, sick and healthy, conservatives and liberal, poor and rich, and all races, nationalities and cultures, there was a place

for all. She asked all who entered to place their trust in the Hidden One who dwelled therein.

Some entered freely with a sense of familiarity, clearly committed to stay the entire forty days. Some never came back after that first Day of Ashes. Others entered cautiously, staying near the door. Still others entered out of curiosity, eyeing the unfamiliar surroundings. Some entered out of bored routine or strange feelings of obligation. Others entered sullenly, being forced by their elders. There were even those who entered arrogantly, displaying their fine vestures. Happily, there were also those who entered unnoticed in great humility.

Many passed by. Some didn't even notice the amazing structure, which in one sense was not one building but many, one in every town and community. But in the deepest sense it was one Sacred Space. For many the Ancient Woman's call was drowned out by the dangling conversation in their minds. Others recognized Her Voice all too well, remembering with nostalgia past happy times within the walls of Her great hall. But this year, they no longer felt the need or the desire to enter, even as their friends and family members went in. Still others felt no longer free to enter. Perhaps they

had been made to feel unwelcome. Still others passed by in proud self-sufficiency, looking with scorn at the "fools" who entered and scoffing at them for their pie in the sky pipe dreams of a coming world filled with justice, love and peace. Many passed reverently, hearing the voices of other prophets and sages calling them to other dwelling places. Though, in fact, it was the



**Bishop  
Edward  
K.  
Braxton**

same Voice which called them all.

But of those who entered many remained or came frequently during the six weeks. With a remarkably strong Voice, the Woman, who at times appeared to possess the radiant beauty of youth, read to them from the Holy Word, "Return to the Lord your God. Return to me with all your heart. Rend your hearts and not your garments. When you pray, fast and give alms, do not perform these acts for others to see like the hypocrites do. Do these works in secret so that only God can see. If you would find yourself, you must lose yourself; if you would have life, you must be willing to die."

They also shared a simple meal of Bread and Wine. The more they partook of this meal of thanksgiving and sacrifice, the more they realized it was the Cup of Salvation, the Bread of Eternal Life. They praised God in song and greeted one another with signs of peace. They left each day to go forth, to love and serve the Lord.

There was a discussion amongst them about what to "give up" during these Holy Days. Coffee? Candy? Gumbo? Cigarettes? Alcohol? Television? Crawfish? Movies? Ice cream? Boudin? The Ageless Woman looked into their soul-space and said, "What you are doing is good. But it would be far better to give up pride, selfishness, anger, rash-judgment, impatience, jealousy, racism, materialism, lust, anti-Semitism, infidelity, dishonesty, and disrespect for others." "Give up these," She said, "and you will be giving in to the Son of the Blessed One."

Some entered at quieter times throughout the day, reading, reflecting, praying, as sunlight danced about the stone-like walls. Others gathered in small groups to become more acquainted with the meaning of the stories about the Son of the Hidden One. Still others gathered in the evening inside the structure where they prayed in their own words for one another and

for all. Then it was decided to focus on prayer through the six weeks. People resolved to remember one another in prayer during the noon hour. In time, men took to reading the New Testament on the way to work and in quiet moments at the office. Children began to praise God in their own words at the dinner table. Teenagers and collegians began to think and talk about prayer. Husbands and wives took up the Gospels and prayed about their lives before retiring.

Everyday the people bowed down their heads to the Lord, asking that they become more fervent in prayer, more generous in works of charity, more eager in celebrating the mysteries by which they were reborn. "Pray most fervently for peace," said the Valiant Lady, who sometimes seemed to disappear and speak from the mouths of those gathered together, especially the children. Her heart seemed to break as she said, "All about you are wars and rumors of wars! When shall the people beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks? When will they train for peace and not war?"

Then when the six weeks were nearly over, all the people were gathered together. More and more the great structure took on the

appearance of a freshly hewn tomb. The Woman, who some called a prophet, (others called Her their Mother) asked the people, with longing in Her eyes, to stay for three days and nights and watch and pray with Her. She invited them to take some private time to express their sorrow for their sins and seek forgiveness. She told them that on the third day the Nameless One would reveal His glory through His Son. At first most stayed gladly and praised God. As the three special days, the Sacred Days, drew near some began to feel uncomfortable. They felt an urge to leave. They suddenly realized that they had things to do. "This is a very busy time of year for us, what with spring cleaning and redecorating." Others said, "With the 'holidays' coming they didn't see how they could stay, with company coming, cooking to do, and all. Still others offered their regrets lamenting, "This has really been great, a time of spiritual renewal. We hate to duck out before it's over. But we've gotten the gist. We always take the kids on vacation at this time of year."

Only a remnant stayed praising God. For a moment the tired Old Woman was sad. She had hoped this year might have been different.

(To be continued Friday, April 18, 2003)



**Bishop Edward K. Braxton speaks to members of the ninth grade class of St. Louis Catholic High School during his Friday, April 4 visit to the school where he talked to each class individually. The visit to St. Louis was the first visit to each of the eight Catholic schools in the Diocese of Lake Charles. He continues his journey around the diocese on Friday, April 11, at St. Theodore Holy Family School in Moss Bluff, Our Lady's School in Sulphur on Monday, April 14 and Our Lady Immaculate School in Jennings on Tuesday, April 15. He will visit St. Margaret School on Tuesday, April 29, and Immaculate Conception Cathedral School on Wednesday, April 30. In May Bishop Braxton will visit Sacred Heart of Jesus Saint Katharine Drexel School on Monday, May 5 and Our Lady Queen of Heaven School on Tuesday, May 20.**

## Holy Week schedule for Cathedral announced

LAKE CHARLES - The schedule for Holy Week at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception has been announced by Msgr. Harry D. Greig, Rector of the Cathedral.

On Wednesday, April 16, the Chrism Mass will be celebrated at 4 p.m. At this Mass, priests and deacons renew their commitment to their vocations. The Sacred Oils of Catechumens, Chrism and the Sick, which will be used during the year for sacramental purposes will be blessed by The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Bishop of Lake Charles, and distributed to the priests of the diocese.

Bishop Braxton will be the celebrant on Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil.

The Sacred Triduum, the three-day period of liturgical observance, begins on Holy Thursday, April 17, with the Mass of the Lord's Supper to be celebrated at 7

p.m. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be held in the Day Chapel following Mass until midnight.

On Good Friday, April 18, the Celebration of the Lord's Passion will be celebrated at 3 p.m. There will be Veneration of the Cross and Holy Communion.

The Easter Vigil will be celebrated on Saturday, April 19 at 7 p.m. At this Mass there will be blessing of fire and water, lighting of the Easter Candle and renewal of Baptismal promises.

On Easter Sunday, April 20, the Cathedral's regular Mass schedule will be adhered to with Masses at 7:30 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11 A.M. Monsignor Greig will celebrate the 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. masses while Bishop Braxton will be the celebrant of the 11 a.m. Mass. The 9:30 a.m. mass is aired live on KLCL-AM radio Lake Charles and KJEF-AM radio in Jennings.

## The Bishop and the Atheist

By Fr. Frank Pavone,  
Priests for Life

Bishop William Weigand of Sacramento has something to say to pro-abortion politicians who claim to be Catholic. So does Doris Gordon, an atheist and the founder of "Libertarians for Life."

On January 22, 2003, Bishop Weigand preached the following words:

"As your bishop, I have to say clearly that anyone - politician or otherwise - who thinks it is acceptable for a Catholic to be pro-abortion is in very great error, puts his or her soul at risk, and is not in good standing with the Church. Such a person should have the integrity to acknowledge this and choose of his own volition to abstain from receiving Holy Communion until he has a change of heart."

He made explicit that fact that his words have direct application to Gray Davis, the Governor of California, who is pro-abortion and says he is Catholic. The bishop's homily made national news. And many of the faithful are saying it's about time.

Surprising to many, however, is that an atheist would say the same. My friend, Doris Gordon, founded "Libertarians for Life" (www.L4L.org) and recently wrote an arti-

cle, "A Libertarian Atheist Answers Pro-Choice Catholics." She issues this challenge:

"The Church holds that such children are human persons with rights, yet the 'personally opposed' hold that it should be a woman's choice to destroy them. If there is a credible reason for such a position, what is it? Opposition to legal abortion cuts across the religious and political spectrum. I'm an atheist. I was born and raised Jewish. Catholicism had nothing to do with my coming to understand why abortion is a wrong, not a right, and why it should not be legal."

Both Bishop Weigand and Doris Gordon are calling for

consistency. If one claims to be Catholic, he/she should accept the teachings of Catholicism. It's as simple as that. Holy Communion, moreover, reinforces the need for consistency. Communion means "union with." To receive Communion is not magic. It is, rather, the summit and source of all our efforts to think, desire, choose, and live in union with Jesus Christ. When one knows the definitive teaching of Jesus as expressed in the Church, and deliberately refuses to accept it, he/she rejects "communion" at that moment. It no longer makes sense to receive physically the One whom you have rejected by clinging to your

own conflicting doctrine.

Moreover, both the bishop and the atheist are saying that abortion is wrong not because the Church says so, but because of what abortion is. The taking of a child's life is simply not a civilized act. Nor is stealing. The Church teaches against stealing, but we don't hear people complain that laws against stealing are an imposition of religious doctrine. They realize that stealing does not only violate religious doctrine; it violates basic human rights. So does abortion. That truth isn't so hard to understand. But if we forget, then fortunately, we have both bishops and atheists to help us.

### Catholic Home Mission Appeal strengthens the church at home

WASHINGTON, DC — Catholics in the United States have a new opportunity to support the work of mission parishes at home. At their June 1997 meeting, the bishops of the United States designated the last Sunday in April as the date on which Catholics can participate in the Catholic Home Missions Appeal. The Appeal in the Diocese of Lake Charles is April 26-27, 2003.

Coordinated by the USC-CB Committee on the Home Missions, the Appeal will extend and strengthen the presence of the Church by helping provide basic pastoral services. The Diocese of Lake Charles is one of the recipients of grant funds from the Committee on the Home Missions. During the current fiscal year 2002-2003 the diocese has received \$115,000.00

for a variety of programs and ministries, including aid to financially needy parishes, religious education, evangelization and seminarians, among others.

The Catholic Home Missions Appeal will help fund diocesan evangelization efforts, parish religious education programs, seminarian education, lay ministry training and the pastoral care of growing ethnic and migrant communities on both diocesan and national levels.

(This page paid for by the Diocese of Lake Charles.)



The Entrance into Jerusalem

When Jesus and his disciples drew near to Jerusalem, to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately on entering it, you will find a colt tethered on which no one has ever sat. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone should say to you, 'Why are you doing this?' reply, 'The Master has need of it and will send it back here at once.'" So they went off and found a colt tethered at a gate outside on the street, and they untied it. Some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" They answered them just as Jesus had told them to, and they permitted them to do it. So they brought the colt to Jesus and put their cloaks over it. And he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut from the fields. Those preceding him as well as those following kept crying out: "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is to come! Hosanna in the highest!"

Mark 11:1-10