

# CATHOLIC CALENDAR.

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## An Easter Parable

(Second of two parts)

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

The first day was a Thursday. To their surprise there was a joyful celebration with lamb, Bread, Wine and song. ("Lord of Lords in human vesture. In the Body and the Blood. He will give to all the faithful, His own self for heavenly food.") They mended one another's clothes, nursed each other's wounds, and shared their life stories with one another. They all had stories of sorrow and joy. All knew fragmentation and broken hearts. They longed to be made one, to be made whole. Finally, their Mother and Teacher took off Her robes, donned an apron and silently washed their feet in warm comforting Water. They were amazed as she kissed and perfumed each foot. She then asked them to wash one another's feet. Reluctantly, they did so. After that, they all knelt in silent vigil till the morn.

There was something ominous about Friday. There was no denying it. The great edifice was at once a church and a tomb.

The Old Woman rose to her full stature and began to question them. "Would you ever speak falsely against your brother or sister? Would you ever hand your neighbor over to enemies? Would you accuse a friend of a crime that you yourself committed in order to save yourself? Would you ever be unfaithful to your husband or wife? Would you ever abandon your parents in old age? Would you ever scandalize small children? Would you ever hire laborers and pay them unjustly? Would you ever destroy the career of a fellow worker in order to get ahead? Would you reject others because of their race, religion or gender? Would you ever deliberately harm anyone? Are you a true peacemaker in a world at war?" Then there was a pause and the people talked among themselves about the questions. And Holy Mother Church asked in a strong voice: "Do you love God with all your heart and soul? Do you love yourself? And do you love your neighbor as yourself? Would you die for love of God and for your sisters and brothers here gathered?"

As they stood in stunned

silence, a quiet breeze began to blow through he structure as if before a spring storm. The windows were blown shut. Then suddenly the huge doors, which had remained open day and night throughout the forty



**Bishop  
Edward  
K.  
Braxton**

days, were slammed shut and all could hear the sound of locks turning. They knew that they could not leave. But, they didn't want to. They sat in a circle of silence praising God and expressing sorrow for their sins.

Then in their midst there appeared a huge cross. Actually it was always there, but they only just noticed it. On the cross was a person in the final agony of crucifixion. Some said that it was a man, others were sure it was a woman or a child. For a moment it looked like a respected member of their community, then a common criminal, a prostitute, an "il-

legitimate" child, a homosexual, a drug addict, a child abused by a priest, an Iraqi soldier, an abortion provider, an aborted child, an American military leader or a neighbor. Then the form appeared to be people from every period of past, present, and to come. Was he Oriental? European? African? Some thought it was a friend or a family member. For a moment each one saw their own likeness on the cross. Then Holy Mother Church commanded them to open their eyes and look at the man on the cross. In an instant they say that it was Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. "Is this how God is to be glorified through His Son?" they asked themselves. The man on the cross sighed, "Father forgive them. They know not what they do!" Finally, he gave up His spirit, saying, "It is finished. Into your hands I commend My Spirit." Then He died.

A fierce storm raged across the heavens. Thunder and lightning rocked the building. The earth itself quaked. Torrents of rain fell as if baptizing the whole universe. It was as dark as night. Finally the storm

abated. The gray tomb was utter darkness. Before them was the shrouded body of Jesus. And it was night.

As the golden sun rose on Sunday morn, the birds were singing, the grass and trees were a rich green, the flowers were in bloom. Mother Church stood in their midst holding a huge lighted candle. She blessed the new fire and water. She decorated the Paschal candle and sang its praises. The people asked about the body of the Lord. She said, "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" With that the walls of the tomb gave way and they could see the people in all the cities of the world who had entered the Sacred Spaces they had seen in their own wildernesses. They remembered Jesus saying, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I'll rebuild it. The grain must fall to the earth and die before bearing fruit. I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Before Abraham came to be, I am. I am the resurrection and the life." Mother Church plunged Her new members into the font of Living Waters bubbling up with Eternal Life. She baptized and confirmed

them and fed them with the Eucharist for the first time. She anointed them with scented oil. Then as the sun rose to its height, they saw the Chosen One with eyes of faith, transformed and revealing the Father's glory. He said, "As I have told you, if you have gone into the tomb with Me in death, you shall also rise with Me to the glory of eternal life."

Each person went forth in peace carrying a lighted candle, telling everyone of what they had seen and heard in the three and forty days that seemed like three seconds or three years. As they approached the millions of people milling about in the busy cities of the world sharing their joy, many rejoiced with them saying, "Christ has risen from the dead. Risen as He truly said!"

But many others, including some who had been baptized during the Easter Vigil the year before hardly said a word...as if they hadn't heard.

**(EDITOR'S NOTE: The complete text of Bishop Braxton's "An Easter Parable" as well as other of his writings can be found at [www.lcdioocese.org](http://www.lcdioocese.org).)**



## Dr. Eugene Fisher named by Pope as Consultor to Holy See's Commission For Religious Relations with the Jews

WASHINGTON - Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), has received from Pope John Paul II his fifth quinquennial appointment as Consultor to the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

Dr. Fisher is one of ten such Consultors worldwide and the only American.

In a cover letter to the appointment, Cardinal Walter Kasper, President of the Commission, wrote: "The renewal of your mandate imparts particular joy as it enables the Commission to continue to involve you and to benefit from your valuable collaboration in its aim of promoting and nurturing relations between Catholics and Jews."

On hearing of the appoint-

ment, the USCCB General Secretary, Msgr. William Fay, said, "I join with Cardinal Kasper in expressing my delight and gratitude to Dr. Fisher for his many years of productive and faithful service to the Church."

Father Arthur Kennedy, Executive Director of the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, said: "Dr. Fisher's work has contributed to deepening bonds between Jews and Catholics not only in the United States, but also in many other countries and contexts as a result of his dedicated activity as Consultor to the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews."

Dr. Fisher, who has served the bishops' conference for 25 years in this capacity, has been the recipient of numerous awards from both Jewish and Catholic organizations.

In 1999 he was named an honorary doctor of divinity by St. Mary's Seminary and University, in Baltimore. He has been given awards by the National Jewish Chautauqua Society, the Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Foundation, Sacred Heart Seminary in Detroit, the Edith Stein Guild, the National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, Muhlenberg College, Notre Dame College, the National Jewish Book Council, the Ecumenical Institute for Jewish-Christian Studies of Detroit, and New York University.

In 1999, Dr. Fisher delivered the John Courtney Murray lecture at Fordham University, and in 2002 the Cardinal Pio Laghi lecture at the Josephinum.

From May to July of this year he will hold the position of Hugo Gryn Fellow at Cambridge University in England.

## Easter Sunday

On the first day of the week, Mary of Magdala came to the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, and saw the stone removed from the tomb.

So she ran and went to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and told them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we don't know where they put him." So Peter and the other disciple went out and came to the tomb. They both ran, but the other disciple ran faster than Peter and arrived at the tomb first; he bent down and saw the burial cloths there, but did not go in. When Simon Peter arrived after him, he went into the tomb and saw the burial cloths there, and the cloth that had covered his head, not with the burial cloths but rolled up in a separate place. Then the other disciple also went in, the one who had arrived at the tomb first, and he saw and believed. For they did not yet understand the scripture that he had to rise from the dead.

John 20:1-9

## Bishop Braxton to present lecture "Peace on Earth: The Catholic Bishops of the United States and the War in Iraq" May 4

LAKE CHARLES - The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton, Ph.D., S.T.D., Bishop of Lake Charles, will present a lecture titled, "Peace on Earth: The Catholic Bishops of the United States and the War in Iraq" at 3:30 p.m. Sunday, May 4 at the Catholic Student Center of Our Lady of Good Counsel Church.

The lecture commemorates the 40th anniversary of Blessed John XXIII's historic encyclical *Pacem In Terris* (Peace on Earth), which was published on Holy Thursday 1963.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Priests, deacons and their wives, seminarians and those who receive the Easter Sacra-

ments are especially invited to attend.

Bishop Braxton is a member of the Committee on International Policy and World Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The event is sponsored by the Diocese of Lake Charles and the Catholic Student Center.

## World Day of Prayer for Vocations May 4

LAKE CHARLES - World Day of Prayer for Vocations will be held at the 11 a.m. Mass Sunday, May 4 at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception. The Most Rev. Edward K. Braxton will be the celebrant.

Priests, Religious and Deacons, observing anniversaries of 10, 25, 40, 50 and 60 or more years will be honored.

Parishes are encouraged to send members of vocation committees, religious education and youth to this Mass to pray for an increase in vocations.

## British court decision raises fears over misuse of embryos

LONDON - The British Court of Appeal gave the go-ahead for a couple to use embryo testing in order to have a baby that will provide bone marrow for a sibling, BBC reported April 8, according to Zenit News Agency. The technique, known as pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD), examines the embryos conceived through in-vitro fertilization, selecting for implantation in the womb the embryo, or embryos, with the genetic characteristics desired.

Raj and Shahana Hashmi's 4-year-old son, Zain, suffers from a blood disorder, thalassaemia. He can be treated with marrow transfusions, but a marrow transplant holds out the hope of a longer-term cure.

Of the court decision, Shahana Hashmi declared: "We have said all along that at the center of this case was our son, a little boy who suffers greatly." She added, "We are also delighted because this case opens the door to other families who are suffering."

The decision overturned a High Court ruling in December which said the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority did not have the power to license the technique under existing legislation. That ruling followed a challenge by Josephine Quintavalle, of the public interest group Comment on Reproductive Ethics.

Following Tuesday's decision, Quintavalle commented: "There are serious issues at stake here and from that

perspective it is a defeat for society at large and certainly an overwhelming defeat for parliamentary democracy."

The Society for the Protection of Unborn Children was also critical of the approval. In a press release issued the same day, SPUC general secretary Paul Tully said: "This anomalous judgment is the thin edge of the wedge to allowing embryos to be created and selected for non-medical reasons. Many embryos will now be created — and die — in this unethical search for genetically desirable children."

He also noted that, according to the UK Thalassaemia Society, the condition affecting Zain Hashmi is not terminal, in spite of media claims to the contrary.

Tully expressed his sympathy for the family, but added: "We regard it as de-

plorable to use the suffering of families and children as a means of emotional blackmail to demand that human embryos in the test-tube can be chopped up, tested and discarded as if they were inert samples from an industrial chemical process."

This week also saw the publication in the New England Journal of Medicine on the use of PGD in a similar case. According to the Chicago Tribune of April 10, the case involves a baby who had been selected as an embryo to be free of the birth defect known as holoprosencephaly, an anomaly in which the brain fails to separate into distinct right and left halves.

The study reported on an unidentified couple who already had two children with this defect. Their 5-year-old son has a milder case and is

developing normally, while their second child died shortly after birth.

For the latest birth, Dr. Yury Verlinsky implanted only those embryos not carrying the genetic defect — even though he admitted that he may have excluded embryos that could result in healthy children.

According to the Chicago Tribune, more than 1,000 healthy babies have been born worldwide as a result of IVF-PGD procedures, with more than 400 of them conceived at Verlinsky's clinic. Pre-implantation screening adds about \$2,000 to the cost of in-vitro fertilization, which ranges from \$6,000 to \$12,000 for each attempt.

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