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RELIGIOUS



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Public Life

Thomas O'Meara O.P.



"AS JESUS MOVED OFF, PEOPLE SPREAD THEIR CLOAKS ON THE ROAD, AND NOW, AS HE WAS APPROACHING THE DOWNWARD SLOPE OF THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, THE WHOLE GROUP OF DISCIPLES JOYFULLY BEGAN TO PRAISE GOD AT THE TOP OF THEIR VOICES FOR ALL THE MIRACLES THEY HAD SEEN."

TV DIRECTOR: Camera #1, I know it's hot but stay up on that shed — we want those crowds moving in here; Camera #2, get the children's faces. Ready with Camera #3 on the adults cutting palm branches and spreading them on the road — nice touch. Audio, you're fading out, I'm losing you...

"SOME OF THE PHARISEES IN THE CROWD SAID TO HIM, 'MASTER, CHECK YOUR DISCIPLES,' BUT HE ANSWERED, 'I TELL YOU, IF THESE KEEP SILENCE, THE STONES WILL CRY OUT.'"

TV DIRECTOR: Camera #2, show some stones, quick! You're picking him up again with the mikes, Audio. Right, Camera #1: this thing is moving into the City, time to fold up. Mini-Cam crew, why don't you stay with Jesus for a few days... something might develop.

There was, of course, no TV at the first Palm Sunday. Today NBC television will transmit the liturgy of Palm Sunday at Notre Dame to tens of millions of Americans. This choice of Notre Dame is a tribute to the public role our University has in America and in American Catholic life.

Religion and Television.

We see in the United States today an ever-expanding but unsure marriage of media and religion. The multiple TV camera may be transmitting a colorful and elaborate Mass from St. Peter's in Rome, or a Protestant service centered on musicians and choirs, pulpit and preacher. Fundamentalist groups dominate religious television, creating an electronic church of solitary viewers, but, nevertheless, viewers now urged to be politically active -- with votes and dollars. With television, religion goes public -- in a large-scale, electronic way.

By entering into Jerusalem at a time when tens of thousands of people on pilgrimage poured into the Jewish capital for Passover, Jesus made clear that his "religious" message was public. He preached not myths or mysteries about a distant deity, but some kind of power and atmosphere he called "the reign of God." Religion and state -- those two powerful institutions influencing men and women -- were challenged by Jesus to serve, not to exploit, human beings. As months passed, the debate between Jesus and the institutional caretakers of his time over who is God and who are men and women became more heated.

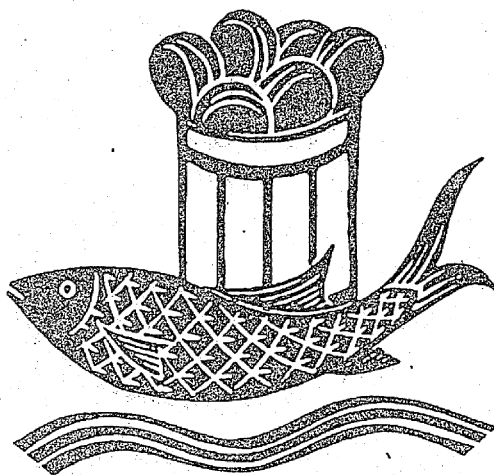
What is the purpose of human institutions? Jesus asked about the health or sickness of the economic and political structures surrounding each of us. The public impact of his preaching makes Jesus' figure present today, just as it was twenty centuries ago.



Christians face numerous, complex issues. The public presence of the reign of God does not permit us to present the Gospel to the world as mental or miraculous. The Gospel of Jesus speaks on Palm Sunday to our public lives, sharing the hopes and aspirations of the human race. On the other hand, the church cannot avoid the edge of the Gospel, whose beliefs are so sharp that for their most public witnesses they often lead to death. Christians cannot ignore issues (greater in scope than Jesus met) of planetary destruction, genocide, new systems of slavery.

For a century and a half Notre Dame has known various prophets urging the Catholic Church to enter the life of America in the modern world. Today -- both "live" and "on TV" -- the palms and the procession recall the hope-filled but perilous entry of the reign of God into the world. The readings at Mass depict Jesus not as a theoretician or a political consultant, but as a seer of how God intends to be present in the media which are our lives and our world. The Eucharistic bread and wine, Christ's body and blood, bring courage for me and you to speak publicly of the value of each human being. After Jesus, history is filled with so much danger and so much promise that if men and women do not speak out, branches and stones must come to life.

Thomas O'Meara is with the Department of Theology at Notre Dame.



ΙΧΘΥΣ

THIS IS
THE BREAD
OF LIFE

FULL COMMUNION

On Tuesday, April 2, 5 P.M. in Sacred Heart Church
the following candidates will celebrate
Full Communion with the Catholic Church:

DEAN CARLILE

JONI FLYNN

KIM ESLINGER

ELIZABETH DEARMOND

BRENDA BARTHOLOMEW

TRACY ANN TEAH

NANCY McCREARY

We offer them our prayerful support and congratulations.

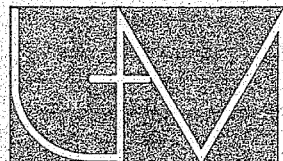
Please note time change from 5:15 to 5:00



The Cross, the Cross
Goes deeper in than we know,
Deeper into life;
Right to the marrow
And through the bone.
□ D.H. LAWRENCE



The innocents of the world suffer, just as the Son suffered, because every living person makes them suffer. It is our responsibility, in and through the cross of the Son, to see that innocents stop suffering. People either give life by themselves taking on the suffering of the innocents in that community of Christ working toward a new earth or they murder by turning from the God in each of us to the idolatry of a distant deity. There is only one God, and he has become one of us. We can possess no life in God apart from God's life in the Suffering Servant.



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