

MID-LENT NOTES

"Wherefore Rejoice" -- One reason the Church places Laetare Sunday in the middle of Lent -- you recognized it last Sunday by the rose colored vestments -- is to remind the People of God of the very fact that the special time of penance is half gone; and with this thought to help them persevere until the end, until the joyous day of the Resurrection when they, too, having died, even a little bit to selfishness and wilfulness, may rise with Christ to the new life.

Some, perhaps most, need this reminder. Many have fallen by the wayside in their uphill struggle for a more deeply Christian life. It's obvious, for instance, that attendance at daily Mass has dropped off considerably since the first few days of Lent. Other resolutions have perhaps fared no better -- resolutions for more intense application to the duty of study; for greater charity toward one's roommate or toward the pest down the corridor; to break the habit of vile, vulgar, or vituperative speech, to forego smokes, sweets, or alcoholic beverages. All have perhaps worn thin and need reassertion. Now is the time to do it. There are less than three weeks until Easter and only eleven days until the beginning of Easter vacation. After all, penance isn't wholly voluntary. For sinners -- and who is excluded from this category? -- it is a condition for salvation. Moreover, it is especially the obligation of all those who avail themselves of the Notre Dame dispensation from fast and abstinence. Now that we're over the hump -- that's what Laetare Sunday indicates -- we should be able to persevere to the end in our renewed resolutions.

Lenten Adoration -- One of the Lenten practices of devotion in which some have slackened off is the half-hour periods of adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. True, there is always someone there (sometimes, rarely, only the faithful Sisters) but that should not give anyone reason for shirking a voluntarily assumed responsibility. Perhaps your failure to keep your appointment with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament has been due to forgetfulness. If so, provide yourself with some reminder.

Forty Hours Devotion -- How many were aware that Forty Hours Devotion, which concludes with 5:00 Mass -- 5:00, not 5:10 -- this afternoon, didn't conflict with Mardi Gras this year? For the first time within the memory of anyone at Notre Dame, the Forty Hours devotion did not take place this year on the three days preceding Ash

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FAITH FOR MODERNS Cardinal Newman once wrote, "A person who says, 'I believe just at this moment...but I cannot answer for myself that I shall believe tomorrow,' does not believe." To believe, says Josef Pieper in his book, Belief and Faith*, means two things: it means to believe something and to believe some one. These two elements of belief, assent to the truth of a subject and assent to a person, are often isolated from one another today, played off against one another. Some modern thinkers tell us that there are two kinds of belief, one depending exclusively upon holding certain things to be true, the other affirming trust in some person. Actually, the Christian concept of belief embraces twin elements: the reason for believing something is that one believes someone.

An extreme form of reliance upon another's authority might be said to exist when a believer accepts as true everything that his authority has said or will ever say in the future. In mere human relationships, belief of this kind cannot exist, says Pieper. It can neither be practiced by mature human beings, nor be asked of them. No mature man is so spiritually inferior or superior to another that the one can serve the other as an absolutely valid authority. Belief of this extreme sort is meaningfully possible only if there exists Someone Who stands incomparably higher above the mature man than the latter stands above the immature man.

The question of belief, of course, immediately calls up the question of doubt. Here Pieper makes a distinction between "doubt"

and "cogitatio" which he defines as "mental unrest". In true belief, there is no room for doubt in the strict sense of the word. There is, however, room for an "unstilled, persistent thinking in spite of unshaken assent" -- a searching and pondering, even though one assents to what is believed with the utmost firmness. The true believer, in fact, is bound to be restive in this sense. Firmness is neither affected nor restricted in the slightest by that "mental unrest".

Pieper's distinctions and probings into the extreme complexities of the matter of belief are most valuable today in a world which rejects faith as incompatible with the freedom and dignity of the mind. Perhaps if more moderns would think these matters through as Pieper has done, they would discover that unbelief is what is incompatible with man's dignity. The truth, as Newman again says, may not be approached without homage.

--Claude L. Boehm

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To believe is not some mechanical kind of an act, but a living act; it is not complete, but, in a continual state of becoming; there is nothing guaranteed about it, but it must continually be completed; it requires a great effort, but it is precisely in this that its real greatness lies.

--Romano Guardini

MID-LENT NOTES (continued from the front page)

Wednesday. It was moved to Laetare Sunday and the two days following. The move was made to avoid the conflict with Mardi Gras on campus and also to give a spiritual lift that generally becomes necessary at mid-Lent.

Father William Toohey, C.S.C., who is preaching all the Forty Hours sermons, had a lamentably poor crowd for his Sunday evening sermon. Those who heard it will agree it was as fine a sermon -- intellectually and inspirationally -- as they had ever heard in Sacred Heart Church. Those who forgot about it, passed it up for a TV program, a bull session, or even for twenty minutes of study, deprived themselves of a singular -- and truly enjoyable -- active grace.

MOREAU RETREAT -- Upperclassmen have until tomorrow, March 11, to sign up for the closed retreat to be held in Moreau Seminary this coming weekend, from Friday evening until Sunday noon. See your hall chaplain this evening or drop in at 116 Dillon Hall tonight or tomorrow night. The retreat fee is \$5.00.

Father Maurice Powers, C.S.C., an experienced retreat master and a former Army chaplain, will give the conferences. Seniors who heard his Washington's Birthday sermon will know that a retreat under his direction will be solid and stimulating.

IN YOUR CHARITY please pray for the following: Ill -- two brothers of Father Michael Foran, C.S.C., of Fatima Retreat House. Deceased -- grandfather of Thomas McGinley of Morrissey; sister of Thomas Walton, '63; father of Paul Monagle, '51; William O. Brandenburg, '27; George R. Farage, '26; father of John Thilman, '60; Dr. James F. Seccareccio, '32; father of Joseph Usina, '45; mother of John W. Crilly, '58; father of Richard Meaney, '60.

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Too often we think of Religion as a set of answers, a body of knowledge to be memorized rather than as a personal encounter with Christ, as an experience, as a mystery, as the members of Christ contemplating the mystery of God, and working out salvation amid the practical problems of daily life.

--Father Walter W. Imbierski

Fresh from the Pad.....

THE GREAT MYSTERY

Mysteries are a continual challenge to the man of faith. Many students are perplexed and sometimes annoyed by the gnawing mystery of predestination; some become terribly bewildered as they struggle with the problem of the existence of hell; and others find themselves caught in an intellectual threshing machine as they grapple with the truth of Papal infallibility. With all their erudite discussions even professional theologians remain awe-struck by the mystery of Three Persons in One God and by the miracle of Transubstantiation. And in our daily routine living there is a quiet and at the same time an astounding mystery. The sharp edges of this continual mystery never seem to pierce the fog of our consciousness. It's too close.

Each one of us, no matter what kind of a "hard guy" role we play, is very susceptible to the sincere, open and selfless love given us by another human being. The tugging of such self-giving makes a big thud in our hearts which we just can't resist. And some inner force makes us respond with our best. Our vulnerability to the power and innate goodness of human love is a commonplace human experience and yet daily we remain callously unmoved by the overwhelming torrent of love from our Brother, Christ.

Christ didn't protest emptily: "I love you so much that I will lay down my life for you." He did it. And right now -- today -- the unselfishness of His love is absolutely paralyzing. When we chose emptiness, darkness, and death instead of Him, He is still there loving us. He loves us even in our sins. His love is etched out much more vividly for us who live on this campus. Twenty-four hours a day He is clawing at us from twenty tabernacles. From five o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock at night He becomes a victim on seventy altars so that we can be united in His redeeming victimhood and eat an unspeakable meal (His Body and Blood) at the banquet table of love.

As you become deeply involved and very philosophic in your struggle with faith's mysteries, give this mystery a little thought -- how you and I who are so completely melted by genuine unselfish human love can so stubbornly refuse, run away from, and remain unresponsive to the relentless love of our Brother, Christ. This is indeed a Great Mystery.

--Father Baker, C.S.C.

P.S. A cynic -- a man who buys a repeating rifle to commit suicide.