

~ The Epistle ~

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THE MOST REVEREND SHANE B. JANZEN, ARCHBISHOP & RECTOR

"I therefore invite you, in the name of the Church, to the observance of a holy Lent, by self-examination and repentance, by prayer, fasting, and self-denial, and by reading and meditation upon God's holy Word."

(BCP, p. 612)

ON February 17th this year we will enter into the Holy Season of Lent. The imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday marks for Christians around the world the beginning of a season of penitence, reflection, and conversion. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 restrictions, Ash Wednesday will have to be observed virtually. However, through our livestreaming of the Mass and other Services on Facebook and YouTube, we will observe the Season of Lent with humble, penitent and faithful souls.

For many people, Lent is not a particularly joyous season; compounded this year by the impact of pandemic. To be sure the acknowledgement of personal sin, the call to repentance, and the spiritual discipline that accompany this Season are not particularly fun in and of themselves. But joy is more than a feeling, encompasses more than fun-filled events, and is more than a mental or emotional state of contentment or well-being.

I would suggest that one of the reasons some do not look forward to this Season is that their experience of Lent has been one of mere self-denial, spiritual drudgery and frustration. Denial of what they would want to eat or do, and frustration in not actually accomplishing all that they set out to do in terms of spiritual exercises, devotions, and promises to God of repentance and new Christian zeal. I fear that sometimes we try to do too much in Lent and yet at the same time too little.

In light of this year, I would ask you to consider doing less this Lent, and in so doing, accomplishing more. By focusing on a few specific devotions, a particular spiritual exercise, along with targeted alms in addition to our regular offerings, we can experience a joyous Lent, all the while deepening our devotion meeting our spiritual goals. We need not promise God or ourselves more than a balanced

spiritual life should contain. It is better and more productive if each of us keeps the Season of Lent simple, and commits to those things which, while certainly stretching our spiritual muscles, should not cause us to give up after the first week. Examining our lives in terms of time, talent and treasure we can come to some fairly concrete and simple ways in which to enrich our spiritual lives, turn away from habits of sin, and offer God and our neighbours something of our better natures.

In terms of prayer, choose one reasonable goal that you can begin now, and then incorporate it into the Season of Lent. Have a simple plan – as simple as reading a portion of the Bible appropriate for the Season about which you can think and pray. Or, with Prayer Book at hand, pray either the Morning or Evening Prayer contained in the Family Prayers section at the back of the book – having in mind particular persons or needs to place before God. Keep your prayer time simple, realistic and consistent.

As we are currently restricted in our gatherings, outings, and interactions with others, this is a good time to renew our spiritual lives. We have been afforded more time for prayer, so let your time with God in prayer become the bookends of your day; let prayer be the anchor that steadies your daily schedule and busy life. And in that time with God in prayer, let God get a word in – *listen* as well as *speak*. Prayer is nothing more than our conversation with God. Speak to God honestly, plainly and in your own way. God is our Father in heaven, He knows you and wants you to know Him better. Then, when you have finished speaking to God, listen to what He has to offer you for your spiritual growth and salvation. You may be surprised at how much forgiveness, guidance, and blessing comes from a few minutes each day with God.

Even in this time of pandemic with all its uncertainty, isolation and restrictions, I invite you to the observance of a holy Lent. May God richly bless us as we undertake our Lenten discipline and devotions, together yet apart.

Archbishop Shane Janzen

HOLY SEASON OF LENT

THE holy Season of Lent is upon us. We began our Lenten observance on Ash Wednesday with a day of fasting and abstinence; coupled with the call to prayer and repentance. Now we begin our ascent to Mount Calvary; and in these 40 days of Lent, we shall strip ourselves of the weight of our sins and the baggage of worldly things, placing them, and ourselves, at the foot of the Cross on Good Friday.

But Lent is not just a season of discipline, denial, and repentance; it is also a season of renewal, hope, and triumph. It is a time to give of ourselves while giving up something of ourselves. It is indeed a period in which we reflect upon our past but also one which prepares us for the future, drawing us ever closer to the God who is love.

Our Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent sets the tone for the whole of our Lenten observance, and is a dramatic illustration of our walk as Christians through a life of promise and hope but also of struggle and temptation; of faith in God; and of obedience to His will and His Commandments.

The temptations of Christ recorded in Saint Matthew's Gospel were of a subtle character; as are most temptations which come our way. They were temptations to show that Jesus had the power to do God's work, and the faith to act on God's word. What could be wrong with that? Taken together, they cover the range of the power and work that might be expected of the One whom God had chosen to carry out His saving plan. But let us examine the real motivation and the real meaning behind the devil's words of testing and temptation.

First was the temptation to believe that life is lived primarily on the basis of material well-being. "Command this stone to become a loaf of bread". The echo of Israel's temptation in the wilderness as they journeyed from slavery to freedom in the Promised Land. (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). The purpose of the long wilderness journey recorded in the Old Testament was to see whether keeping God's commands counted more to the people than material comfort. The reply of Moses to Israel, repeated by Jesus to the devil, is "one does not live by bread alone." Jesus does not say "not by bread at all." There is indeed a material dimension to life, and it is God who made it when He created the world and pronounced it good. But as our Lord would tell His disciples, "life is more than food, and the body more than clothing." (St. Matthew 6:25)

There have been those who throughout history have sold their souls for a bowl of soup and for material well-being. However, there have also been those who have given up freedom for the sake of conscience; material comforts for the

sake of others; and their time, talent and treasure for the sake of the Kingdom of God. There are those too who have fought and died in the battle for liberty and for the dignity and sanctity of each and every soul. The roll-call of Christian martyrs from St. Stephen in Acts 7 to the latest victims of oppression, terrorism and hatred in our century stand as imperishable testimony to those who regarded love of God as taking precedence over love of self.

Life lived "for bread alone" is a feeble substitute for life lived for God and in obedience to the truth of His Holy Word. Jesus knew the temptation, but He did not give way.

The second temptation presented to Jesus by the devil was to believe that working eye-catching miracles was a superior way of winning followers to God; rather than simple, humble obedience to God in faith.

The insidiousness of this temptation was that it was a challenge to believe and to act upon God's promise of protection and provision. Why not jump off the pinnacle of the Temple, landing unharmed on the ground to the applause of amazed spectators? After all, hadn't God promised that He would give His angels charge over His Son, lest at any time He dash His foot against a stone, and so be harmed?

Jesus' reply to the devil is again drawn from Deuteronomy: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." The miraculous power of God is real, but it is not some electronic gadget to be switched on to impress and entertain onlookers seeking a cure for their boredom. The power and mercy of God are to be sought in a spirit of humble faith and obedience. His providence and protection are always there for His faithful people but only for our well-being as His precious sons and daughters; and not for show.

It is significant that this second temptation, the 'Temple temptation', takes place in Jerusalem; the place where ultimately the ministry and witness of Jesus' providential love will end in rejection. However, for Jesus, resistance to the second temptation is in truth submission to the way of the Cross. That is how the world would be won back to God; and not by conjuring tricks or meaningless spectacle. And even in this temptation we can behold the truth which the devil's lie tries to hide. For behind the pinnacle of the Temple we can see in the distance the silhouette of the Cross lifted high upon Mount Calvary.

The third temptation faced by Jesus was to believe that power and prestige are the key to life and salvation. For many people, much of life is a power-struggle, sometimes driven by the desire to win, often simply by the attempt to survive. But the battle Jesus was fighting was no mere turf war. It was the battle for His Kingdom – the Kingdom of truth, salvation, love

and justice. The devil had seemingly much to offer, for we read: "And again the devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt but fall down and worship me."

Were the devil's words true? Are the kingdoms of the world in the grip of the devil, for him to give to whomever he pleases? It is a half-truth. Wherever life is lived on the devil's terms it is true; there he is king. And he can offer glittering, and seemingly low-cost bargains, as his offer to Jesus shows: "If you then wilt worship me, the world and all its glory will be yours – think of the souls you could save." No agony in Gethsemane, no rejection, no Calvary, no Cross. The bill, however, would come later, as it did for Israel in the Promised Land. Her endless compromises with false gods and debased values eventually led to her ruin. Jesus picked up the words spoken to Israel, recorded in Deuteronomy 6, and hurled them back at the Tempter: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, And Him only shalt thou serve." To make a compact with the devil, to live life on his terms and to adopt his values is to sentence oneself to destruction and ultimately, damnation; which in the end will encompass not only the souls of the damned but the devil himself and all who have made common cause with him. Jesus knew that there could be no Crown without the Cross, no salvation without His sacrifice, no life without His meritorious death, once for all.

Taken together, the three temptations add up to one thing: allurement to do God's will in appearance, while rejecting it in reality. It is the cheap substitute for obedience, and it is a fraud. Jesus recognized that His whole word and ministry depended on total and unconditional acceptance of His Father's will. The devil's way was much more attractive: a square meal for an empty stomach, a position of (almost) supreme power, and throngs of followers attracted by mind-boggling conjuring tricks. It was the painless way to power and position. It was also the way to damnation – for Himself and for the world He had come to redeem.

The snares of the devil are always being set, for that is the way of evil; but it is not the way of God. St. James bids us: "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you." (James 4: 4,5)

Our Lord withstood the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil to restore the obedience of fallen man to the commandments of God. In turn, Jesus offers to each of us the grace to withstand these same temptations in our time; and offers in the place of sin and death, God's blessing and eternal life.



WE are soon going to share in the Passover, and although we still do so only in a symbolic way, the symbolism already has more clarity than it possessed in former times because, under the law, the Passover was, if I may dare to say so, only a symbol of a symbol. Before long, however, when the Word drinks the new wine with us in the kingdom of his Father, we shall be keeping the Passover in a yet more perfect way, and with deeper understanding. He will then reveal to us and make clear what he has so far only partially disclosed. For this wine, so familiar to us now, is eternally new. It is for us to learn what this drinking is, and for him to teach us. He has to communicate this knowledge to his disciples, because teaching is food, even for the teacher.

So let us take our part in the Passover prescribed by the law, not in a literal way, but according to the teaching of the Gospel; not in an imperfect way, but perfectly; not only for a time, but eternally. Let us regard as our home the heavenly Jerusalem, not the earthly one; the city glorified by angels, not the one laid waste by armies. We are not required to sacrifice young bulls or rams, beasts with horns and hoofs that are more dead than alive and devoid of feeling; but instead, let us join the choirs of angels in offering God upon his heavenly altar a sacrifice of praise. We must now pass through the first veil and approach the second, turning our eyes toward the Holy of Holies. I will say more: we must sacrifice ourselves to God, each day and in everything we do, accepting all that happens to us for the sake of the Word, imitating his passion by our sufferings, and honoring his blood by shedding our own. We must be ready to be crucified.

If you are a Simon of Cyrene, take up your cross and follow Christ. If you are crucified beside him like one of the thieves, now, like the good thief, acknowledge your God. For your sake, and because of your sin, Christ himself was regarded as a sinner; for his sake, therefore, you must cease to sin. Worship him who was hung on the cross because of you, even if you are hanging there yourself. Derive some benefit from the very shame; purchase salvation with your death. Enter paradise with Jesus, and discover how far you have fallen. Contemplate the glories there, and leave the other scoffing thief to die outside in his blasphemy.

If you are a Joseph of Arimathea, go to the one who ordered his crucifixion, and ask for Christ's body. Make your own the expiation for the sins of the whole world. If you are a Nicodemus, like the man who worshipped God by night, bring spices and prepare Christ's body for burial. If you are one of the Marys, or Salome, or Joanna, weep in the early morning. Be the first to see the stone rolled back, and even the angels perhaps, and Jesus himself.

From a homily by Saint Gregory Nazianzen.



THE MEANING OF HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday: Hosanna

In the earthly life of our Lord, His solemn entrance into the Holy City was His only visible triumph. Up to that day He consistently rejected all attempts to glorify Him. But six days before the Passover, He not only accepted to be glorified, He Himself arranged this glorification. By doing what the prophet Zechariah announced: 'behold, Thy King cometh unto thee...lowly and riding upon an ass...', He made it clear that He wanted to be acclaimed and acknowledged as the King and Redeemer of Israel. The Gospel narratives stress all these Messianic features: the Palms and the Hosannas, the acclamation of Jesus as the Son of David and the King of Israel.

The history of Israel is now coming to an end, such is the meaning of this event; for the purpose of that history was to announce and prepare the Kingdom of God, the advent of the Messiah. And now it is fulfilled: for the King enters His Holy City, and in Him all prophecies, all expectations find their fulfilment. He inaugurates His Kingdom.

The Liturgy of Palm Sunday commemorates this event. With palm branches in our hands we identify ourselves with the people of Jerusalem; together with them we greet the lowly King, singing Hosanna to Him.

But what is the meaning of it today for us?

First, it is our confession of Christ as our King and Lord. We forget so often that the Kingdom of God has been inaugurated, and that on the day of our Baptism we were made citizens of it, and have promised to put our loyalty to it above all other loyalties. We must always remember that for a few hours Christ was indeed King on earth, in this world of ours: for a few hours only and in one city. Yet in this city we acknowledge the mystical centre of the world, and indeed of the whole creation. For such is the biblical meaning of Jerusalem, the focal point of the whole history of salvation and redemption, the Holy City of God's advent. Therefore, the Kingdom inaugurated in Jerusalem is an universal Kingdom, embracing in its perspective all men and the totality of creation...For a few hours - yet these were the decisive time, the ultimate hour of Jesus, the hour of fulfilment by God of all His promises, of all His decisions. It came at the end of the entire process of preparation revealed in the Bible, it was the end of all that God did for man.

And thus this short hour of Christ's earthly triumph acquires an eternal meaning. It introduces the reality of the Kingdom into our time, into all hours, makes this Kingdom the meaning of time and its ultimate goal. The kingdom was revealed in this world and from that hour; its presence judges and transforms human history...And when at the most solemn moment of our liturgical celebration we receive from the priest a palm branch, we renew our oath to our King; we confess His Kingdom as the ultimate meaning and content of our life. We confess that everything in our life and in the world belongs to Christ and nothing can be taken away from its sole real Owner, that there is no area of life in which He is not to rule, to save and to redeem. We proclaim the universal and total responsibility of the Church for human history and uphold her universal mission.

But we know that the King who was acclaimed then, and whom we acclaim today, is on His way to Golgotha, to the Cross and to the grave. We know that this short triumph is but the prologue of His sacrifice. The branches in our hands signify, therefore, our readiness to follow Him in this sacrificial way, our acceptance of sacrifice and self-denial as the only royal way to the Kingdom.

And finally, these branches, this celebration, proclaim our faith in the final victory of Christ. His Kingdom is yet hidden, and the world ignores it. It lives as if the decisive event had not taken place, as if God the Son had not died on the Cross, and Man in Him was not risen from the dead. But we, Christians, believe in the coming of the Kingdom in which God will be all in all, and Christ the only King.

In our liturgical celebrations, we remember events of the past. But the whole meaning and power of the Liturgy is that it transforms remembrance into reality. On Palm Sunday, this reality is our own involvement in, our responsibility to, the Kingdom of God. Christ does not enter into Jerusalem any more; He did it once and for all. He wants from us a real acceptance of the Kingdom which he brought to us...And if we are not ready to stand by the solemn oath which we renew every year on Palm Sunday, if we do not mean to make the Kingdom of God the measure of our whole life, then meaningless is our commemoration and vain the palm branches we take home.

Maundy Thursday: The Last Supper

'Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour was come...having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end....' (John 13: 1). To understand the meaning of the Last Supper we must see it as the very end of the great movement of Divine Love which began with the creation of the world and is now to be consummated in the death and resurrection of Christ.

'God is Love' (1 John 4: 8). And the first gift of Love was Life. The meaning, the content of life, was communion. To be alive man was to eat and drink, to partake of the world. The world was thus Divine love made food, made Body of man. And being alive, that is, partaking of the world, man was to be in communion with God, to have God as the meaning, the content and the end of his life. Communion with the God-given world was indeed communion with God. Man received his food from God and making it his body and his life, he offered the whole world to God, transformed it into life in God and with God. The love of God gave life to man, the love of man for God transformed this life into communion with God. This was the Paradise. Life in it was, indeed, eucharistic. Through man and his love for God the whole creation was to be sanctified and transformed into one all-embracing sacrament of Divine Presence and man was to be the priest of this sacrament.

But by sin man lost this eucharistic life. He lost it because he ceased to see the world as means of Communion with God and his life as eucharistic, as adoration and thanksgiving... He loved himself and the world for their own sake; he made himself the content and the end of his life- He thought that his hunger and thirst, that is, the dependence of his life on the world, could be satisfied by the world as such, by food as such. But world and food, once they are deprived of their initial sacramental meaning - as means of communion with God, once they are not received for God's sake, and filled with hunger and thirst for God, once, in other words, God is no longer their real 'content', can give no life, satisfy no hunger, for they have no life in themselves ... And thus by putting his love in them, man deviated his love from the only object of all love, of all hunger, of all desires. And he died. For death is the inescapable 'decomposition' of life cut from its only source and content. Man thought to find life in the world and in food, but he found death. His life became communion with death, for instead of transforming the world by faith, love and adoration into communion with God, he submitted himself entirely to the world, he ceased to be its priest and became its slave. And by his sin he turned the world into a cemetery, where people condemned to death partook of death and 'sat in the region and shadow of death' (Matt. 4: 16).

But if man betrayed God, God remained faithful to man.... A new Divine work began, that of redemption and salvation. And it was fulfilled in Christ, the Son of God, who, in order to restore man to his pristine beauty and to restore life as communion with God, became Man, took upon Himself our nature, with its thirst and hunger, with its desire for, and love of, life. And in Him life was revealed, given, accepted and fulfilled as total and perfect Eucharist, as total and perfect communion with

God. He rejected the basic human temptation: to live 'by bread alone'. He revealed that God and His kingdom are the real food, the real life of man. And this perfect Eucharistic Life, filled with God, and, therefore, Divine and immortal, He gave to all those who would believe in Him, who would find in Him the meaning and content of their lives. Such is the wonderful meaning of the Last Supper. He offered Himself as the true Food of man, because the Life revealed in Him is the true Life. And thus the movement of Divine Love which began in paradise with a Divine 'take, eat...' (for eating is life for man) comes now 'unto the end' with the Divine 'take, eat, this is My Body' (for God is the life of man). The Last Supper is the restoration of the paradise of bliss.

Good Friday: The Cross

From the light of Maundy Thursday evening, we enter the darkness of Friday, the day of Christ' Passion, Death and Burial. In the early Church this day was called 'Passover of the Cross', for it is indeed the beginning of the Passage or Passover whose whole meaning will be gradually revealed to us, first in the wonderful quiet of Holy Saturday, and then in the joy of the Resurrection day.

But, first, the darkness. If only we could realize that on Good Friday darkness is not merely symbolical and commemorative. So often, as we watch the beautiful and solemn sadness of these services, we do so in a spirit of self-righteousness and self-justification. Two thousand years ago bad men killed Christ, but we to-day - the good Christian people - come and kiss His cross. Is this not the sign of our goodness? Yet Good Friday deals not with the past alone. It is the day of Sin, the day of Evil, the day on which the Church invites us to realize their awful reality and power in 'this world'. For Sin and Evil have not disappeared, but, on the contrary, still constitute the basic law of the world and of our life. On what side, and with whom would we have been, had we lived in Jerusalem under Pilate? This is the question addressed to us in every word of the Good Friday services. It is, indeed, the 'day of this world', its real and not symbolical, condemnation; and the real and not ritual, judgement on our life. It is the revelation of the true nature of the world which preferred then, and still prefers, darkness to light, evil to good, death to life. Having condemned Christ to death, 'this world' has condemned itself to death, and inasmuch as we accept its spirit, its sin, its betrayal of God - we are also condemned. Such is the first and dreadfully realistic meaning of Good Friday: a condemnation to death.

But this day of Evil, of its ultimate manifestation and triumph, is also the day of Redemption. The death of Christ is revealed to us as the saving death for us and for our salvation.

It is saving Death because it is the full, perfect, and supreme Sacrifice. Christ gives His death to His Father, and He gives His death to us. To His Father, because as we shall see there is no other way to destroy death, to save man from it, and it is the will of the Father that man be saved from death. To us, because in very truth Christ dies instead of us. Death is the natural fruit of sin, an immanent punishment. Man chose to be alienated from God, but having no life in himself and by himself, he dies. Yet there is no sin and therefore no death in Christ. He accepts to die only by love for us. He wants to assume and to share our human condition to the end. He accepts the punishment of our nature, as he assumed the whole burden of the human predicament. He dies because He has truly identified Himself with us, has taken upon Himself the tragedy of man's life. His death is the ultimate revelation of His compassion and love. And because His dying is love, compassion and co-suffering, in His death the very nature of death is changed. From punishment it becomes the radiant act of love and forgiveness, of alienation and solitude. Condemnation is transformed into forgiveness.

And, finally, His death is a saving death because it destroys the very source of death: evil. By accepting it in love, by giving Himself to His murderers and permitting their apparent victory, Christ reveals that, in reality, this victory is the total and decisive defeat of Evil. To be victorious Evil must annihilate the Good, must prove itself to be the ultimate truth about life, discredit the Good and, in one word, show its own superiority. But throughout the whole Passion it is Christ and He alone who triumphs. The Evil can do nothing against Him, for it cannot make Christ accept Evil as truth. Hypocrisy is revealed as Hypocrisy, Murder as Murder, Fear as Fear, and as Christ silently moves toward the Cross and the End, as the human tragedy reaches its climax, His triumph, His victory over the Evil, His glorification become more and more obvious. And at each step this victory is acknowledged, confessed, proclaimed - by the wife of Pilate, by Joseph, by the crucified thief, by the centurion. And as He dies on the Cross having accepted the ultimate horror of death: absolute solitude (My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!), nothing remains but to confess that 'truly This was the Son of God!' And, thus, it is this Death, this Love, this obedience, this fulness of Life that destroy what made Death the universal destiny. 'And the graves were opened.....' (Matt. 27: 52). Already the rays of the Resurrection appear.

*Easter Even, Holy Saturday:
The Life-Giving Tomb*

This is the day that connects Good Friday, the commemoration of the Cross, with the day of His Resurrection. To many, the real nature and meaning of this 'connection', the very

necessity of this 'middle day' remains obscure. For a good majority of us, the 'important' days of Holy Week are Friday and Sunday, the Cross and the Resurrection. These two days remain somehow 'disconnected'. There is a day of sorrow, and then there is a day of joy. But according to the Church, expressed in her liturgical tradition, the nature of this sequence is not that of a simple replacement. The Church proclaims that Christ 'by His death hath destroyed death'. It means that even before the Resurrection, an event takes place, in which sorrow is not simply replaced by joy, but is itself transformed into joy. Holy Saturday is this day of transformation, the day when victory grows inside the defeat, when before the Resurrection, we are given to contemplate the death of death Itself, and all this takes place every year in this quiet morning service, in this liturgical commemoration which becomes for us a saving and transforming present.

The Apostles' Creed says that Christ 'descended into hell', and the Prayer Book teaches that those words mean the same as 'He went into the place of departed spirits': Hades. 'Hades' in biblical language means the realm of death, that state of darkness, despair, and destruction which is death. And, being the realm of the dead, which God has not created and which He did not want, it also signifies that the Prince of this world is all powerful in the world. Satan, Sin, and Death, - these are the 'dimensions' of Hades, its content. For Sin comes from Satan, and Death is the result of Sin - 'sin entered into the world, and death by sin' (Rom. 5.12). The entire universe has become a cosmic cemetery, was condemned to destruction and despair. And this is why Death is the 'last enemy', and its destruction constitutes the ultimate goal of the Incarnation. This encounter with death is the 'hour' of which Christ said that 'for this hour have I come' (John 12.27). And now this hour has come and the Son of God enters into Death.

The Fathers usually describe this moment as a duel between Christ and Death, Christ and Satan. For this death was to be either the last triumph of Satan, or his decisive defeat. At first, the forces of evil seem to triumph. The Righteous One is crucified, abandoned by all, and endures a shameful death. He also becomes the partaker of 'Hades', of this place of darkness and despair. But at this very moment, the real meaning of this death is revealed. The One who dies on the Cross has Life in Himself, not as a gift from outside, a gift that therefore can be taken away from Him, but as His own essence. For He is Life and the source of Life. 'in Him was Life'. The man Jesus dies, but this Man is God the Son. As man, He can really die, but in Him, God Himself enters the realm of death, partakes of death. This is the unique, the incomparable meaning of Christ's death. In it the man who dies is God, or to be more exact, the

God-Man. God 'is the Holy Immortal; and only in the unity 'without confusion, without change, without division, without separation' of God and Man in Christ can human death be 'assumed' by God and be overcome and destroyed from within, be 'destroyed by death'.

Now we understand why God desires that death, why the Father gives His Only Begotten Son to it. He desires the salvation of man; i.e., that the destruction of death shall be not an act of His power (Matt. 26: 53), not a violence, but an act of that love, freedom, and free dedication to God, for which he created man. For any other salvation would have been in opposition to the nature of man, and therefore not a real salvation. Hence the necessity of that Incarnation and the necessity of that Divine death. In Christ man restores the obedience and love; in Him man overcomes sin and evil. It was essential that death were not only destroyed by God, but overcome and trampled down in human nature itself, by man, and through man: 'for since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead'.

Christ freely accepts death; of His life He says that 'no man taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself' (John 10: 18). But He does it not without a fight: 'He began to be sorrowful and very heavy'. Here is fulfilled the measure of His obedience; and therefore here is the destruction of the moral root of death, of death as the ransom for sin. And because Christ's death is a movement of love towards God, an act of obedience and trust, of faith and perfection - it is an act of life (Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit) which destroys death. It is the death of death itself.

As His death destroys the very principle of death, His resurrection is the token of the resurrection of all for His life is the source of every life. It is probably here that the ultimate meaning of this 'middle day' is made manifest. Christ rose again from the dead; His resurrection we will celebrate on Easter Day. This celebration, however, commemorates a unique event of the past, and anticipates a mystery of the future. It is already His resurrection, but not yet ours. We will have to die, - to accept the dying, the separation, the destruction. Our reality in this world, in this 'age' is the reality of Holy Saturday, Easter Even. This day is the real image of our human condition. We believe in the resurrection, because Christ rose from the dead. We expect the resurrection. We know that Christ's death has annihilated the power of death, and death is no longer the hopeless, the ultimate end of everything. Baptized into His death, we partake already of His life that came out of the grave. We receive His Body and Blood which are the food of immortality. We have the Holy Spirit, the anticipation of eternal life. We are partakers 'in advance' of the life of the 'new age' of the

Kingdom of God; and yet we are here, and death is our inescapable share.

But this life between the Resurrection of Christ and the common resurrection, is it not precisely the life in Holy Saturday? Is not expectation the basic and essential category of Christian experience? We wait in love, hope, and faith. And this waiting, this growth of expectation in love - all this is our own Holy Saturday. Little by little everything in this world becomes transparent to the light that comes from there, the 'image of this world' passeth away, and this indestructible life with Christ becomes our supreme and ultimate value.

Every year on Holy Saturday, the quiet services of Mattins, Ante-communion and Evensong ended, we wait for Easter night and Easter joy. We know that they are approaching - and yet, how slow is this approach, how long is this day! But is not this the symbol of our very life in this world? Are we not always in this 'middle day', waiting for Easter?

(The preceding is an adaptation of the Very Revd. Alexander Schmemmann's 'Holy Week'. Orthodox Worship No. 3. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press).

Morning Has Come

*They all walked away, nothing to say,
They just lost their dearest Friend;
All that He said, now He was dead,
So this was the way it would end!*

*The dreams that they'd dreamed,
Were not what they seemed,
Now that He was dead and gone;
The garden, the jail, the hammer, the nail,
How could a night be so long?*

*The angel, the star, the kings from afar,
The wedding, the water, the wine,
Now it was done, they'd taken her Son,
Wasted before His time!*

*She knew it was true,
She'd watched Him die too,
She'd heard them call Him just a man;
But deep in her heart
She knew from the start,
Somehow her Son would live again.*

*Then came the morning,
Night turned into day:
The stone was rolled away,
Hope rose with the dawn!*

*Then came the morning,
Shadows vanished before the sun;
Death has lost and Life has won,
For Morning has come!*



SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION)

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE (also called 'Confession and Absolution') is to be found on page 581 of *The Book of Common Prayer (Canada)*. Auricular Confession is private confession between a penitent and priest. Auricular Confession for Anglicans is underused. This is unfortunate since it is tremendously freeing and uplifting. Everyone thinks of it as a Roman Catholic practice but it has been a practice for Anglicans, Eastern Orthodox, and Lutherans for centuries as well. While it is not mandatory, it is encouraged. There is an old Anglican saying regarding who ought to go to confession:

'All Can, Some Should, None Must'

WHY DO WE CONFESS THE WAY WE DO?

When we go to Confession we meet Jesus who takes us to himself and, because we are in him and because we are sorry, God our Father forgives us. Each time we sin, we damage the loving relationship that exists between God our Father and ourselves, between Jesus our Brother and ourselves, between the Holy Spirit and ourselves, and between ourselves and the Church.

SIN IS PUBLIC, NO MATTER WHAT. Each time we sin even though the sin may be an entirely private affair we harm the other members of God's family. We are all members of Christ's Body, the Church. A sin hurts us individually and so affects all other members. St. Paul writes: 'If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it'. (*1 Corinthians 12:26*)

That is why it is not just enough to apologize to God, we must also apologize to God's people, and so we either do so generally (during the service at the time of General Confession) or personally (called "Auricular Confession") to Christ's vicar - the priest. So, when we go to confession although what we say to the priest and what he says to us is absolutely private, what we are doing is something public. It is much more than when in the privacy of our bedrooms, during our night prayers, we kneel down and tell God we are sorry. All of us participate in the General Confession at each Eucharist and in Morning/Evening Prayer and Compline.

Auricular Confession is also important in providing us with spiritual counsel and advice, and peace of mind and heart knowing God has indeed forgiven us our sins. As well, auricular confession helps us in our examination of conscience to distinguish between sin and simple human error.

THE SEAL OF CONFESSION means that all things confessed remain between you and your priest. The seal of the confessional is never broken. This is both established in church and secular law. Your confessor will not bring up anything to you in the future unless you seek counsel.

PENANCE: Along with Absolution from your confessed sins, the priest may assign what is called "Penance." This should never be seen as away to "make up" for your sin. Only Jesus Christ can or has done that. Rather, it is a way to make yourself right or your relationship with another right and bring restoration.

ABSOLUTION: The power and authority of absolution reside in the Apostolic priesthood by virtue of our Lord's express declaration: "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." (*St. John 20:23*) The Sacrament of Penance is the method by which this authority is exercised to remit sins committed after Baptism. Sin destroys the union between the soul and God which was effective in Baptism. Thus, just as there is a sacrament (Baptism) to effect the union in the first place, so there is a sacrament (Penance) to restore this union when sin has broken it. The outward and visible sign of the sacrament is the declaration of a Priest in Apostolic succession: "I absolve thee from all thy sins." Its inward and spiritual grace is the application of the merits of the Cross to the life of the individual for the forgiveness of sin.

REPENTANCE: True repentance has three elements:

1. **CONTRITION** or sorrow for sin. This can be obtained only at the foot of the Cross. We may not have an emotion of sorrow, but when we see what our sins have done to Jesus, we shall be sorry.
2. **CONFESSION** of all known sin. This involves a careful examination of our conscience. We cannot confess our sins until we see exactly how we look to the all-seeing eye of God.
3. **SATISFACTION** and **AMENDMENT OF LIFE.** We must intend to lead a new or better life. This intention is shown by our acceptance and performance of the penance imposed by the priest in confession.

