



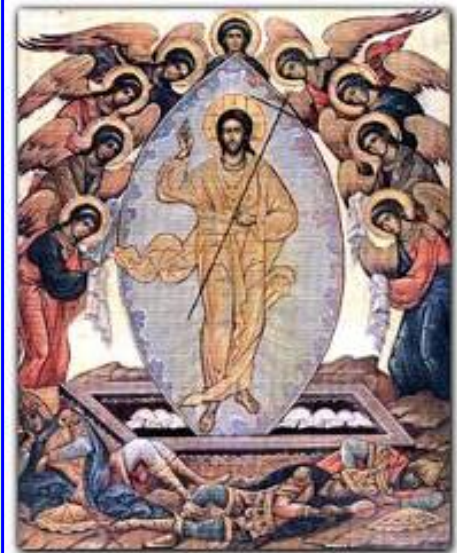
Dear friends,

All of us here at the Singapore Pastoral Institute wish you a joyful and prayerful Easter day. We also wish that you feast and celebrate for 50 days up to Pentecost.

You will find in this issue a little article to remind us of the meaning of the Paschal candle. Also information about the upcoming courses.

April brings the first of our pastoral training workshops for leaders and members of Small Christian Communities as well as parish training teams. We have on our next page an extract from a reflection by Fr Paul McPartlan on Palm Sunday. You will find it very interesting. We also include an article to help us recognize the real values that drive our parishes.

*Wendy Louis*



### EASTER REFLECTION

*Tell us if you enjoyed using our Lenten booklet. Also, if you found things that could be improved.*

*Tell us what activities you did with your family. Share it with us and we will include it in our next issue.*

### THE EASTER VIGIL - the greatest liturgical celebration of the year:

The Easter Vigil begins with the service of Light. All the lights in the church are extinguished. Outside the Church, all are assembled around the new Fire. From this Fire, the Easter Candle is lit and carried into the dark Church. The priest cries out "LUMEN CHRISTI" or "THE LIGHT OF CHRIST" and we all respond "Thanks be to God". When the candle is placed on its stand, the great Easter Proclamation is sung "Rejoice..." Before lighting the Easter candle, there is a ritual blessing which is full of beauty and meaning:



1. A Cross is traced and cut into the Candle. The Cross which becomes the tree of life.
2. The tracing of the Greek alphabets Alpha and Omega above and below the cross signifying that Jesus Christ is the beginning and the end, the Lord of all time.
3. 5 grains of incense are inserted around and on the cross to represent the wounds of Christ which are now glorious wounds by which we are healed.

Once again have a joyous Easter and remember to celebrate for 50 days!!

## The SPI LIBRARY

Theological / Pastoral reflections from:

### THE TABLET 31st March 2007



#### THE STONES WILL SHOUT OUT – A PALM SUNDAY REFLECTION

Extracts from an article by Fr Paul McPartlan

Christ's death opened the way to a new heaven and a new earth. He liberated not just humanity but the whole of Creation, as his words on Palm Sunday indicate

As Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, his disciples exultantly hailed his arrival: "Blessings on the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest heavens!" St Luke's Gospel tells us that some Pharisees told him to check his disciples, and Jesus replied: "I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out" (Luke 19:38-40).

These words are full of meaning for a truly Christian understanding of Creation and of the salvation won by Christ. Jesus implies that the stones themselves are thrilled at his arrival, that the very earth responds to his presence. Moreover he implies that what is keeping Creation silent is the fact that human beings are voicing its praise. Were they to fall silent, the earth would not be able to contain itself any longer and would shout out in acclamation as best it could. We are reminded that "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it" (Psalm 24:1), and that when God saw all that he had made he found it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). We are reminded also that humanity has a special place in the ordered totality that God made and loves, a unique role and responsibility. Humanity marvels at the harmony of God's Creation (Psalm 103), and lifts its praise to God: "... sun and moon ... Bless the Lord, stars of heaven, Bless the Lord ... all rain and dew, Bless the Lord ... all you winds, O bless the Lord ..." (Daniel 3:62-90). ...

However, Creation's true joy at his coming was most fully expressed a little later that week, at the Last Supper, when Jesus took bread and wine, and instead of simply breaking, distributing, eating and drinking, first of all lifted them up, giving thanks to God, as all the Last Supper accounts tell us. Adam and Eve, in the story that is emblematic of humanity's defiance and disobedience, took and ate what God had forbidden. There was no shred of thanksgiving in their act. In complete contrast, the whole spirit of Jesus' action is one of thanksgiving, Eucharist, and thanksgiving for Creation remains at the heart of the Church's understanding of the Eucharist, though this fact is rarely if ever heeded. "In the eucharistic sacrifice, the whole of Creation loved by God is presented to the Father by means of the death and resurrection of Christ" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 1359).

.... The Creation attains its final freedom when in the hands of human beings tasting their own final freedom, all of which only happens in Christ, the true Son and image of God, who treated Creation as humanity always should have done, but from the start never did.

The whole Church is a priestly people, and that priesthood embraces Creation and should care for it and speak up for it. The ordained priesthood images Christ gathering up the praise and thanksgiving of all humanity and all Creation in his own single offering on the Cross, crowned by God in the Resurrection.

As we enter into that core mystery of our faith at the climax of the coming week, let us be aware of its true dimensions: the way is being opened to the new heavens and new earth. Let us heed not only the palms this Sunday, but also the stones.

## **ONLINE RESOURCES**

### **Discerning Your Church's Hidden Core Values**

*It's the unstated, underlying purpose that really drives a church.*

*Extracted from an article by Angie Ward from the 'Building Church Leaders' website:*

Anyone who has been around visiting parishes will realize immediately that each parish has a rather unique character and culture. These are determined by the surrounding community, socio-economic status, and language preferences, leadership styles of the parish priests and the physical environment and facilities available. There are many articles written about the church and her interaction with people of other faiths or other Christian churches or with society, but not much has been written about the culture prevalent within any given parish.

Sometimes, we find a parish that has a beautifully crafted mission and vision statement printed in the weekly bulletin and so on. On closer observation of the activities, programmes, structures and all that goes into the daily life of the parish you get a glimpse of the culture that actually exists or persists. We begin to understand the shared attitudes, values, and beliefs that define this parish and shape its practices.

It can happen that the language used by the church leadership expresses the need for a more "outward-focused" church, about the priority of "people over programs", about the need for community and communion, but the reality experienced does not match the words.

Very often our problem is not a lack of resources, expertise, or a clearly worded purpose statement. The problem is that the parish's actual culture does not reflect its stated mission or may in fact contradict it. A church's culture can be encapsulated into an "ethos," or a statement that summarizes its true guiding beliefs. Ideally, the ethos of an organization should flow out of its purpose, but when it doesn't, the church's underlying culture can subvert even the best vision. "Don't rock the boat."

"Don't rock the boat" seems to be a common ethos in many parishes, but here are some others:

- We can find something wrong with anything.
- The world isn't safe, so we will protect you.
- Visitors are welcome to come back, if they really want to.
- Saved by grace but living under law.
- Don't demand too much from the overworked people

These core beliefs are rarely articulated, but they have enormous impact on the health and effectiveness of a church, no matter what its stated purpose.

In any church, the first step toward creating a healthy culture is identifying the existing ethos, whether positive or negative.

Changing that culture, of course, is an ongoing process. Slowly, but surely, our parishes can begin to reflect a renewed purpose of "Life-changing relationships with God, with each other, and with the world around us."

*Angie Ward is a consultant, ministry leader, and pastor's spouse in Durham, North Carolina.*

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