

S. Clement's Holy Week Journal

Palm Sunday

At the High Mass of Sunday, the two-and-a-half hour, pre 1955 Ceremonies and High Mass of Palm Sunday began at 11:00 a.m. Perhaps most notable in the rite is the blessing of the palms in a series of six collects that includes the phrase, "For, as at this time, the multitude by the inspiration of thy heavenly light went forth to meet their Redeemer, and strawed branches of palm and olive in his way, thereby in the branches of palm foreshadowing his triumph over the prince of death and by the boughs of olive proclaiming that the anointing of the Spirit was come."

Wednesday in Holy Week

Tonight the offices of the Triduum begin with Tenebrae of Maundy Thursday. Tenebrae is matins and lauds of the day with many of the characteristic versicles and responses, such as the Gloria Patri, omitted. The office takes on a stark character and preserves many simpler, more ancient forms.

It rained heavily tonight but nine of us gathered in the crypt for Tenebrae of Maundy Thursday. The offices of the Triduum make a stark contrast to the ornate liturgy. Those of us who are present monotone our way through the psalms, lessons, and canticles. It is very simple and homely.

This is the third year that I've been able to take time off around the Triduum to say the offices in common and to help with the setup and take-down for the principal liturgies. It has entirely changed Holy Week for me.

Someone has said that the Triduum is like staging three operas in three days. There is certainly a lot to be said for that analogy. On Wednesday the palms come down, on Thursday the white goes up and the altar of repose is decorated. On Friday the black vestments come out. Saturday is back to violet for the vigil, then white, then more white for Sunday morning. From Thursday night to Sunday morning, the choir sings as many pieces as a small church's anthem choir might sing in an entire year. Flowers come for Thursday and go for Friday then come back for the Vigil. Around the edges there is silver to polish and votive candle holders to be cleaned out and lots of trips to fetch things from store rooms.

I find that the offices become the glue that binds the whole. The constant repetition of the antiphon, "Christ for our sake became obedient to death" and the repetition of Psalm 51 bind the disparate ceremonies of the Triduum into one piece. The starkness of the offices set a baseline from which the great liturgies of the week leap and soar.

Morning of Maundy Thursday

When I arrived at 6:30 this morning, the preparation of the Repository was well under way. I helped carry in flowers and help set up the votive stands before going down to the Crypt for the hours.

Psalm 119 is divided among Prime, Terce, Sext, and None with Psalm 51 at the end of each hour. With the hymns, chapters, and responsories removed, it takes about half an hour to monotone through the four offices together. The collect at the end of each hour joins Psalm 51 and the antiphon, "Christ for our sake became obedient unto death," as another piece that anchors the days of the Triduum:

Almighty God, we beseech thee graciously to behold this thy family, for which our Lord Jesus Christ was contented to be betrayed, and given up into the hands of wicked men, and to suffer death upon the cross...

I never stop being moved by the phrase "contented to be betrayed." There is something particularly heart-rending about the word "contented."

For the afternoon, the mighty labors continue. Folks made good progress yesterday in setting up the Altar of the Maundy in the Parish Hall and the Repository set up is ahead of schedule, so it looks as if a couple of us may be able to look in at the Cathedral to see what Dean Giles is putting on for what the Diocese now calls "The Bishop's Mass."

Afternoon of Maundy Thursday

The repository finished, Paul Goings and I went to the Cathedral for the Bishop's Mass. It was a fairly standard middle-of-the-road Eucharist with the bishop washing the feet of the clergy, though this year we were deprived of seeing Canon Reid, our rector, in the Jedi cape that members of the Chapter wear at Cathedral liturgies. I figure there were 80-90 present, about two-thirds of them priests. This year there were stations for communion so there was no need to whisper in the bishop's ear as he came around the circle that we weren't receiving because we'd receive that night at S. Clement's.

While S. Clement's is a very different sort of place than the Cathedral, the Dean cares deeply about the Church's liturgical and prayer life. I never saw the old Church of the

Saviour before it was remodeled, but the remodeled space is quite pleasing--the addition of a baldacchino and a side altar would fix things right up.

Now for a little rest--It will be a long night with tenebrae at 7:00 tomorrow morning.

Evening of Maundy Thursday

It is near 1:00 a.m. as I write this entry. The Mass, Procession to the Altar of Repose, Stripping of the Altars, and the Maundy all went well. Every year I look forward to this night. It has been a favorite since I first saw the Triduum at the Advent in Boston when I was 23. I was only a torch bearer and carrying one of the poles of the Blessed Sacrament's canopy, so I could relax and be part of the whole thing.

When I got to the church, the choir was rehearsing *My Song is Love Unknown*. I listened to them practice as I waited for the other servers to arrive and vest. The congregation for the night was the smallest I remember at S. Clement's--there weren't many of our regular visitors in the pews, but from the ringing of all of the bells at the Gloria of the *Missa Pagne Lingua* to the Durufle *Ubi Caritas* at the Maundy, everything was lovely.

After the Maundy, four of us said vespers and compline in the choir before the bare altar, then I shucked my cassock and five of us raced off to make the traditional visit to seven altars of repose. Timing on this is key since you need to make some of the churches that close early as quickly as possible. Here's the route:

The Basilica of Ss. Peter & Paul: At our nearest neighbor the Altar of Repose was much more highly decorated than any of us had seen. One priest was keeping watch.

S. Francis Xavier: The Oratorian's church strips down well. Two younger members of the community were trading watches as we arrived.

S. John: The Franciscan's lower church had a bare ciborium on the altar with a few rose petals scattered around it.

S. Mark's, Locust Street: The darkness and stillness of the church contrasted with the lights and flowers banked around the silver altar of the Lady Chapel. The chapel is small and intimate. It's always here that I have the most sense of waiting with the Lord.

Old S. Joe's: The Jesuits had a large number of people scattered around the church keeping watch.

S. Mary's Bainbridge: Fr. Jackson let us in when we rang the bell. The sacrament was in the small prayer chapel above his office as men slept in the shelter in the basement. The Church was built as a chapel of S. Mark's and, though small, is perfectly designed for catholic worship.

S. Clement's: Back at last to our own altar, the quietness a great contrast to the earlier liturgies. Parishioners will trade off watches here every hour until noon tomorrow.

Morning of Good Friday

Today is always the hard day: late night followed by early morning tenebrae, the liturgy of Good Friday then the beginnings of the Easter Vigil set up. You begin to feel a little like one of those sleep deprived cult members, though the payoff from the 20th Street Gulag is much more tangible and immediate.

Last night's visit to seven altars of repose was particularly good. This was my third year to make the trek. There's always a certain Mission Impossible element in the frantic scurries between churches as you try to make it to places before they close up for the night, but I'm amazed that that mood always seems to stay out on the street. Once inside a church, you fall into your devotions and are reminded that Christians across the world are watching just as you are.

Each altar and each set of watchers in every church is different, but you all know that you are doing the same thing and that, though these might be faces that you see only once a year on this night or faces that you never see again, you are all joined together in something larger than yourselves. I think of the final verse of a song the evangelical church I grew up in often sang at Communion:

*And that dark betrayal night
We with His last advent unite,
By one bright chain of loving rite
Until he come.*

This morning, I spent too long putting up last night's journal entry and only made it to the church about ten minutes before tenebrae started in the crypt at 7:00 a.m. The morning shift was just Reilly, Goings and I. Psalm 22 comes in the first nocturn. The verses never fail to move me:

My God, my God, look upon me; why hast thou forsaken me: and art so far from my health and the words of my complaint? ... But as for me, I am a worm and no man: a very scorn of men and the outcast of the people. ... They pierced my hands and my feet; I may tell all my bones: they stand staring and looking upon me.

Maybe I should say something about the structure of tenebrae. In a nutshell, it is the simplified form taken by matins and lauds on the days of the Triduum. Matins consists of three nocturns, each of which includes three psalms and three lessons with a responsory after each lesson. Lauds follows immediately with five psalms and the Benedictus.

There are no ceremonies to speak of. A large candlestick called a hearse holds fifteen lit candles. The six altar candles are lit as well. During the two offices, one candle is extinguished at the end of each psalm, leaving only the topmost candle, often called the Christ Candle, burning. In a similar way, one of the altar candles is extinguished during each of the final verses of the Benedictus. After the Benedictus, the lit Christ Candle is carried from the room or hidden behind the altar as Psalm 51 ("Have mercy on me, O God...") is recited. After the psalm, the officiant recites the collect and the burning candle is returned to the holder.

Some associate the name of the service, which means "darkness" or "shadows," with the lessening of the light throughout the service, but a better answer is probably that fewer candles were needed to read by as the service moved on towards the dawn. Like many other things that were originally functional, the practice lives past its original purpose because of the symbolic value that has taken on. I suppose we could use a dimmer switch or unscrew light bulbs, but somehow I don't think it would be the same.

Afternoon of Good Friday

After tenebrae came rehearsal for the Good Friday liturgy. This is the most complex of the week's observances. Several of the ceremonies—the Veneration of the Cross, the Mass of the Pre-Sanctified—are one of a kind. Add to this the poignancy of the liturgy and this is a difficult few hours. The ministers have to listen to the singing of the passion then do things that they only do once a year.

After rehearsal, we said the hours in choir at 11:00. Psalm 119 again, that longest of all the psalmist's pleadings with God.

Mr. Reilly, our Master of Acolytes and one of the most knowledgeable people whom I have ever met, often helps the sacred ministers and servers remember what they are supposed to do next during the Good Friday liturgy by reminding us that this is Jesus' funeral. Many of the smaller actions and gestures are those of a requiem—the black vestments, the omission of the reverences and the various kisses as one hand things to the priest. The analogy holds beyond the rubrical directions. We hear the passion; we make our way to the cross to pay our respects; and the same emotions are there as well.

In the liturgy, I assisted our new curate, Fr. Wall, as he held the crucifix for the veneration of the faithful. Most all of whom, the youngest and the oldest, made the traditional prostrations on their way up the aisle to take their turn in veneration. Fr. Wall and eight of the servers stayed in choir to monotone vespers after the distribution of communion. I'm sure it was quite a contrast for those who remained in the church after hearing the choir singing acapella throughout the service. When vespers were finished, the parish's relic of the True Cross was brought to the communion rail for those who wished to venerate it. Afterwards, we said compline, then filed down from the choir into the church to the Shrine of Our Lady of Clemency for the Maria Desolata devotion. The

prayers of the devotion recount the sufferings of the Blessed Mother on behalf of her Son, particularly appropriate on this year when Good Friday falls on the Annunciation. As we left the church, I was surprised to see that there were about 17 who had stayed to the end.

I'm afraid you'll have to wait to see photos from the liturgy-I forgot to give my camera to DaVida Goings, who has taken most of the pictures that go with my journal entries here. The 2004 pictures are available [here](#).

Next it was time to shift gears. It takes a lot of work to take a church from Good Friday to Easter. In an ideal world, we could wait a decent interval, but in a fairly small parish, it's an all hands on deck situation. The Altar of Repose in the chapel has to be disassembled as does the Altar of the Maundy in the parish hall. The Altar rugs are carried back up from the basement where they've spent Lent; the silver candlesticks replace the wooden set. The images are uncovered and dressed, the votive racks are refilled, the reliquaries are returned to their places on the altars, and so on. About ten of us worked for two hours, we'll be glad of it tomorrow.

Holy Saturday

This one is going to have to be short-a bad power supply on my laptop has thrown off the day's schedule.

Tenebrae at 7:00 a.m. this morning, the crucifix on the altar unveiled as were all the others in the church on Good Friday. Psalm 15 caught my attention in particular:

LORD, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? : or who shall rest upon thy holy hill? ... He that hath used on deceit in his tongue, nor done evil to his neighbor: and hath not slandered his neighbor.

Modernity leaves too many of us with too much time on our hands to engage in just that. Perhaps if we had to work more to survive, we would have less time on our hands for all of the particular sins that seem to come with idleness.

Today was no day for idleness. By the time rehearsal for the Easter Vigil came at 10:00 most everything was done thanks to all of yesterday afternoon's work.

Three of us returned to the crypt at 11:00 for the hours. I was the officiant for the day, but during the Triduum, that means I just have to stand up at the end of each office to say the collect, a task commensurate with my meager talents in that area. I haven't considered myself a liturgical buff in a decade, though I love the Mass, offices and devotions dearly, but I know how important they are for grounding me in a world where we are always being pulled in ten directions. Psalm 16 sets out the ideal:

Thou shalt shew me the path of life; in thy presence is the fullness of joy: and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

On leaving the chapel, I noticed the memorial plaque to on the north wall:

IN THIS CHAPEL OF THE
EVER BLESSED VIRGIN MARY
RESERVATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT
WAS ESTABLISHED IN THE DIOCESE OF PENNSYLVANIA
IN 1898
THE REVEREND GEORGE HERMAN MOFFET
RECTOR

It is somehow fitting on this day in the tomb that reservation of the sacrament of Christ's presence was established in our mortuary chapel. I suppose it wasn't a place that Victorian bishops were likely to go poking about.

After the hours, there were two pieces of silver to polish for tomorrow, then off to the grocery store, and home to read over the lessons for the vigil. We have two acolytes down who may or may not make it tonight, so there maybe some improvising

The Easter Vigil

The Easter Vigil is all of salvation history from the creation to the resurrection compressed into three hours. It is one of the most perfectly conceived and effective rites in any of the world's religions. Michael, our scheduled thurifer was ill, so I was shuffled around to second acolyte-a good position from which to observe.

We entered the darkened church at 4:00 p.m. and processed to the narthex for the lighting and blessing of the new fire. Fr. Sipe, the deacon of the Mass, carried the triple candle back to the sanctuary, with Dr. Lilley, the MC, lighting another of the three branches each time the deacon sang, "The light of Christ."

Once we were back at the altar, Fr. Sipe sang the Exsultet perfectly. He always does well, but this year was perfect. The Exsultet, which is sung before the paschal candle, calls us to rejoice, because on this night Jesus Christ passed over from death into life. Sadly, I was holding the triple reed, from which the paschal candle is lit, which began dripping profusely, so I stood catching the dripping wax in my hand to save the rug.

Once the paschal candle was lit, we heard the prophecies, 12 stories recounting God's saving acts in the Old Testament. Yes, 12 readings are long, but the stories never fail to move and they contextualize all that follows. Prophecies finished, we processed down from the sanctuary with the paschal candle to bless the font then back to the altar where

the sacred ministers prostrated themselves for the Litany of the Saints. Even S. Clement's innovates. This year, at Canon Reid's direction, we shortened litany by not doubling the responses. I'm a believer in the slippery slope argument in liturgy: change one bit and I see the New Zealand Prayer Book coming, but the roof didn't fall in.

At the end of the litany, the ministers came into the sacristy to take off the purple and put on the white vestments. Then back to the altar where all of the bells broke out to some impressive vamping on the organ by Peter Conte, our organist and choirmaster, which gave way to the Gloria of Vierne's *Messe Solonelle*. There were 17 or 18 singers in the choir tonight and they and the organ made the building vibrate. They'll have a hard time topping themselves tomorrow.

The Vigil Mass is followed by a truncated vespers at the altar then out we went. Three of us returned to the choir after the essential chores were done to say compline. Now we are in Easter-tide and the full office is restored, including the Regina Coeli at the end.

Regina caeli, laetare, alleluia
Quia quem meruisti portare, alleluia,
Resurrexit, sicut dixit, alleluia :
Ora pro nobis Deum, alleluia.

Joy to thee, O Queen of heaven, alleluia!
He whom thou wast meet to bear, alleluia;
As He promis'd, hath arisen, alleluia;
Pour for us to God thy prayer, alleluia.

Not counting compline, the vigil ran three hours and five minutes. It flew by. I felt like Bart Simpson at the fireworks-puppy dog-and-toy store. He is risen indeed, alleluia!

Vigil Postscript

The Vigil always holds a special place in my heart. As I mentioned earlier, I first saw the Triduum at the Church of the Advent in Boston as a 23 year-old graduate student. I remember getting there fifteen minutes before the service with two friends and barely finding a seat for three in the back then becoming aware of the feeling of anticipation in the darkened church. As the vigil unfolded, I remember thinking this is it, this is what it's all about, it's real.

Fr. Jurgen Liias, then an associate priest at the Advent and perhaps one of the most talented preachers in Anglicanism, preached that year. He took as his text the line from the creed, "Suffered under Pontius Pilate," speaking of how this line grounds the events we memorialize in the liturgy in a concrete time and place and that even as we ritualize the action, we look back to real, urgent events that effect our lives today. I would often think of that sermon when Peter Gomes, my homiletics professor and a mentor, would

remind those of us in his seminars to ask ourselves, where's the good news in your sermon. He was always quick to remind us that people didn't drag themselves out of bed on a Sunday morning to hear how clever we were but to hear something that will help them get through the week. And that's just what the vigil does: it retells the whole story in words and music and gesture. These things happened. They are real, true, and urgent.

The liturgy teaches us things that syllogisms can't. I remember being back at the Advent one Sunday with a good friend and fellow student at Harvard Divinity School. She took me to task as we walked to the Charles Street Red Line Station after Mass for crossing myself at the elevations since I had always been one of those who argued that it was the whole of the canon that effected the change in the elements. I could only say, "Everyone believes in classic transubstantiation when they're at the Advent." Not very profound or logical, but an accurate description of what happened to me in that Mass. Like Thomas, I saw and I believed. I don't know that hearing the deacon sing Exsultet will convert the masses, but that piercing cry going up in the darkened church speaks to the receptive heart in a way that prose cannot:

Now is come the night, wherein the bonds of death were loosed, and Christ harrowing hell rose again in triumph....

The holy mystery therefore of this night putteth to flight the deeds of darkness, purgeth away sin, restoreth innocence to the fallen, and gladness to them that mourn: casteth out hatred, bringeth peace to all mankind and boweth down mighty princes.

That's good stuff. As a speech and position paper writer, I have learned something that is no less true of liturgy: if you lose the poetry you lose the reader or hearer even when the logic is solid. Even in our Ikea world, the rhetorical flourish that soars takes us out of our Prufrockian existences and carries the hearer along on the leap into new places. This is why so many of us still bother putting on these rites and why more and more of us in Gen X and Y are devoted to the traditional Mass. There is nothing daring or provocative to anyone under 40 about the Bauhaus liturgical fare that we're told we should like. To us, most modern and experimental liturgies are as much of a period piece as the Tridentine Mass. Any young urbanite who is practicing Christianity in the year 2005 is already committing a transgressive and entirely voluntary act. In the end, I find the sight of a humeral veil much more daring, and evocative, than standing in a circle passing an earthenware plate of pita bread.

Easter Day

Devoted as I am to the Vigil, Easter Day is the big day at S. Clement's as it was and still is in most places. I arrived late for 7:00 a.m. matins and lauds, wax from last night's taper accident still coating my left sleeve. Four of us flew through the short matins of Easter Day, enjoying the restoration of the *Te Deum* and the antiphon, "This is the day which the

Lord hath made." I think that a childhood Christmas morning is the only thing we have left to us in the broader culture that can touch the joy and excitement of Easter morning.

Offices finished, it was down to the basement to dig up lace cottas for six torchbearers, two acolytes, the crucifer, and the clergy. As they had all week, preparations were still running ahead of schedule so there was no need to be frantic. There was plenty of time to chat with each new arrival before returning to the choir of the church, where five of us recited prime.

We rarely get to say prime in common, though many members of the parish read one or another breviary each day. I always love seeing the reader come to the lectern set up in the middle of the choir and, facing the tabernacle, recite to us the saints who entered into eternal life on this day. As with Fr. Lias' vigil sermon on the phrase "Suffered under Pontius Pilate," the reading of the martyrology grounds us in history and binds us to the exemplars who have gone before us.

I made my confession after Prime. It feels strange to mention going to confession in a web journal, but it only added to the day's joy. Telling another person your deepest failings, the things you fear most about yourself and then being told that you are forgiven and loved has an incredible cathartic power. The emotional release is wonderful, but it goes beyond this. The priest wears the biretta to signify that this is a judicial act. Confession is not simply a way to feel better-it is a sacrament given by God to effect our sanctification. The exuberance fades and the failings return, but the forgiveness is real and lasting.

After saying my penance in the church, I attended Fr. Sipe's 9:30 Mass, where I made my communion. The mass was in S. John's Chapel, which only two days ago had been the repository where we had kept watch before the Sacrament. Three of us who had said the offices together during the Triduum made our Easter communions together at this Mass. Afterwards, I ran up to the kitchen for a cup of coffee and to sample one of DaVida's potato balls. It wouldn't do to pass out from hunger and caffeine deprivation on such a busy day...

At 10:15 we made our way to the Crypt Chapel for the last time to say terce. Six of us monotoned our way through the office in front of the re-vested altar as the orchestra rehearsed upstairs. When we had finished, we threw ourselves into the last minute preparations for the High Mass. There was a momentary crisis when we couldn't find the apparels for the Easter vestments, but they eventually emerged from under an amice in the sacristy. Soon the acolytes and choir were in place in the outer sacristy and the sacred ministers were vested in the white and green High Mass set that was made in the parish more than 100 years ago and restored in the early 1990s. The chasuble has two parrots in the center of the cross on its back. If the set has any flaw, it is that the embroidery is so intricate you need considerable time to study it on the vesting table to fully appreciate the workmanship.

The church was beautiful and everything was in order thanks largely to two people: Mr. Reilly, our Master of Acolytes mentioned in an earlier entry, and Dr. Lilley, our Rector's Warden, standing Master of Ceremonies, vestment artificer, floral designer, and greatly loved general foreman. I could not even begin to know the thousand little things he does between arriving at the church at 5:00 a.m. on a Sunday morning and the beginning of the 11:00 a.m. Mass. We are blessed to have so many people like him with exceptional talent who give of themselves unstintingly

I'm told there were 230 to 250 people for the High Mass. As has been the case since the catholic revival came to S. Clement's, the congregation was a cross-section of the city. We were the first integrated parish in the Diocese of Pennsylvania and the mother of the Guild of the Iron Cross, a national confraternity for "working men and boys." The face of Greater Philadelphia was well-represented on this Easter morning as it has been since Dr. Batterson scandalized the Bishop by putting a wooden cross and candlesticks on the altar in 1870.

The church, which seats 360 in the nave, was pleasingly full by the time the sacristy doors opened. The organ's trumpets blared as we made our way to the altar. Canon Reid aspersed the congregation with the holy water blessed last night and returned with the deacon and subdeacon to the altar to put on incense for the procession as Peter did some more genius vamping on the organ. Nothing can be too over the top for Easter Day at S. Clement's and Peter knows how to knock it out of the park. My friend Devon, who was visiting this morning, said she turned around and looked above her because she thought we surely must have trumpeters in a gallery blowing the fanfare. ([Click here to get a sampling of the sound of S. Clement's.](#))

As I lifted my banner and waited my turn to fall into the procession, I thought of an article recounting Easter Day at S. Clement's that has been reprinted [here](#) on, Project Canterbury. By God's grace and Our Lady's protection, I think we have kept much of the spirit of what was good when the Cowley Father's administered the parish and S. Clement's was a national beacon or scandal to Episcopalians depending upon their churchmanship.

We made the great figure eight around the church and, after the introit, the orchestra and choir launched into the Kyrie of Mozart's *Sparrow Mass*. The readings flew by and Canon Reid, in his second Easter with us, preached masterfully on how after his resurrection Jesus came to those who had loved him as he comes to those who love him today. Then we were enveloped in the stillness of the canon, the Sanctus, organ, and Benedictus framing the words of institution, the bells ringing at the elevation as we all lifted our eyes to adore Our Lord.

There could be no Mass like this, or week of Masses like Holy Week at S. Clement's without a suitable encore and we have a time-tested favorite: Pietro Mascagni's *Regina Coeli* from *Cavalleria Rusticana*. There's a contagious exuberance that overtakes the congregation every year when the Regina Coeli begins after the Last Gospel on Easter

Day. Though some of us are flagging from a long week and others' stomachs are growling from the Sunday fast, no one is impatient for the piece to end.

I ducked out down the back stairs during the postlude and ran through the basement so that I could meet Devon and wish her a happy Easter. She seemed to have enjoyed the whole experience. She had to run along, so I made it into choir to finish out the day with sext, none, and vespers. I was sad to come to the *Magnificat* at the end of vespers. This was the last of 18 trips to one of the church's altars since Wednesday night. There was still coffee hour, lunch with friends, and Monday off as a recovery day to come, but I knew things were winding down and that I would read compline at home tonight instead of in common at the church.

I will make one last entry tomorrow. For now, I leave you a passage from *Victimae paschali*, the Easter Sequence, that summarizes the week for me:

Death and life have contended in that combat stupendous: the prince of life, who died, reigns immortal. Speak, Mary, declaring what thou sawest wayfaring. The tomb of Christ, who is living: the glory of Jesu's resurrection.

Easter Monday

It is gray and drizzling this morning in Philadelphia. The weather held just long enough for us to get through Easter. The last stray plants for the garden will have to wait until later in the week. Marc Coleman, our photographer and webmaster, should have the week's photos up soon so that you can really see what it all looked like. He has a gift for catching the small details that give the feel of things.

For five days, I have given no thought to the roilings of global Anglicanism and lost track of the top stories on CNN. Holy Week and Easter exist outside of time and can still take us outside of ourselves if we are able to let them. I cannot know what the next year will bring, but, short of the Second Coming, Palm Sunday, Spy Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the Vigil, and Easter Day will cycle around again and, with God's grace, I will be waiting.

Tomorrow there's work to tackle at the office and the more mundane churchly business of a vestry meeting where we will begin to evaluate the state of our current ministries. In the coming weeks we enter what Clementines call procession-tide: Annunciation, Ascension, Rogation, the May Festival, Pentecost, Trinity, and Corpus Christi. The calendar stretches the spirit of the season as long as possible before the green hangings and vestments of the Sundays after Pentecost descend upon us for an inordinately long time this year.

These entries have been an attempt to share what we do and to show a bit of what it means to be part of an Anglo-Catholic parish during the greatest days of the year. While details would vary from All Saints, Ashmont, to the Church of the Resurrection in New

York, to Guardian Angels in South Florida, the basics are the same. The Maundy, the watch before the Sacrament, venerating the Cross, and hearing the deacon sing Exsultet, all bring us to the heart of our faith.

Today there are always those who are ready to re-fight the battle of the alabaster box: Couldn't this money have been used for the poor? Shouldn't we be paying more attention to Cause X and less time on all of the smoke and fuss? I find this to be a false dichotomy. As the hymn reminds us, the day will come "when rites and sacraments will cease." Till then, these are the signs that guide us and the touchstones that ground our lives in the life of Jesus Christ.

I have been fortunate to be able to devote my entire working life to social service and social justice work and I know that it is these and the other rites of the church, outlined in palm branches, brocade, and gilt, that keep me going and make me at least somewhat mindful of what the standard for our lives is to be. We have all known those parishes that devolve into the cult of the aesthetic experience with brunch following. Most all converts to Anglo-Catholicism go through a phrase of exceeding liturgical preciousness that their friends will never quite let them forget. But those who stay on mostly come through on the other side to a very different place.

People who stay with the catholic tradition come to see that the rites of Holy Week or the High Mass of a Sunday are pinnacles rising out of a more homely structure. It is the quiet praying, the daily praising of and pleading with God in the words of the psalms, the regular reading of scripture, sanctifying the work day with the Angelus, and the regular examination of conscience that set and hold the gems that are the great ceremonies of the Christian Year. It is all of these nasty, tiring practices that over time shape the soul and call forth catholic faith from what might otherwise become mere high churchery. Ignoring these and living on the dessert of the great rites alone can leave the soul in the strange position of being both bloated and malnourished. I know the temptation all too well.

And now I bring my sacristy rat's diary to a close. I have today to put the house in order and get ready for the return to everyday existence, but I know that I will have both sacred and profane memories of these days for the rest of the year: tenebrae in the crypt on Spy Wednesday, scrambling to the seven altars, catching a palm full of wax from the triple reed as the deacon sang the Exsultet, the organ coming to life at the Gloria of the vigil, and Canon Reid's Easter sermon reminding us that the risen Lord still returns to those who love him as he did on that first Easter morning.

We beseech thee, O Lord, pour into our hearts the love of thy Holy Spirit: that as thou hast now fulfilled us with this Paschal Sacrament, so thou wouldest make us to continue in all godly concord...

J.D. Treat
Easter Monday, 2005