

PARISH BULLETIN

of the English-speaking community

EUROPEAN PARISH
34 rue des Capucins

L-2011 Luxembourg
Tel 47 00 39
Fax: 47 01 55
email: ebreslin@pt.lu

SCHEDULE OF MASSES:

Saturday: 19.00 at St. Alphonse, 32 rue des Capucins

Sunday: 11.00 at St. Peter and Paul's Hollerich

CONFESSIONS

Every Saturday evening from 17.30 to 18.00 in St. Alphonse. Also any time at 34 rue des Capucins, by appointment.

BAPTISMS

On Saturday or Sunday afternoons in Hollerich at around 15.30 and on Saturdays in St. Alphonse at 12. 15. As we are a community largely composed of young married people, there are a lot of baptisms. It is therefore very important to contact me well in advance (a) to settle on a date (it may not always be possible to get the date that suits you), (b) to prepare for the baptism (I like to meet the parents at least once beforehand, and (c) to check out the availability of the church.

MARIAGES:

If you are thinking of getting married, either here or in some other country, please contact me several months in advance, as there is normally a matrimonial dossier to be filled in and many dioceses around the world request that this dossier be sent to them a few months before the wedding takes place. Please phone me to make an appointment and I will let you know the kind of documentation you need to get. If you are getting married here in Luxembourg and want me to 'do the wedding', please contact me before settling on a date etc., as I might not be available on the date you choose.

2. LITURGICAL CALENDAR FOR LENT AND EASTER

- March 12: Second Sunday in Lent (B) Mk. 9,2-10
This will be a community Mass of the whole European parish and will be held at St. Alphonse at 11. 15 a.m. There will be no English Mass in Hollerich on March 12th.
- March 19th: Third Sunday in Lent (B) John 2, 13-25
- March 26th: Fourth Sunday in Lent (B)
This will be a 'Children's Mass' in the context of preparation for First Communion.
- April 2nd: Fifth Sunday in Lent (B) John 12, 20-30

HOLY WEEK

- April 9th : **Passion or Palm Sunday:** Reading of the Passion acc. to Mark. Mass in St. Peter and Paul's Hollerich at 11.00 a.m. begins with Blessing of the Palms and Procession.
There will be no Saturday Evening Mass in St. Alphonse.
- April 13th:** **Holy Thursday: Mass of the Lord's Supper in Hollerich at 20.00**
- April 14th: **Good Friday: Reading of the Passion, Prayers and Holy Communion in Hollerich at 15. 30**
- April 15th: **Easter Vigil Ceremonies in Hollerich at 21. 30**
No Saturday evening Mass in English at St. Alphonse.
- April 16th: **Easter Sunday. Mass in Hollerich as usual at 11. 00 a.m.**

3. HE WAS CRUCIFIED, SUFFERED DEATH, AND WAS BURIED

What follows is a digest of an piece by one of my favourite theologians, the late Herbert McCabe, on this particular article of the Creed. The emphases and italics throughout are mine and are intended to highlight salient points.

McCabe begins by noting how different this article is from all the other articles in the creed. All of them talk religious language or speak of things only a believer could take completely seriously e.g. born of the Virgin Mary, on the third day he rose from the dead, the Holy Spirit, etc But what is this rather gruesome historical fact doing in the middle of all that? One word 'crucified' does suggest an interpretation, not a religious but a political one. If Jesus had

been *stoned* to death, that would have put the thing in a religious context. That was the kind of thing you did to prophets. But nobody was ever crucified for anything to do with religion. No, it was the Roman occupying forces that killed Jesus and they were not interested in religion. All they cared about was preserving law and order and protecting the exploiters of the Jewish people.

But this article isn't just an oddity in the creed. This oddity is the very *centre* of the creed. It's this bald historical fact that makes the creed a Christian creed. "It is because of this vulgar fact stuck in the centre of our faith that however ecumenical we may feel towards the Buddhists, say, and however fascinating the latest guru may be, Christianity is something quite different. It isn't rooted in religious experiences or transcendental meditation or the existential commitment of the self. *It is rooted in a murder committed by security forces in occupied Jerusalem around the year 30 A.D.*"

The Cross is the centre of our Creed

Most of the creed is expressed in language that could fairly be called mythological (mythological language is just as good as any other and at least as likely to tell the truth as any other). There are creation and resurrection myths all over the place and Christianity can be related to them. And a good thing too.

What anchors the creed is the totally non-theological cross. The image that stands at the centre of popular Christianity just shows a dying man nailed to a piece of wood. And this is just a picture of a historical event. It's as old as the earliest Christian writings. St. Paul (writing in 1 Corinthians, long before the Gospels) says: 'we preach Christ crucified' and 'I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified'.

There are all sorts of interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth and all throw some light on him. We can tease out what we mean by calling him Messiah or Servant or Son of Man or Son of God or light of the world or redeemer. But they all end up as answers to the questions: 'Why did Jesus decide to be crucified? What was the reason for the Cross?' My belief is that the ordinary Christians who have kept the crucifix or the sign of the cross as their creed have no problem with this at all. They've taken it for granted. *Why naturally the man was crucified. Aren't we all?* They feel deep down that crucifixion really does express what life is about, that the deep things in life are suffering and death. Not the only things in life of course.. But the deeply significant things are always tied up with suffering. Ordinary people have taken the crucifixion for granted in one way; *what has made the cross the symbol of hope and consolation is that it is a symbol of God.* It says the divine reaches down even to those depths of the

human reality, the depths we scarcely dare to explore. So what I am saying is that the question ‘Why did Jesus opt for crucifixion?’ is a misplaced one. Of course he was crucified: he was human wasn’t he? **This is the central thing I want to say: that Jesus died of being human. More than that: all humans die, but he was so human he had to be killed.**

Like us in all things, but without sin

Scripture says he was a man like us in all things but sin. On the face of it that doesn’t sound very like us. We have the feeling that if you took away our sins and (minor) vices, we would be less human and less likeable people. There is something repellently inhuman about the man or woman with no weaknesses, who is always rather chillingly perfect. But this feeling is based on a hopelessly negative idea of virtue. Whatever else virtue means, at least it means being more human. It wouldn’t be virtuous if it did not. Sin, whatever else it means, means being less human, more stiff, cold, proud, selfish, mean etc. It is not our sins that make us more human. What makes us more human is, of course, being more loving. And sin is a defect in this love. ***To say that Jesus was without sin just means that he was wholly loving, that he did not put up barriers against people, that he was not afraid of being at the disposal of others, that he was warm and free and spontaneous.*** That’s the meaning of the phrase ‘he spoke as one with authority’ i.e. what he said came straight out of him. So to say that Jesus was ‘without sin’ means that he was really able to love, not afraid of others, not afraid of being with others at their mercy.

This is no world for love

Any man like this is, of course, at risk. He is going to first be exploited and then destroyed. This is no world for love. The only way to get by in it is to restrict your humanity rather carefully, otherwise you will get hurt. You have to ration your love, keep a wary eye out for enemies if you want to survive. Now Jesus did not ration his love, so naturally he didn’t last. ***To believe in the cross, as distinct from knowing it happened, is to believe that this challenge to the world at the cost of destruction is not only right but the key to what human life is about, that in this act we have the revelation of the divine.***

We live in a world that cannot afford too much humanity, too much love. Love is permissible on the surface down to a certain relatively shallow level. But beneath that, what keeps chaos at bay, what keeps our world fairly stable, ***is not love but domination and fear.*** The last resort of society is to violence, whether today or in colonial Palestine under the Roman empire.

Both the social order and religious order in 1st century Palestine depended on the imposition of law. The only alternative that could be envisaged was chaos. And Jesus posed a threat to both the political and the religious establishment because he proposed what he claimed was a third possibility: neither domination nor chaos but love. What was special about Jesus was not that he produced the theory that people might live by love - that was a tired old theory, many times discredited by experience. ***What was special about Jesus was not that he produced the theory that people might live by love, but that he produced the love.*** The kind of relationship he had with his friends, and the kind of relationship he enabled them to have with each other, was something quite new. Jesus' alternative was not a philosophy or a theology or a social theory or a political programme. It was simply himself. Believe in **me**, he says.

The whole question of Jesus turned on whether he really was or was not offering a quite new kind of relationship with people - or as people were subsequently to put it, pouring forth the Holy Spirit. And the only way to tell this was to respond to Jesus, to accept him or reject him, to have faith in him or not. ***Your response to Jesus was not just your judgement of him. It was also a judgement of you.*** If you did not take the risk, then you did not recognize what Jesus was offering; you immediately explained it away.

Why they killed him

The religious leaders in general failed to see what Jesus was offering them. They saw him as a blasphemer. It was necessary to be rid of him. This would not be difficult as the colonial powers were naturally suspicious of any popular leader and Jesus had begun to have a mass following, especially among poor people. Things were made worse by the fact that some members of the zealots, the underground revolutionary movement, were associated with Jesus (though he clearly disagreed with their aims and their tactics) and this would arouse the suspicion of the Romans. Caiaphas, a Roman appointee, put it simply: if we let him go on he will provoke a Roman backlash. To present him as an enemy of both the Jewish people and of the Romans was the neatest way of getting rid of him. There was never much difficulty about getting the Romans to crucify someone. It was the normal punishment for political opposition.

How did Jesus see his death?

That is the death of Jesus as seen from the public point of view, as it might have been reported in the contemporary left-wing press. What about it from Jesus' own point of view? It's clear that very early on Jesus recognized that the

love he offered was a threat to the establishment and that they'd try to destroy him. The evangelists, writing with hindsight, attribute to him various specific prophecies about his death and there's no reason to think they're inventions. Jesus would have had to be very imperceptive and foolish to think he could get away with it. Real love is a dangerous, disturbing, and subversive force. If you offer it to the world then, as John has Jesus say, 'The world will hate you'. Jesus knew that his attempt would fail, but he remained faithful to his mission from the Father.

In conclusion: it is clear that if the kind of love that Jesus offers inevitably results in his being crucified, the same kind of thing is going to be true of those who receive his love and are liberated in their turn and able to pass it on to others. Crucifixion in some way is the destiny of every Christian. It does not have to be public execution. That only occurs when the love of Christ takes forms that are recognized as immediately dangerous by the ruling class. But for every Christian his or her death is to be a death that expresses the love of Christ, the Holy Spirit. There are just two kinds of death, the death that, like Christ's death, is the operation of the Spirit, or the death that simply means the organism has ceased to function. *To die as Christ did, filled with the Holy Spirit, is to conquer death; death then becomes simply the presupposition for the transformation of humanity in the resurrection.* But that is another matter.

4. OUR LENTEN PROJECT: QUITO SOUTH, ECUADOR

Last year we began a project to finance the building of a school for poor indigenous children in the south of Quito, Ecuador, where two of our expatriationers, Tim and Phil Lane, have been working. The missionary committee of the European parish has decided to continue the project this year. Tom Cranfield was there last summer and offers the following report of the actual situation.

The situation now: The position of the indigenous peoples around Quito has not changed. Their situation is described in a special study from the World Bank in November 2005 and quoted in the highly prestigious *Tablet* magazine last week. Poverty is the condition of 87% of the indigenous people of Ecuador. They are paid 55% the wages of non-indigenous peoples. A third of the children of indigenous people do not go to school, another third is 'working' in the economy. In other words two thirds of the children are not being educated. The school project in the southern suburb of Quito is a small step to ease this situation.

After the Lenten campaign of 2005 a site of 1000sq. meters has been bought and paid for and this is now walled and fenced and protected. I have photos of it and of the surrounding area.

Before Christmas Tim and Phil sent me the estimated cost of buildings to get the school up and running

Excavation and Foundations.....	\$2 500
Walls and structure.....	\$30 000
Plastering.....	\$7 000
Flooring.....	\$8 000
Roofing.....	\$10 000
Joinery.....	\$8 000
Plumbing.....	\$3 000
Electrical works.....	\$3 5000
Total.....	\$72 000

This is a large sum by the standards our parish has had to face heretofore. However for half the sum the school can be partially operational and in any case I believe a special effort could be made. In short, ‘all’ we need is 72 people who will promise to raise 1000 euro each before Pentecost 2006. This could be by way of individual contribution, or a sum to aim at through charity events.

The parish has long arms and stretches into far away places. I will be very happy to come to the English or French or Dutch-speaking or German churches to talk to our parishioners, and would be happy to help put a letter together to some of our friends begging for support for this very worthy and effective project which will bring light into the lives of hundreds of young people in one of the most under-privileged places on earth.

Our project to support the creation of a primary school for the young of Ecuador is truly a Christian calling and i would ask all to actively join in a common effort to anser the call fo tehHoly spirit. It is worth recalling that initially the only land available for this project was a cramped site of a mere 400 sq. metres. However quite unexpectedly, a site of 1000sq. metres became availeable. A member of the parish has made a substantial personal donation towards the purchase of this site. Twice the Holy Spirit has helped the project. Now perhaps we should allow him to act again by energetically seeking the necessary funds. The

miracle of the loaves and fishes can happen at any time.

Tom Cranfield.

Please make your contributions to either of the following accounts of the European parish - taking care to note under 'Communication' Lenten Project 2006

CCPL IBAN LU67 1111 0283 7652 0000
BCEE IBAN LU16 0019 1000 4800 4000

5. LENTEN SERVICE OF RECONCILIATION

We will have a service consisting of readings, a brief homily and prayers, followed by absolution on Wednesday March 29th at 8.00 p.m. in Hollerich. There will be opportunity for a brief private confession for those who wish. It's a good way to prepare for Easter. All are welcome.

6. FIRST COMMUNION PROGRAMME

Many thanks to our catechists, to the parents and all concerned with the First Communion programme, which is going well. Just a reminder: the date of First Communion is June 4th. The next 'Children's Mass' will be on the Fourth Sunday of Lent, March 26th.

7. KATHOLIKENTAG IN SAARBRUCKEN 24 - 28 MAY

The German community of the European parish invites you to join them and take the bus at 9.00 a.m. on Saturday May 27th. There will be facilities on request for people whose mother tongue is not German. There will also be ecumenical activities. For further information contact Marlies Werner at m.werner-gura@internet.lu

To conclude, may I wish all our parishioners, whether you are here for Holy Week and Easter or not, a blessed season of Lent and the joy of the risen Lord in your heart this Easter.

Eamonn Breslin, parish priest.

