

April 1987 #109

For the Sunday of the Resurrection , Easter Day -- Colossians 3:1-4

Christ Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

If then you have been raised with Christ , seek the things that are above , where Christ is , seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died , and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. -- Colossians 3:1-2

Christ is risen! That is the glad shout today. Christ is risen -- but what are we supposed to do about it? Our epistle tells us what we are to do about it! Seek the things that are above. Earthly things are transitory, but Christ is eternal.

We must not be like the people we know who are always on the track of the latest thing . *State of the Art* is their gospel , and *New and Improved* is their creed. Because earthly things change , these people are never happy for very long. Take some-thing which is now fairly common: the VCR. These trendy people ran out and bought a VCR when Sony first made home models available. These machines recorded and played back in a format that was unique , and the tapes only lasted an hour each. A few years later, JVC came out with a different format (VHS) that gave more time. Our trendy friends, of course , had to run out and buy one. Then Sony improved their model . Guess what? I think you get the idea. The people of whom I write feel they must have the latest, but fail to realize that what is latest soon becomes dated. As someone once said, nothing is more dated than yesterday's newspaper .

But our faith rests on something that is far from dated. We believe in something that

is eternal. Christ is not dated. Heaven is not dated. Heavenly things are never dated, because they are eternal. We are risen with Christ . That means we died with Christ; since we died with Christ , things which seem so important to worldly people have no interest to us. All that matters is Christ, and he matters eternally .

We must, however, not become 'other-worldly' in the sense of ceasing to be good stewards. We are called to be innocent as doves, but wise as serpents, when dealing with the things of this world . And one can deal with the things of this world, as one must -- the food we eat , the air we breathe, the earthly lives we live -- without setting our hearts upon them. For the time being we do live in the world. We need to work to make a living , to earn the money needed for the necessities of life. There is nothing wrong with having a VCR. It can provide amusement and be educational. But it is not where the heart should be. The VCR or the automobile is not the be-all or end-all . Christ is.

Go ahead . Tape the Easter liturgy broadcast on TV -- in Beta or VHS! And have a blessed Easter and a happy eternity! o

Br. Charles Kramer is secretary of the Acolytes' Guild of the Parish of Trinity Church, New York City. It is his responsibility to schedule for Sunday services and to provide replacements when scheduled acolytes are absent .

Faith and Resurrection

I think we can all agree that while the disciples knew Jesus was a bit radical, the resurrection really came as a surprise . I know *Id* be a bit taken back Once they were convinced that it had actually happened they could not stop talking about it. And because they talked about it to all who would listen, the Church sprang up and grew and flourished.

I cannot explain the resurrection: yet I can believe it; I can experience its power; I can affirm and proclaim it . In the Eucharist we proclaim: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again .

There are many benefits we receive as a result of this resurrection:

+ Because God raised Jesus from the dead, we can believe our sins are forgiven . These sins are what separate us from God; whatever makes us feel estranged and distant from the Lord.

+ Not only can we know that our sins are forgiven — we can hope and believe in a future life in Christ . Those who walk with Jesus Christ , who enter into the struggles and triumphs of fellowship with him, realize

Here and there with the Brotherhood . . .

COMMUNITY NOTES

White Plains NY

The Brotherhood Council has accepted Br . Joseph Thomas Irvin's request for release from annual vows .

New York NY

Br . John Peter Clark represented the Brotherhood at the memorial service held for the Rev . Mother Ruth, founder of the Community of the Holy Spirit . +++ Bra. William Francis Jones and Tobias Stanislas Haller attended the eighteenth national conference of Trinity Institute .

Bronx NY

Superior General Br . Richard Thomas Biernacki was joined by Brs. James E . Teets , Tobias Stanislas, William Bunting, and Earl Christian for the installation of the Rev . Alfred P. Montalto as rector of the Church of the Good Shepherd. Brs. William and Earl served as masters of ceremonies in planning the liturgy for the installation, and Br. William was chaplain to Bishop Moore, who presided at the service.

that this new relationship has no beginning and no end. (2 Cor 5:17) Because of Christ, life has a new quality , a new dimension. (John 17:3) That is why the apostle Paul said , For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain ." (Phil 1:21)

+ Because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead, we can believe in the ultimate victory of God. The truth of the resurrection is of cosmic proportions . All creation shares in his redemption . Paul described the whole creation moaning and sharing the pain of childbirth, awaiting God's final act of redemption .

Again and again, those momentary victories of crime and injustice, sickness, death and strife, confront us with the cross and its tragedy . We are forced to live out many of our days in the darkness of Good Friday. But Easter says to us: *God is alive* . God has won the victory over sin and death . The power of the enemy is broken!

Christ has died, Christ is risen , Christ will come again . +

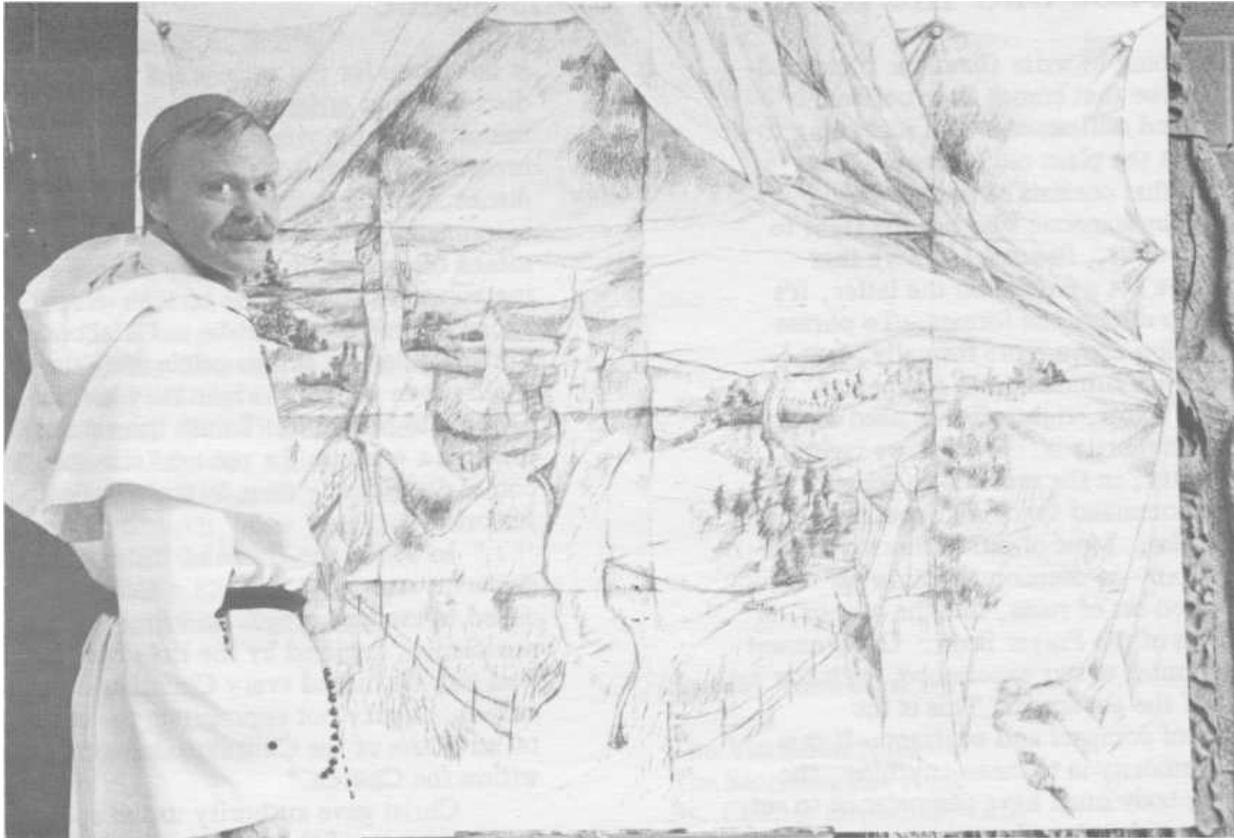
-RTB

Catonsville MD

Br . Edward Munro joined Deacon Karl Halter in a two-day quiet retreat at the Annunciation Monastery on the grounds of the All Saints Sisters Convent .

Cincinnati OH

Br . Richard Thomas was present for the installation of the Rev . Thomas James Snodgrass as rector of Christ Church , where Br. Thomas Joseph Ross serves on staff . They were joined by Br. Bernard Francis LaReau and novice Br. Michael David Elvestrom. Fr. Snodgrass was once curate at Grace Church, White Plains NY , where Br . Richard Thomas first knew him. This was also a time to visit with other friends: Fr. Paul Wessinger of the Society of St . John the Evangelist, and Kay Sturm, one of our Companions. Also present were two sisters from the Community of the Transfiguration. During the festivities surrounding the visit, Br. Thomas Joseph discovered that the Superior General has a passion for grits!



Kankakee IL

Novice Br. Michael David has presented a show of his paintings, icons and drawings at the Olivet Nazarene University . Works include pieces from his series "Songs My Mother Taught Me." Br. Michael David is chairman of the Department of Art at South-eastern Illinois College, Harrisburg. In the photograph, Br . Michael David is shown with one of his works.

Minneapolis MN

Novice Br. Michael David was keynote speaker at a thy-long Celebration of Faith and Art at Bethlehem Lutheran Church. The aim of the program was to stretch the understanding of worship and its relation to the arts, and its mediation by the senses — aural , visual, olfactory, gustatory and tactile . Br . Michael David led a workshop on the ways in which liturgy can reach the worshiper through all of these senses. o

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Obedience and the Idolatry of Conscience

I am not going to write about the transcendent obedience that comes from perfect humility and selflessness. I'm just going to write about the plain old garden-variety obedience that consists of doing what you're told to do by someone who has the right to tell you to do it. Because I believe that until you've got a handle on the latter, it's pointless to discuss the former. To phrase the definition above more formally, let's call obedience submission to competent authority. Now, right off, we need to figure out what authority is. Fact is, we rarely see authority, in the sense of an innate power to command that isn't dependent on someone else. Most of our authority comes from custom -- a decision to follow an agreed-upon set of rules, like the canons, or the rubrics of the Prayer Book. Government exists, in most of our experience, with the consent of the governed. This is the authority of compact and contract. If this kind of authority is to mean anything, the governing body must have competency to act, and expect to be obeyed.

An attitude that says, "I'll follow the rules except when I disagree with them," can hardly be called obedient. That such an attitude cloaks itself in the term conscience does not render it immune from criticism. Too often depth of feeling is mistaken for conscience. Strongly held opinions are not necessarily valid opinions, and the individual must weigh his or her opinions against the objective standards and disciplines which make up the social and ecclesial contract. There are proper forums for the debate and resolution of such problems. Only when such forums are nonexistent, or when individuals are excluded from participation in them, is disobedience a proper option.

In the Church, disobedience arises when individuals cease to follow the will of the majority as expressed in a body of canonically accepted rules. The individual violates the discipline of the Church, the ecclesial contract, and -- in some cases -- the solemn vow of obedience. Anglicans, especially Episcopalians, have a very democratic setup, with opportunity for input at all levels, from pew to cathedra. There

is no excuse for the widespread disregard for discipline and order in the Church, from minor tinkering with rubrics to major breaches of polity by bishops. Such disobedience is all the more regrettable when the sacramental life of the Church is used as a means of protest, whether by bishops exercising episcopal acts outside of their proper jurisdictions (whether it be in Oklahoma or Philadelphia), or priests celebrating the eucharist in places in which they are not licensed to function. To use the vehicles of grace as a medium for political statements comes dangerously close to ecclesiastical terrorism.

In 1975, the House of Bishops made a powerful assertion. "While a bishop is called to exercise prophetic witness as his conscience, inspired by the Holy Spirit, may lead him (as indeed every Christian is so called), he may not appropriate the sacramental structure of the Church to his own view within the Church."

Christ gave authority to the apostles. The successors of the apostles, in the Episcopal Church, have shared their authority in synods which include presbyters, deacons and laity. If you disagree with the decisions of General Convention, by all means make every effort to change them, through the process provided. And if the proper authority will not change, and you believe you bear a vision of the truth so clear that it cannot be denied, then perhaps you should boldly take the radical step of schism. Such actions are part of Anglican tradition as well.

I said at the outset that I wasn't going to write about the mystical side of obedience. But there is a way in which the lower form of obedience leads to the higher. It is the way of the cross. Jesus Christ was obedient, even unto death on the cross. The authority that crucified him was Pilate; as Christ said to him, "You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above." The cross was the means by which Christ was obedient to the Father. We are called to an obedience no less painful. May we answer that call in humility, made perfect in weakness — for grace is sufficient. o

-- The Editor