



Good Friday

By Deacon Tim White



Today, Christians all over the world pause to remember the story of the passion and death of Jesus Christ. *Let us make no bones about it; Jesus suffered intense pain during his passion and death, physical and intense emotional pain. The Romans knew crucifixion was the most painful death imaginable. It was so cruel that Cicero claimed a Roman citizen, no matter the crime, should never be crucified. Roman writers even urged fellow citizens not to watch a crucifixion.*

Two thousand Jews had been crucified less than ten miles from Nazareth as Jesus was growing up; so he knew what it was. Is it any wonder that he asked his father to be freed from this horrible death even though he knew it was the reason he had come into the world. Is it any wonder that he begged his disciples to pray with him so he would have the courage to go through with it?

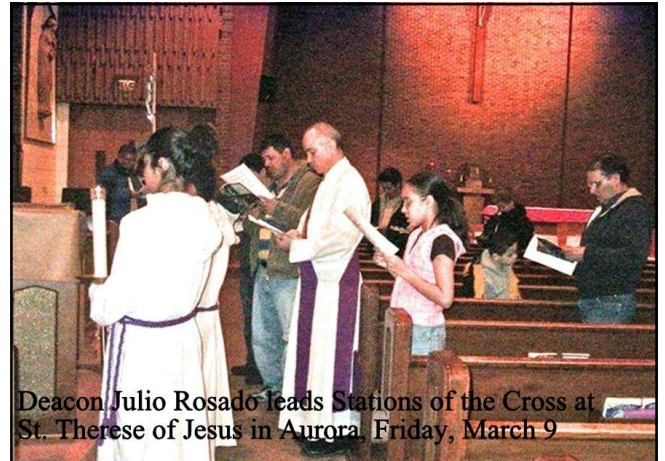
But why would he have subjected himself to such agony? He didn't have to. *He's the son of the all powerful uncaused cause. Could God not have just started over, or called the score even? We have to answer, "Yes!" Instead, his son willingly submitted to die in pain and agony.*

Isn't it true that there are hundreds of "little painful deaths" in our own lives we have to endure—be it a driver's test, final exam, presentation to the boss, confrontation with those we love? Note

that Jesus didn't scream "Why me?" He accepted that pain in human life is unavoidable and turned to the Father in prayer.

Envision all the pain, all the blood, all the tears in the world, then picture Jesus as a giant sponge blotting all that up and taking it into himself. Jesus took all the sin and resulting pain in the world upon himself and marched away with it.

Jesus' passion must have been what inspired C.S. Lewis to write: "God whispers to us in our pleasures. He speaks to us in our conscience and He shouts to us in our pain." *It is through our pain that God contacts us most profoundly. Pain is God's loud speaker. Continued on page 2*



Deacon Julio Rosado leads Stations of the Cross at St. Therese of Jesus in Aurora, Friday, March 9

Deacon to Deacon: Since Assembly Day, a number of deacons have enquired about the status of the St. Stephen - Deacon Relief Fund. As background, the Office has been given funds by parishes [tithes], deacons and individuals earmarked for assistance to deacons or their families in times of great need. The funds are kept in a separate account, isolated from the operating funds. With the advice of the Bishop's Committee for the Permanent Diaconate and authorization of the Vicar for Clergy, the Office has made several gifts since the funds inception over a decade ago.

Today, the funds are nearly depleted. If you or your parish would like to make a gift at this time, please do so by sending a check accompanied by a letter stating the origin and intended use of the funds. As John Sentovich suggested, an individual may want to consider putting a bequest in his or her will for this fund.

To replenish the funds, we will need the assistance of the community. Several deacons made suggestions about how we might raise funds. Please contact the office if you would like to serve on a committee focused on sourcing these funds. Today's generosity will be the charity we have to share with deacons and their families in times of great need.

Important Fall Dates: The daffodils are barely out—but it is never too early to stake out time for the Annual Deacon/Couple Retreat and Priest/Deacon Symposium. **The Annual Priest/Deacon Symposium will be held in Rockford on September 28th and 29th.** The schedule will be as it was last year and the conference will qualify participants for preaching recertification. Topic and details will appear in future editions of *Deacon News*. **The annual Deacon Retreat will be the weekend of September 7th; Couples retreat, the weekend of October 5th.** Those willing to serve as the "Assistant Retreat Master" at either retreat should contact the Office.

For those looking to go full circle (or at least 344°), **Assembly Day 2008 is Saturday, February 23.** Please ask your pastor to give you this day off from the parish and keep your calendars clear as much as possible so that we can have the proper time to meet, pray together, attend mass, enjoy meal together, exchange ideas, gain new ones and enhance the strength of our community.

Please contact the office if you are willing to assist with the planning of Assembly Day 2008. We plan to form a committee to begin meeting in September.

Birthday and Anniversary

Wishes: Beverly Bach, Allen Bondi, Jeanne Dall, Lee Deatherage, Ann Gartland, Alex Haincheck, Joe Kayser, Doris and Tony Koss, Jim Lopez, Christine Rees, Bob Smits and Evelyn Verstynen.

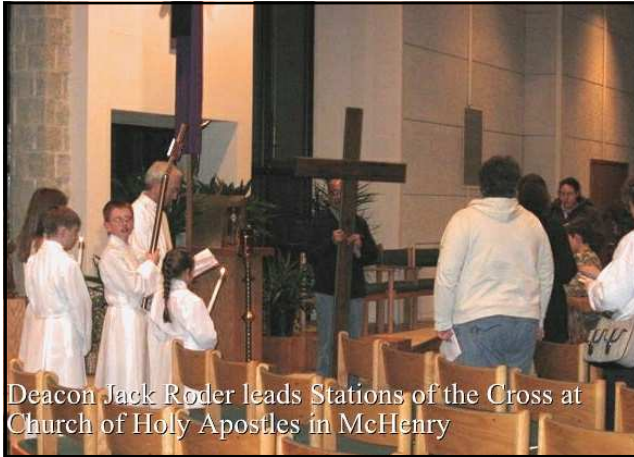
Marriage: Beverly and John Bach, Sam and Priscilla Cassaro, Thad and Theresa Ciochon, Marty and Valerie Hetzel, Warren and Jeanne LaMont, Ed and Theresa Morrison, and Jim and Frances Olson. Special anniversary wishes to Larry and Nina Motyka who are celebrating 25 years of marriage April 17.

May they be touched by Jesus' healing hands: We pray for our brother deacons, Mike Frazier, Ron "Willie" Williams, Lee Deatherage, and Peter Calgaro. Continue to pray for Tom O'Brien's wife, Maria and Bob Brandenburg's wife, Arlene. Continue to pray for our Bishop, Thomas G. Doran.

Necrology: We pray also for our brother deacons who have gone to eternal life: Robert McElroy [April 12, 2004].



Good Friday *Continued from page 1*



The Lamb of God took away the sins of the world. In reparation for the sins of all mankind—now and forever—he offered his pain to the Father for each woman and man singularly, from Adam and Eve to us. So complete was his act that he won forgiveness for all sins, even those yet to be committed.


"How long," Edwin Arlington Robinson pleads in his poem *Crucifixion*, "will we keep Christ writhing on the cross?" When we turn our back on God for some small advantage, like so many pieces of silver, are we any different from Judas? Each time we extend the misery of another person by not doing what is right, not acting according to principle, not stepping in when we see a wrong being done, are we any different than Pilate?

Jesus also shows us something else by his final agony. The

minute the blood flowed from the first nail hole made in his flesh, Jesus cried out, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." At the instant that the temporal power of the world attempted to draw Jesus into the violence game, at the instant those voices rang out on either side of him, "Get us down from this cross! Summon the father's legions of angels," Jesus refused to play. He knows that violence merely begets more violence. Instead, he takes all the violent sinfulness of the world upon himself. He drains the violent of all injury and gives nothing back. He leaves the provocateurs spent and the admiring crowd of onlookers confident that, "He is truly the son of God."

Peter asked Jesus, "How many times must I forgive my brother?" He expected Jesus to give him a number. Erroneously, Peter thought forgiving eventually has an end. But Jesus says "No!" With more than words and far more than once, we must return love for hate, good for evil, forgiveness for injury. *This is what Jesus taught to the world. Had he summoned a legion of angels, stepped down from the cross triumphant and swatted a few centurions, he would have done nothing more than the usual eye for an eye. He wouldn't have been news!*

We stop to reflect on the triple message of the crucifixion: 1. To understand that God knew about all things human including our pain... 2. To understand that it is in our pain that we are alone with God. 3. To understand that we must break the cycle of violence and sin that lead us away from God and away from our neighbor first by forgiving others seven times seventy seven times.

As Jesus Christ hung upon that Cross, he could see all of the ages of man turning from him, hurting their brothers. He could see all the individual ethical evils that you and I commit each day, our loneliness, our arrogance, our misery and agony. He did not call his Father to let him down. He turned to the thief on the right and forgave him. To us, he continues to say the same, "I forgive you, I love you." 

Ordination Anniversaries: 21 years and under!

The Most Reverend Arthur J. O'Neill ordained the Class of 1996 eleven years ago, April 27. Of the 15 men ordained, Deacons Chuck Cooper, Bill Dean, Rich Gerdeman, Cy Grossmayer, Tom Hawksworth, Ron Magee, Pat Maher, Rick Martin, Bob Milano, Dick Mulcahey, Jim Olson and Larry Zitkus are still serving this diocese. Deacon Mike Cristoforo spends most of his time in Marco Island, Fl. and serves the Diocese of Venice.

Deacon Larry Geinosky moved to Haines City, Fl. in 2001 and now serves the Diocese of St. Augustine. Retired Deacon Bob Brandenburg resides within this diocese.

The following deacons were ordained in the month of April in the Archdiocese of Chicago and now serve this diocese. Celebrating 21 years as a permanent deacon is Deacon Armand Ferrini, April, '86; 20 years - Deacon Louis Barone, April, '87; 13 years - Deacon Greg Stevens, April, '94; and celebrating 10 years as a permanent deacon is Deacon Howard Ganschow, April, '97.

Of Interest: You can still sign up to attend the following presentation. On Saturday, April 28, two single event opportunities are available at St. Bridget Church in the main hall. Rockford Police Chief, Chet Epperson will present "Gangs - What Can the Church Do" 10:00 - 12:00 AM. Mr. Mike Gallagher will present a wellness class 1:00 - 2:30 PM. You may attend one or both classes on April 28th. Participation for this day qualifies for 3.5, 2 or 1.5 hours of ongoing formation credit. Register with the office to attend the above opportunities.

Participation in the following seminars qualifies for Ongoing Formation Hours. If you would like to attend one of these seminars or programs and the cost is an obstacle, please contact the office.

All Deacons and their wives are invited to attend a **Natural Family Planning Seminar** as auditors. The NFP Seminar is a mandated norm for engaged couples as part of marriage preparation in the Rockford Diocese. Seminars are held routinely throughout the diocese. Please register at least 14 days prior to the seminar you wish to attend. A half-price fee of \$20 will assist in covering material expenses. For more information, go to: www.rockforddiocese.org/respectlife/CalendarPage.

"Created & Redeemed Seminar" an introduction to **Pope John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*** with Christopher West. **When:** Friday, April 13, 2007: Sign-in 6:30; Seminar 7-9:30PM and Saturday, April 14: 8:30 AM-3:45 PM at Holy Cross, Batavia. **Cost:** \$20/per person includes workbook and lunch [turkey, ham or vegetarian] - if ordered prior to April 7th. **Contact:** cindyagustine@comcast.net

"This is MY Body: Human Sexuality" a **FREE** seminar for Teens (12 and over) and their Parents presented by Fr. Thomas J. Loya. **Purpose:** to present ***Theology of the Body*** concepts to teens and parents that will help them in moral decision making. **When:** Sunday, April 22, 2007; 2:30-5:30 PM at St. Mary Church, Elgin. Registration requested by April 12 to the parish address or via email to mattoon@stmarylgin.com