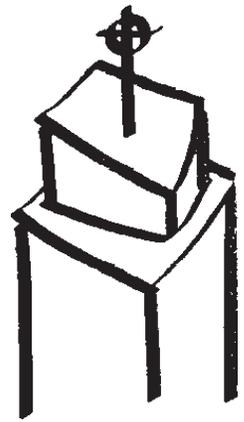


# OUR FAMILY



# NEWS

For Oblates of St. Bede Abbey, Peru, Illinois



March &  
April, 2017



# THE DRAMA OF EASTER

## THE TIME

The gospel proclamation that we shall hear on Easter Sunday is a kind of dramatic presentation of the discovery of the empty tomb. The Middle Ages saw the dramatic possibilities of various passages of scripture and produced the mystery play. This passage invites us to take our places with the disciples of Jesus on the Sunday morning after the Passion and relive their experience. Let us look first at the stage directions. The time is “very early, when it was still dark” (Jn 20:1). Whereas Mark says that the sun had already risen, John seems to want to make a point of the darkness. When Judas had left the supper, after the washing of the feet but before the discourse of Jesus, “it was night” (Jn 13:30). Luke says clearly, “This is your hour, the time for the power of darkness” (Lk 22:53). And indeed, the darkness grew even more intense: “there was darkness over the whole earth” (Lk 23:44) during the crucifixion. We had all been in darkness for a long time; St. Paul says that we belonged to the “power of darkness” (Col 1:13), but “God called us out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Pt 2:9).

Truly, “at night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn” (Ps 30:5). It is still dark when Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb; she is still sunk in gloom and notices only that the stone has been removed. By the time the two disciples whom she summons have arrived, the light is beginning to dawn in the sky (for they are able to see the cloths inside), and soon the light dawns in their hearts as well.

## THE PLACE

John is the only one of the evangelists who tells us that Jesus was buried in a garden: “In the place where he had been crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had been buried” (Jn 19:41). In the scriptures the mention of a “garden” inevitably recalls the original state of the human race, which began in what is called the “garden of Eden” (Gen 2:8), i.e., the “garden of delight.” The word “paradise” used to describe it was borrowed from the Persians, for whom it meant a royal park, surrounded by a wall. The Septuagint use of it for Eden marked it with a religious sense. Thereafter, whenever Israel thought of future bliss, the point of reference was “Paradise,” “Eden,” the original state. The future was seen as a return to the ideal past. Thus Is 51:3,

The Lord shall comfort Zion,  
and have pity on all her ruins;  
her deserts he shall make like Eden,  
her wasteland like the garden of the Lord;  
joy and gladness shall be found in her,  
thanksgiving and the sound of song.

The paradise of the end time is a return to the original one, a return to the garden. Its gifts are the fruit of the tree of life, the water and bread of life, the banquet of salvation, fellowship with God. The doctrine of resurrection meant that all the righteous would enjoy it, even though they had died.

When the New Testament therefore speaks of future bliss, it speaks of return to the garden. And so Rev 2:7, “To the victor I will give the right to eat from the tree of life that is in the garden of God.” The victor is the

one who perseveres in testifying to the Risen One. His destination is described in the final chapters of Revelation, where the “garden of God” is revealed as “the Jerusalem that comes down from heaven” (21:2). For there “the river of life-giving water, sparkling like crystal,” flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of its street; the river nourishes the tree of life “that produces fruit twelve times a year, once each month” (22:1-2). The serpent is destroyed (Rev 20:2.10) and there is “no more death or mourning, wailing or pain” (Rev 21:4).

## THE CAST OF CHARACTERS

Mary Magdalene and Peter and the other disciple find themselves, then, in the garden. As the light begins to flood the sky, the darkness is lifted from their hearts. It happens first to the disciple whom Jesus loved, because it is love that provokes faith: this is the disciple who responded most wholeheartedly in love to the love that Jesus had shown him. “He saw and believed” (Jn 20:9). He began to recognize that he was indeed in the garden of God and that dawn was breaking to dispel the darkness forever. The long reign of darkness is over; the dawn of salvation is at hand. “I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness” (Jn 12:46).

We listen to the Easter gospel, and like Mary and Peter and the beloved disciple, we too are in the garden. The light of dawn now floods *our* hearts; we see and believe. We become conscious of where we are: in the garden of God. Jesus on the cross had said to us, in the person of the thief, “Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise” (Lk 23:43). The eschatological garden of delight has arrived. Jesus seats us at the banquet of salvation (Lk 12:37). The menu is the bread of life and the water that causes one never to thirst again (Jn 6:35), the wine produced by the one with crimson garments after trodding the winepress alone (Is 63:1.3), and the fruit of the tree of life that never stops bearing (Rev 22:2). Our fellow guests at the table of the Lord are Mary Magdalene and Peter and the beloved disciple, the apostles and martyrs, the angels and saints, and all who have believed in the Lord, who have entered the garden of the Lord and opened their hearts to the light of the true dawn. “At night there are tears, but joy comes with dawn” (Ps 30:5).

Rejoice, my brothers and sisters, and let us celebrate our paschal feast, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor 5:8).

The Lord has made our desert like Eden,  
our wasteland like the garden of the Lord;  
let there be joy and gladness found in us,  
thanksgiving and the sound of joy.

(Is 51:3)

+ Fr. Claude Peifer, O.S.B.



**Our Family News** is published in the special interest of the oblates of St. Bede Abbey. Please send changes of address and comments to The Editor, Our Family News, St. Bede Abbey, 24 W US Highway 6, Peru, IL 61354.

We welcome your submissions to this publication, either instructive or reflective, whether prose or poetry. They should in some way relate to the **Rule of Benedict**, Benedictine spirituality, and/or the oblate program. The editor reserves the rights to choose material for publication and to edit as necessary.

## SCHEDULE OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are held in the abbey church from  
1:30 P.M. to 4:30 P.M.

Sunday, March 12, 2017  
Sunday, April 9, 2017  
Sunday, May 7, 2017

### Passage for *Lectio* at the March Meeting

As your fellow workers we beg you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In an acceptable time I have heard you; on a day of salvation I have helped you." Now is the the acceptable time! Now is the day of salvation!

2 Corinthians 6:1-2

### Passage for *Lectio* at the April Meeting

Christ suffered for you and left an example for you to follow the way he took. He had not done anything wrong, and there had been no perjury in his mouth. He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge. He was bearing our faults in his own body on the cross, so that we might die to our faults and live for holiness; through his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 2:21-24

All oblates are invited  
to a memorial Mass  
for **Elizabeth Lee Lenski**,  
to be celebrated  
at 10:30 A.M., Friday, May 5,  
in the St. Bede Abbey Church,  
Abbot Philip Davey, O.S.B.,  
presiding.

Visitation from 10:00 A.M. until Mass

Interment at St. Hyacinth Cemetery,  
N. 30<sup>th</sup> Rd., LaSalle,  
immediately following Mass

Buffet luncheon  
at Maples Supper Club,  
1401 Shooting Park Rd., Peru

### Abbey Prayer Schedule

Visitors are welcome to join the monks for Mass and for the hours of the Divine Office. Conventual Mass is celebrated on the first level of the abbey church, the hours of the Divine Office on the second level. During the school year, the monks' schedule is as follows.

5:45 A.M. Morning Prayer\*  
7:45 A.M. Conventual Mass\*\*  
12:00 Noon Midday Prayer  
5:30 P.M. Evening Prayer\*\*\*  
\* on Sunday, 7:00 A.M.  
\*\* on Sunday, 10:00 A.M.  
\*\*\* on Saturday & Sunday, 5:00 P.M.

