

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

PALM SUNDAY

Palm Sunday is the beginning of Holy Week, a special time of the year which makes all other days, weeks and months holy by virtue what God did through Jesus Christ during this time.

A week is an important time period in our lives. Animals do not live by a time-table other than the seasons when instinctively, they begin to move from place to place, or shed an apparel and put on heavier clothing or as some such as the bear begin to hibernate to sleep-out the season. We humans, generally live in a framework of a week. Those that are employed or who are students, look forward to Friday afternoon when things begins to wind-down and when one is free for the weekend either for pleasure or to do " catch-up" work or to do things on a more relaxed and at a more leisurely pace. But when Monday morning arrives, the new week seems a long way off in order to arrive at the weekend once more.

God created the whole universe in a week. Each day of creation may have been millions and billions of years or it may have been done in a 24 hour time frame. Nothing is impossible with God. If he wanted, He could do each day's work in 24 hours, which otherwise for us would take many years. During the final period of the creative act, an ozone layer was formed above the Earth's atmosphere which played a decisive role in the formation of plant and animal life. This protective layer which is very delicate and holds the delicate balance of life and is in danger of being destroyed because of human negligence and lifestyle. We knew of these years ago. A spaceship was sent with astronauts aboard specifically to study the ozone layer. Their report was not encouraging. The planet Earth is dirtier than ever!

There is another protective mechanism which is built into our bodies. It is called the immune system. Its function is to repulse harmful bacteria to protect the body from infectious diseases. When the protective shield has been penetrated it leaves the victims in a helpless and merciless situation under control of germs that multiply and spread at will. Sickness easily spreads among all classes and gender groups. Again a very delicate but important mechanism when "broken down" is unable to function properly.

The purpose of Holy Week is to restore that, which was lost, essentially the grace, that great gift of God by which the human specie not only has the capacity to repel harmful (evil) elements which endeavor to estrange it from its source of life, but also more importantly, to provide it with vital nutrition so it can grow, prosper and bloom properly bodily, mentally and spiritually. When the spirit is healthy all other elements and components likewise are favorably affected. It was during the last days of Holy Week that the major operation of the human soul took place, mainly in the sufferings, crucifixion and burial of Jesus of Nazareth, called the Christ. By His Holy Resurrection from the dead a healthy recovery was assured those deemed worthy, a blessing that can be enjoyed by all because holiness of the Holy Week is not confined to a certain people living at a particular time and place but for all people living everywhere and at all times.

JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM **(Mt. 20: 29-34)**

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus went to Jericho with the great crowd following Him. Two blind men were sitting by the roadside and when they heard that Jesus was passing by they began to cry out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David." The crowd attempted to quiet them but they cried out even louder. Jesus stopped and

asked, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said, "Lord, let our eyes be opened." Jesus had pity on them, touched their eyes upon which their sight was restored to them and they too follow Jesus with the others many of whom were healed by Him.

Near Jerusalem two of the disciples were sent to bring a donkey and a colt. Jesus sat upon a donkey and as they entered Jerusalem fulfilling the prophecy of the Prophet Zechariah (9:9) to "tell the daughter of Zion, behold your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on an ass and a colt, the foal of an ass." The disciples went and did what Jesus had directed them to do. As they entered the people began to spread their garments and crying out saying "Hosanna, to the Son of David; blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." Many in Jerusalem were moved by this and began to ask "Who is this?" To which the reply was given, "Jesus the Prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

Jesus entered the Temple and cast out the money changers and those who sold pigeons, saying, "It is written, 'my house shall be called a 'House of Prayer' but you have made it a den of robbers. Jesus did not denounce charity but the use of the House of God to further personal profit. The Chief Priest became annoyed in seeing the healings and the crying out of the children saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David" and asked Jesus, "Don't you hear what they are saying?" To which Jesus replied, "Have you not read that 'out of the mouth of babes comes perfect praise." (Ps. 8: 2)

Concerning the saying referring to Jesus as being the Son of David, Christ questioned the Pharisees asked to, "Who is Christ?" To which they answered, "The Son of David." (Mt. 22:41-46) Jesus then asked, "If He is David's son, how is it that David said to him as being his Lord saying in spirit, the Lord said to my Lord." Both Mary and Joseph were descendants of David. As Mary's son, Jesus became the son of David who for the Jews was to come as the Messiah or Christ whom they regarded to be the Son of God. At the time of Jesus, there was an immediate expectation of the coming of the Messiah. Some thought that it was John the Baptist, but John said that, "one mightier than I" referring to Jesus. (Lk.3:16) Reference to Christ as the Son of David was an open acceptance as the promised Messiah. As the seed of Abraham, Christ became the fulfiller of the Law and the Prophets. Some recognized and accepted Him as such, but others led by the Council of the Chief Priests rejected Him, submitting Him to be tortured and crucified.

The world is still divided into these two camps; some recognize and accept Him while others led by the Council of chief priests reject Him submitting Him to be tortured and to be crucified while those who cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of God; blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest" and in accordance to their belief.

WASHING OF THE FEET AND DARK NIGHT SERVICES **WASHING OF THE FEET (John 13:1-11)**

We learn to take care of ourselves -we bathe and dress ourselves; go to school, etc. There may come a time when we will be unable to do these things for ourselves - if we become hospitalized because of illness or accident; or because of age when many of our elderly are unable to care for themselves.

Jesus took care of the Apostle's needs and by the washing of their feet gave them the example as how they were to conduct themselves after his physical departure from them. They are called to help one another. They are called to be a team player by fulfilling their particular assignments yet caring for the needs and deficiencies of each other and other people.

DARK NIGHT SERVICE

The story of the Dark Night Service is of love: God's love for us. It demonstrates how precious and dear we are in the eyes of God. Words do not move as, love is something that has to be experienced, to give meaning and substance to words which otherwise are hollow and empty.

There was a two car collision involving 4 girls from a High School in Richmond, Virginia. Two girls were killed, a third seriously injured and the fourth, though shook up, was alright. Tragic as it was, it does not affect us. We do not become emotionally aroused and moved although we are very sympathetic with their loved ones. I'm certain though if we had attended a memorial service at the school or the funeral we too would have been affected by the deep feelings of the parents, faculty and classmates. This type of deep and moving experience which brings tears to one's eyes is how God feels about us. Our feelings alter. We become composed and go on with life. The intensity of the moment of grief doesn't continue whereas with God it never changes. This is the love of God for his children who are precious and dear in his sight.

JERUSALEM

Jesus asked the Pharisees and Scribes about Christ as to "whose son is he?" Their answer was David's son. Jesus asked them as to how David called him Lord, if he is David's son. Can someone be a son, yet Lord and Master over the same person at the same time? David recognized Christ, who was to be of his lineage, as his Lord. Unable to answer Jesus, the Pharisees and Scribes ceased to ask him questions after that.

Jerusalem means the City of Peace and is also called the City of David. There is a well-known picture of Jesus sitting on a hilltop overlooking the Holy City grieving over her people seeing them as sheep without a shepherd. The Jerusalem of Jesus' day is not the Jerusalem of today. Because of Him, the city has moved. He was crucified on the outskirts of the city on unwanted land where criminals were executed. Their bodies were thrown in a nearby ravine. Joseph Arimathea took Jesus' body and buried it in his own tomb saving him from that fate. Imagine what our fate would be if he hadn't done this!

During Holy Week we relive the events of Jesus's life of that week, events that henceforth made all weeks and days Holy and Jerusalem a Holy City, a city of God, *for* us Christians. In our worship service we return there and relive Jesus' life remembering the happenings of Holy Week. It opened the door to heaven--the heavenly Jerusalem. Thousands each year make pilgrimages there, some taking a burial cloth, a shroud, to be blessed to wrap their bodies when they are to be buried.

Today, the once unwanted territory has become the most sought after land in the world. It is the center for Christian and Jews and is an important Holy Place for the Moslems. It is also a hotbed of the political world where there is continuous unrest amongst the rivaling factions; unholy acts in the Holy City. The same can be seen in churches which are a small Jerusalem in themselves. Why is there so much ungodliness in holy places?

In a war, rivals attempt to break the will and morale of the opponent. Hitler bombed London with U2 rocket bombs during World War II. Churchill retaliated with his famous speeches of blood, sweat, and tears encouraging his people to persevere. The Allied forces countered bombing Berlin. Japan attempted to permanently cripple the morale of America with a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt exhorted Americans, "We only have fear to fear?" Colonel James Doolittle's squadron of bombers later bombed Tokyo. Satan works the hardest in the most important place, which is why ungodliness can be seen in

Holy Places. To break the will and morale of the people, Satan went directly to the heart of the matter. After Jesus fasted 40 days, he was tempted (tested). The temptation was not in the beginning, but after the 40 day period of fasting and done by Satan himself, not his evil ministers, agents, or subordinates. His intent was to break the will and morale of Jesus, but thank God, he did not succumb.

We Christians consider Jesus to be the Prince of Peace, and as such, King of the City of David, Jerusalem, where he made a triumphal entry on Palm Sunday. His army greeted Him, shouting with joy ... "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." His soldiers were not military men, but the elderly and very young, those either too old or too young to fight wars. Jesus led them and those who needed help to take Jerusalem and made it a Holy City, the heavenly Jerusalem for them and for all seeking true justice.

**“And Joseph Arimathea...laid Jesus' body in a tomb...
and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb”... (John 19:38-42)**

And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, went to the tomb...and asked one another who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb and saw that it was rolled back; for it was large. And entering the tomb they saw a young man who said; 'He has risen.'(Matthew 28:4-10)

During Lent we heard of the story of the dishonest accountant who was accused of cheating on his master. He became the object of God's praise not for his dishonesty but for his foresight to do now, today, something to save himself from tomorrow's miseries. He reduced the debt of each of his master's debtors before his discharge so that when he was without a job and income, there would be a way open for him. These same persons would have to return his favor. The lesson was that he did today what needed to be done for his salvation tomorrow. So too a Christian must look beyond today and set his sight on his ultimate goal to be with Christ now and forever. If he wants the doors of heaven to be open for him tomorrow he must do something now, in this life. We are told in that same lesson that if we are not faithful to God in little things, those pertaining to this world such as food, clothing, money and property, how can God entrust us with that which has eternal value?

We also celebrated during the Lenten season the imprisonment of our patron saint, Gregory the Enlightener, in a deep pit where he was to die from starvation but miraculously survived, living on the barest minimum of food brought secretly by a pious Christian. The food is not the question, but what kept this man from becoming insane, living day and night, month after month, year after year, from hot summer to cold winters to hot summers again, in a dark, cold pit for 15 long years? How did his health hold up? Why wasn't his vision seriously impaired since there was no light? How was it he did not contract tuberculosis, arthritis or a multitude of other ailments and diseases, with the bugs and insects and humidity of that deep underground cave? What kept this man not only alive but sane so that after 15 years he was able to heal an ailing king, convert him and with his assistance embark on the holy mission of converting a whole nation of people to a new way of life?

A man can psych himself to do an extraordinary feat but is it possible to remain 'psyched up' so to speak for fifteen years? There is something beyond the psychic in this message, it is spiritual. The psychic is for the psychiatrist but the spiritual is for God. That which sustained Gregory was the power of prayer.

The lesson of Lent is the lesson of prayer; praying not only for others or for those who have gone to their rest, but for our own individual selves. If we do not personally experience and are not convinced of the power of prayer what good, we may ask, are our prayers for others. Lord, we say, help me in my disbelief and in this simple confession unfolds another mystery of the power of prayer for us.

It was after forty days without food and water that Jesus was tempted; first his stomach, when food was offered to him; then his mind, when he was confronted in a test of logic with Satan; and finally his heart when all the glories of the world were offered to him, but in the end he answered, "You shall not tempt the Lord, your God." (Lk. 8:12)

We followed Him testing our stomachs, minds and hearts. We joined Him, on His glorious entry into Jerusalem last Sunday and through the arduous days that we call Holy Week sharing in His suffering, crucifixion, death and burial. After the long journey of 40 days, again we were a simple prey of the enemy in keeping us from Him, but here we are unworthily bathing in the glory of His mighty resurrection.

So too, it is in our journey in life. Say, we follow Him because it is by Him and only He is the way to eternal life open to us.

We pray, O Lord, awaken in us an awareness of using what we have so that our behavior in this life is becoming to you. Like our patron saint, Gregory the Enlightener, unlock the secret of prayers and the blessings found therein as in the House of Prayer, your Holy Temple, the church so that like Gregory, again we be sustained.

Don't leave us desires which drive us from you for without you, no matter how far we progress we could never advance beyond the sealed grave. Only you, O Lord, possess the power to remove the stone, freeing us from eternal bondage. Blessed is your resurrection for indeed its good news for us who rest our hope on you.

EASTER **Mathew 28:7**

"He is raised," said the Angel to the women who came to anoint Jesus's body. "He is not here. He is raised." The message is the culmination of the activities that are called Holy Week. Because of Jesus's resurrection from the dead all events during the week are sanctified as part of a process that began in time immemorial and now have come to their completion. Because of Jesus's resurrection from the dead Holy Week has made all weeks, months and years henceforth holy. Everyone and all things are brought before God's glorious and majestic presence. A new day dawned and an era began. A sun rose in the spiritual heavens of the soul of man, his sun that would never set. This, the second phase of God's creative act concerning His children on the planet Earth came to a close. Both phases took one week. In the beginning God created heaven and Earth and all things including human beings in one week. This is what is recorded in the biblical books called Genesis. The first phase of God's creative act the sun is the source by which life is sustained. Although not exactly in the middle, the solar sun is the center point of focus in the solar system which sustains whatever life there may be on the planet Earth. Because of it all is provided to meet their physical needs. Again this is done in what the biblical writers describe as taking place in a one week period.

In part two of God's creative act, which although is the second part doesn't necessarily mean that it began later but was there at the beginning and unfolded later in time.

God again in one week, called Holy Week provides all that is needed for the revitalization of the human spirit by means of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Both creative acts are unfathomable mysteries, the second more profound than the first. A sun has risen in the heavens of the spiritual world of God's children shielding them from the onslaught of the Evil One who is constantly and relentless in his endeavors to usurp them. An Evil One who has no scruples as seen in the Lenten lessons of the Unjust Steward. A life devoid of any moral principles where lying, cheating and stealing are accepted as a normal way of life. Has much changed?

The influence of evil permeates all walks of life even in the legal, professional, educational and religious circles. The resurrection of Jesus provides a shield for his children against this relentless assault and grants them energies to work on indefatigably turning defeat into victory and death into a renewed life. The sun never sets even while his children sleep. It is a day that has no beginning and no end, a day in which God's children gather around Him and His Holy Table, the Holy Altar, to enjoy His holy presence and His holy food, the Blessed Sacrament by which they become spiritually energized.

This invitation extends to all by God through His Son Jesus Christ in the message of the angel announcing His resurrection from the dead saying, "He is not here, he is risen."

Blessed is the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

EASTER

Luke 18:1-8 - The Judge

Even in the earliest of times there was a need for someone to pass judgement on a question or a problem, someone whose decision would be accepted with respect. Most likely the eldest of the elders whose wisdom and maturity seasoned with the experience of time held much weight and whose words were regarded with authority.

With the passing of time, though, the role of judge increased and amplified to such a degree that we have reached a point today where they interpret the law and make decisions ranging from the ordinary to the extraordinary such as highly complicated corporation and international laws. Their decisions not only affect particular persons but also can affect a living pattern of a whole nation of people. Being men and not God, they do err: sometimes unknowingly and other times quite intentionally such as in the case of the 'unrighteous judge'.

Perfect judgement is not expected from them but a reasonable judgement is a hope.

Perfection lies with God. Truth and justice are with Him. This is seen in the Word of God which took on flesh and which was crucified by the law of man. But by the power of the Spirit of God, the Word of God rose leaving the tomb empty and the threat of the tomb. The truth of this proclamation, "He is risen", tells of God's eternal judgement concerning life and death and it speaks equally to all generations. It has taken the Earth and has brought it to heaven where worthy men, who have lived according to God's Commandment of love, continue to live with Him eternally.

The Cross is the standard bearer by which this judgement is rendered and the Bible is the Book of Divine Law. The churches are courtrooms where the letter and the spirit of the law is interpreted and whose hallowed traditions, like the wisdom of the elder, are seasoned and enriched by the witness of each passing generation.

Tested by the trials of time, the Armenian Church has within her a priceless treasure which she has derived from the vast reservoir of her experience. She suffered and was crucified with her Master. Her soil was soaked with the blood of her immortals fighting those who tried in vain to bury her truths. But with her Master she always rose again and again from the dead dressed each time in newer and more glorious apparel

A wise person will stay close to her and take refuge under her sacred dome where God's blessing is bestowed upon His children, a blessing which has a just and righteous judgment for it removed from them the sentence of death from the hands of the unrighteous.

**Christ has risen from the dead...Blessed is the resurrection of Christ
Indeed a great message for all mankind.**

EASTER

In the beginning man worshipped objects in nature. Later these gods took on human form as gods and goddesses, who were men that had supernatural gifts during their earthly lives, and were able to continue after their death. Temples and statues were made for them. These idols were worshipped as a residue of supernatural power. Man spoke to God by these means and likewise God conversed with man.

Our Armenian forefathers among other things were 'Sun' worshippers. Its vitality caused growth; it provided the light of the day; its warmth had healing power and gave strength to the weak. At eventide when it set in the West, it returned to its mother; Darkness followed it blanketing the Earth. His sister, the moon, then arose and lit up the night with the stars. She was charming but lacked her brother's vitality.

At dawn the Sun sent its rays before his arrival, which depressed the darkness. When it was completely gone, he rose in his full glory, and journeyed across the heavens again. It couldn't be reached but it was able to reach everything and everywhere. That is why it knew everything. 'Let the Sun be my witness' was an expression when someone wanted to substantiate what he said was true.

Two men came to Armenia and told of a man who after he had died, rose from the dead. This was not strange or unusual for them for some of the gods and heroes had risen from the dead such as Ara the Handsome and Vahan. But this particular man's life, his miracles and teachings awakened a keen interest in them. The other gods were men who had become gods. This man was God who had become man, taking the sins of all mankind upon Himself, and buried it in his grave. He conquered death by his death and with his resurrection brought a new light, enlightening all men.

This new message was 'good news' that captivated our forefathers and when they compared it with what they had, they converted to the new. It eventually became the adopted faith for the people with an ancient history. Temples were converted into churches and heathen rituals changed to conform to the teachings of Christ.

The Sunrise Service that is performed during Lent was an old heathen service. Lent is a time when we recognize our lives as being shrouded by the darkness of our sins. But a light shines guiding us to a better day. In one of the songs "O Light," we beseech God at the rising of the morning light "to shine forth upon our souls Thine intelligible light". Just as the rising sun changes the dark night into the light of day, so too, the Lord's light disperses the darkness in our souls.

'Let the Sun be my witness' became 'Let God be my witness'. The rising Sun was replaced by the resurrected Christ by whose light peace is brought to mankind by the Will of God.

Mark 16:1-8

We are now living in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By His Holy Resurrection, God's heavenly kingdom was permanently established on earth. If Jesus had not been crucified and hadn't risen from the dead then that which was considered to be established was demolished, and annihilated.

During His mission on earth Jesus was subject to the temptation to submit to the will of Satan, even unto death, but by death He conquered death with His victory in His Holy Resurrection. (1) This you might say is the microcosm (the small example) of the macrocosm (the large example) which is the life of the church. That is to say, the church as the body of Christ, is constantly reliving the life of Christ from His birth to His resurrection and ascension. We are partakers of that life, and members of that kingdom through the church.

This is what I call the incarnate period of the resurrection. The fulfillment of Jesus' incarnation was realized in His birth. In His birth, allegorically speaking, Christ entered in the incarnate period of His missionary life on earth which was fulfilled in His Resurrection. This is what one of our church fathers calls the blooming of a new flower because for mankind this was an unprecedented experience which has never been equaled nor surpassed. After the Resurrection, mankind, although living in the resurrection, entered its incarnate stage whose perfection is realized in the Glorious Second Coming. Thus we have a sequence of incarnations and resurrections.

The church and man live in the pains and trials of Jesus as well as His glorious resurrection. Following the example of its master, mankind is in a struggle to ward off the temptations of the devil and in so doing must bring forth its best efforts to be victorious – football player, violinist, scientists, relying on past experiences and adding his best efforts to succeed – by adjoining himself to the resurrection. (We understand the historical resurrection to mean the church which represents as we have said the entire life span of Jesus.) Jesus, being without sin, and God-in-the-flesh, was and is God working through history by setting Himself as the highest ideal to which man should strive and to whom man should attach himself in order to attain this goal. In fact, man's only means of succeeding lied in this alignment so that he would be in Christ and likewise Christ in him. As the great apostle St. Paul's writes in his epistle to the Galatians 2:20. This is St. Paul's life in the resurrection. Likewise it is each and every individual Christian's duty to make his identity with Christ and in doing so he will be putting on a shield which is known as the armor of salvation. (Therefore during His sojournment on Earth and in his struggle to up-right himself man is granted aid through the fruits of resurrection.)

But what is this shield, this invulnerable protection, the fruit of the resurrection? In the Gospel of St. John (7:38,39) it is described as the presence of the Holy Spirit.

In concluding therefore, man's hope and belief is that in being so equipped Jesus will lead him to his victory, that is through his attachment to the church (2) from which he receives the aid and comfort of the Holy Spirit. In using the word "hope" we must understand this to mean not that Christ might fail man but rather that man's hope being that he be proven worthy of such a reward.

**INDEED CHRIST HAS RISEN AND BLESSED IS HIS HOLY RESURRECTION
AND MAY WE WHO ARE PARTAKERS OF HIS CRUCIFIXION
PROVE WORTHY OF THE BLESSINGS OF THE RESURRECTION.**

EASTER'S VICTORY MESSAGE "He is Risen"

The Gospel lesson for today was very short. It is short because basically it has one very simple message to proclaim that needs little explanation and very little elaboration and that message is clean and precise, "He has risen." Actually that is all we have to say today whether it be in its broad context or narrow sense and that is "He has risen." Simplicity classifies and edifies. So that we can form a clearer picture of this message, I have chosen the lesson from the sixth Sunday of Lent which is called "Advent Sunday". This tells us about Jesus' Glorious Second Coming and is found in the 23rd Chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew.

In this reading Jesus lets loose with all hell-fire, hail and brimstone against the way that the Pharisees and scribes behave and live. It seems very odd and paradoxical that before Jesus begins this very bitter criticism, he advises the people saying, "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatsoever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach but do not practice".

It seems that within this one chapter or even only a few lines we see a sort of dualism in Jesus saying. First, He exhorts the people to do what the scribes and pharisees tell them to do but on the other hand, He condemns them so severely that it seems quite obvious that they will not be enjoying the rewards of their great expectation but to the contrary, suffer the judgement of eternal damnation! In fact verse 13 of this chapter says quite explicitly, "you shut the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in".

How can we understand or even try to comprehend this simple message of "He is Risen", when we are faced with the dilemma of this dichotomy, division in Jesus' own words? It distorts and confuses rather than directs. Is there a division in Jesus' messages? If there is, then there is also a division which could lead to the utter destruction of the glorious Easter Resurrection Message of Eternal Life to all who are found worthy.

How can we reconcile these two opposing factors: (1) Jesus' exhortation to do what the Pharisees say and (2) His stern condemnation of them for what they are doing. It is essential that the power of the Easter Message, "He has risen", be kept intact so that it enlivens.

If we have a problem, we will ultimately want to find the main cause of it if we want to have a good solution or a sure remedy. In this way we will avoid having it bother us later and we will not have to bother wasting our time and energy on it later on. For example, if the grass on our lawn is not as nice as we would like it to be, we look for something that will be effective in killing the weeds without harming the grass. If it damages the grass roots then we will have defeated our purpose because instead of a beautiful lawn we will have only a patch of dirt. The kind of spread we will be seeking is one that will be able to kill the weed plants and their roots alone. If it doesn't kill their roots, we know that in time it will grow back to plague us once more. If a spread or medicine is ineffective, we might resolve to use garden tools to pry out the unwanted plants but the success depends on how well we are able to take out the whole root. With this same purpose in mind we hoe and pluck out the weeds in our flower beds and vegetable gardens so that we will have a better and stronger plant.

If we are confronted with a problem of insects or animals plaguing our homes such as ants, bugs, mice or even rats, again we not only seek means of ridding a few of these but want something that will be potent enough to

destroy their nests which are their breeding grounds. We know that if only a few are killed others will be produced and their numbers will multiply because of the existence of the nest. So the aim is to find and destroy the nest or have the animals that eat of this poison or medicine to serve as carriers of it so that when they return to their nests this medicine in turn will infect and contaminate it.

Let us bring the message a bit closer to home to where we are and talk about human beings. When two nations are warring against each other, the prime target of each offense will be directed to destroy the main center, their capitals and their roadways which are the important arteries. In the Second World War the main targets were Berlin, Tokyo and the highly industrialized cities. The bulk of the defense is to protect these vital centers so that there is a continuous pipeline and movement to and fro to the out-lying areas. The destruction of these centers can be accomplished by direct bombardment on the physical structures or by a psychological bombardment on the morale of the people by frightful, overpowering, psychological tactics such as the threat of annihilation and complete extinction by a super bomb sent by an invincible rocket or some other spectacular feat. The prime target of course is to diminish the power of the centers which is comparable to killing the roots of weeds or destroying the nests of insects or other animals.

Satan is in an all-out war against God and His creation. In this war he wants to destroy of course the centers which if they retain their strength and power will mean his defeat. That is why he works his hardest, his cleverest and unceasingly to curtail their influence. These centers are God's temples on this earth. If Satan succeeds to continually divide the Church, then the propagation of the divine Word will be less efficacious. If these centers continue to weaken, he could possibly be on his way to victory. That is the reason for the constant all-out assault upon the church which is quite vulnerable because it relies upon voluntary assistance out of pure love. That is also why people are apt to talk so critically about the church being as a gathering place of hypocrites rather than a gathering place of worshippers of The One, True God. In a sense this may be true. Jesus also makes reference to this but He defends those who retain the pious and unadulterated faith toward the Temple. Some say that some who attend regularly don't behave as followers. It is said they behave and act differently during the week than in Church on Sunday. These accusers are pacifying themselves and justifying their own selfish positions by saying that, although I don't attend services regularly, at least I'm not a hypocrite. Although this is worthy of some praise, it is as effective as someone killing flies with a swatter but too lazy to put up the screens to prevent others from coming in.

Jesus exposes the scribes and Pharisees, who are the chosen ones carrying on God's work for they are on Moses' seat, to show not only their hypocritical tendencies but to show also how zealous Satan is to usurp God's chosen. This same condition is prevalent in the church of today. Satan is busy in not only bringing about division but to keep God's people away from Him especially in the House of God, the House of Prayer.

As I have stated, there is no legitimate excuse to stay away habitually. There is no "in-between" between God and Satan. There is no "no-man's land" or neutral zone where man can seek refuge from one or the other. Anyone found in the neutral zone is shot upon on sight, because he has no business being there. As its name implies, it is "no-man's land". Either a person becomes involved with God or resigns oneself to the will of Satan. The Word of God becomes less efficacious because of indifference but the Word of God is not defeated but victors. It shall always remain victorious forever for the simple reason that it defeated Satan for "He has risen". This victory crown is extended to be worn by all the good soldiers who fight the good fight.

"In deed Christ has risen."

He is victorious and shall continue to be from ages unto ages. Amen.