



# A Light in the Sacristy

A newsletter for and about the Altar Guilds in the Diocese of Iowa

## KEEPING A HOLY LENT

The reverend Canon Carol Hampton,  
St. Paul's Cathedral, Oklahoma City



Thank you, Altar Guild members, for teaching me long before I entered seminary what "keeping a holy Lent" is all about - and how to keep all the other seasons as well. I appreciate this opportunity to tell you a bit about that part of my experience which led to recognizing and following my call to serve as a priest. We share responsibility for the altar and I have never forgotten that.

I had many Altar Guild mentors. Back in those days at St. Paul's Cathedral in Oklahoma City our Altar Guild assigned teaching specific tasks to several members who had those special gifts. When a sufficient number of people (all women back then) had requested and been accepted into membership, a group training was offered. One mentor taught us all there was to know about cleaning silver and brass while another taught the intricacies of ironing linens. Another taught us how to place, light and clean candles. Another had special gifts in working with brides and their mothers and told us many a cautionary tale. We were like sponges soaking up all the information we could. And then, our mentors allowed us to serve with them, to follow in their footsteps and, finally, we served in their place under their watchful guidance. Those were wonderful days and never will I forget the devotion of those ladies to their craft and to the altar. Thanks to you, Altar Guild, for all those you teach today. You may be instructing future clergy.

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### Director:

Martha Hippee  
407 28th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50312-4405  
(515)244-5824  
hipowls@mchsi.com

Newsletter preparation:  
Jeanne Roland,  
St. Mark's, Des Moines  
JeanneHR@q.com

This Newsletter is also  
available at:  
[www.iowaepiscopal.org](http://www.iowaepiscopal.org)

## DIRECTOR'S LETTER

This winter has seemed unusually long and dark. Perhaps that is age dictating how the mind works and the body feels. It is cold and dreary as I write this. We are approaching Ash Wednesday, likely softened by the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Luncheon. The weeks of Lend before us are a time for introspection and quiet, and, yet, if we listen carefully, we can hear the soft beats of spring. I am reminded of some lines by Anne Morrow Lindbergh:

"Only with winter patience can we bring the deep-desired, long-awaited spring."

The long winter months are a good time to rearrange desks and cupboards and to read a book or two. One book that I would recommend is "A Wing and a Prayer, A Message of Faith and Hope" by our Presiding Bishop, Katharine Jefferts Schori. Schori uses her love and experience of flying to reveal her deep spirituality: "Flying reminds me that the word we translate 'spirit' means several things--wind, breath, and spirit, whether we're talking about the Hebrew of the Old Testament or the Greek of the New.

Sometimes it's a headwind slowing us down until we feel like we're hardly moving.

Sometimes is a gloriously fast tailwind, speeding us on our way.

Sometimes it's just downright bumpy, like coming into the airport on a hot afternoon.

And sometimes and sometimes, when

*(continued on page 2)*

## SACRISTY SECRETS



To clean dirty decanters in side, put in raw potato peelings and water; let soak. Repeat if necessary.

To bleach fine lace and linen, soak in cold water in sun. When water turns yellow, repeat until white.

Remove water stains from furniture with a paste of oil and very fine wood or tobacco ashes. Repeat if necessary.

When the tea party's over, pour your leftover tea on your potted ferns.

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### **KEEPING A HOLY LENT**

*(continued from page 1)*

In the dark and cold days of Lent, as we look for light and warmth to return, we journey with our Lord Jesus Christ knowing that the road to Jerusalem will be difficult. The way will lead us to his earthly death before his resurrection. There can be no Easter without Good Friday and we cannot get to either without the preparation which Lent provides. My favorite services come during Holy Week. When we strip the altar at the end of the Maundy Thursday service, my body shivers, and, as we take the reserved sacrament and the sanctuary light to the chapel of repose, my eyes fill with tears. Finally, early the next morning we consume the last remaining pieces of sanctified bread and wine and extinguish the candle and I feel totally bereft. You share with clergy those special moments even when no one else is present.

The scriptural lessons of Lent offer us a way and a hope that all will proceed according to God's will. Your care of the altar reflects that truth.

*(The Bishop is on sabbatical until May 1, 2001)*

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**THIS EASTER, MAY YOUR LIFE AND WORK BE STRENGTHENED BY THE RENEWAL OF FAITH AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.**

## THE DIRECTOR'S LETTER

*(continued from page 1)*

your downstream from one of these big mountain ranges on a good windy day, it's even like surfing.

Life is like that -- the wind and the spirit blow where they will, and we rarely know the direction, or how the wind will carry us, until we are in the midst of it.

Yet that wind and breath and spirit help us do things we couldn't or wouldn't do alone.....we're all afloat in a sky or sea of spirit, even though we have different experiences of it. We're always surrounded by the reality of the spirit, even when we don't realize it or recognize it. There are occasions like Pentecost that bring great in-breakings of awareness, and there are other, smaller, daily miracles of recreation....like the assurance of a friend that we are being remembered in prayer.....Breathe deeply, know the wind of God is always beneath your wings, receive holy spirit, and change the world."

Those words were from the Introduction and there are eight inspiring and thought provoking chapters beyond.

May god bless you hold you gently.

With love,

Martha

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**HOPE IS THE THING WITH FATHERS-  
THAT PERCHES IN THE SOUL-  
AND SINGS THE TUNE WITHOUT  
THE WORDS-  
AND NEVER STOPS-AT ALL-**

**EMILY DICKINSON,**

**" 'HOPE' IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS"**

## WHY ALL THE ASHES?

*The Rev. John Beddingfield  
Borrowed from TAD Lent 2007*

I was lucky enough to be in one of Professor Frederick Shriver's classes at General Seminary before he retired. I recall Father Shriver's (not one to keep his opinions to himself) thoughts about ashes. "You know what I'd do if I were the rector of a church?" he asked our class. "I'll tell you what I'd do. At the end of the Ash Wednesday liturgy, I'd be at the back door with a big washrag. As people left the church, I'd wipe the ashes off their foreheads and remind them of the words of our Lord, 'Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them' (Matthew 6:1)."

Given this strong criticism of outward piety and given that we will offer ashes on Ash Wednesday, we might ask ourselves, "Why all the ashes?" Because ashes are a sign, a reminder, and ashes are an invitation.

Archaeologists tell us the people of Israel were not alone in using ashes in rituals of purification. Ashes appear in Phoenician burial art and Arabic Expressions. Ashes were a sign of grief, mourning, humiliation, and penitence. When Job loses everything, he sits among the ashes. Cursed and overrun by enemies, the Psalmist "eats ashes like bread, and mingles tears with drink." Ashes are what are left after destruction. After chaos or catastrophe, ashes remain.

Ashes also remind us of a common origin. The second chapter of Genesis tells of how we were created from the dust of the ground. Though we may spend our lives trying to distinguish ourselves from others, running after success and trying to feel different from others, the dust and ashes remind us that we are all made of the same



stuff. We are reminded not only of our beginning but also of our end. On the First Day of Lent, ashes are imposed with the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return." Those words apply to us all.

While ashes may signify and remind, they also invite. They invite us to repentance. They invite us to turn again to God and to receive new life. Isaiah brings glad tidings to the people of Israel, "to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning." They begin a season that moves us through silence and longing into a season of joy and resurrection.

May the ashes we receive be a sign of humility and penitence. May they remind us of our individual sins and the complexity of corporate sin. But more than anything, may the ashes invite us into God's presence, into God's love and into God's gift of new life. †

## WHY VEILS?

*Epistle #103, Spring 1997*

Veils are merely liturgical cloths for covering various objects used in our worship of Almighty God. The most prominent is the chalice veil that square of material usually silk, and corresponding in color to the Eucharistic vestments. The post communion veil is made of fair white linen...

During Passiontide, crosses, crucifixes, banners and religious art in the Sanctuary and nave are traditionally veiled in purple or black [or red]. By this we humbly recognize that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor our ways His ways (Isaiah 55:8)... our minds still somewhat veiled?

...At Easter, we remove the veils that symbolized our separation from the blazing glory of God and re-live the walking from darkness into the shadows and then into the full Light of the Word in His resurrected glory.

*From the Mariner's Church, Detroit, Michigan, TAD Lent 1995*

## LIGHTING THE NEW FIRE AT EASTER VIGIL

*Pat Crane*

Because the Easter Vigil begins in darkness, one of the most powerful symbols is the lighting of a new fire. You will need to assemble the following items for the new fire:

- † A small sturdy table — the top needs to be protected: a breadboard will work
- † A heavy (preferably cast iron) 11" frying pan (we used the top of a pottery bird bath, which happened to be shaped like a shell and was larger than the fry pan)
- † About 2½ pounds of coarse Kosher salt
- † 2½ pints of Rubbing Alcohol
- † A pinch of incense (optional, but adds color to the flame and scent to the air)
- † Heavy aluminum foil
- † A taper for lighting the fire
- † A large pot lid big enough to cover the frying pan if the fire gets out of control and needs to be extinguished
- † A pair of heavy work gloves for safety



## PREPARING THE FIRE

Set the table where there will be plenty of open, overhead clearance and away from smoke and fire detectors.

- † Line the container with heavy foil, leaving plenty around the edges to turn up just before you light the fire
- † Place the lined container on the protected table top
- † Fill about 2/3 full with the coarse salt, mounding slightly toward the middle (the salt should only be about ½ way up the sides at the edge)
- † Fold the foil used to line the pan tightly down over the sides, and cut another piece of foil a little larger than the diameter of the frying pan for the next step
- † 45 minutes before you need the fire, pour ½ of the rubbing alcohol over the salt and cover with the foil; crimp tightly so the alcohol will not evaporate
- † 15-20 minutes before the fire is to be lit, repeat the previous step
- † Just before the fire is needed, remove the foil cover and add the pinch of incense if desired
- † Fold the edges of the foil pan liner up around the outside of the pan to look like tongues of flames (this will also keep the alcohol from creeping over the edge of the pan)
- † Light the fire †

## MARCH MAD

By May Sarton

The strangely radiant skies have come  
To lift us out of winter's gloom,  
A paler more transparent blue,  
A softer gold light on fresh snow.  
It is a naked time that bores  
Our slightly worn-down hopes and cares,  
And sets us listening for frogs,  
And sends us to seed catalogues  
To bury our starved eyes and noses  
And order madly at this season  
When we have had enough of reason.

## PALM SUNDAY

*Barbara Gent (with continuing thanks to Boone Porter), borrowed from Epistle #114, Winter 2000*

"A Parade for Our King" Boone Porter titles chapter 16 of *Keeping the Church Year* (now out of print). "Here is a day to express what we mean and to communicate it to a substantial number of people. Palm Sunday celebrates the kingship of Jesus Christ. How do you acclaim and honor a king? By a parade, of course. This is precisely what the Palm procession is intended to be. It is not simply a procession for the choir to enter the church. Nor is it simply a convenient way of distributing palms to worshipers. It is a parade for Jesus our King. Once this is understood, the liturgy of the day can be planned accordingly.

"Weather permitting, the procession can best start somewhere apart from the church [as did the fourth century procession to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives described by the pilgrim Egeria]... Worshipers gather for the opening prayer and the Palm gospel...the palms are blessed and distributed without undue delay. Each person should receive a long sliver of palm leaf...something to carry [and wave] while marching. (Don't overlook the children!) Other kinds of boughs can be used also. Willow shoots were traditionally used in England and other parts of northern Europe.

After all have their palms, they can proceed out-of-doors...to the main entrance of the church. Everyone can be given a mimeographed sheet with the words of Hymn 62, 'All Glory Laud and Honor.' Psalm 118:19-29 can be sung by (a cantor), the choir and congregation singing 'Hosanna in the highest' after each verse. For accompaniment, two or three instruments may be added. For many Episcopalians such a procession will be the first time in their lives that they have marched out-of-doors for their Church. The procession is an act of worship offered to

Christ, an act of witness offered to the community, and an act of devotion strengthening our own faith.... All Episcopal churches, large or small, whether they have the Eucharist this day or not, and whether they have a clergyman or not, can share in these unique and dramatic ceremonies."

Once in church the mood immediately changes as the focus turns to the Passion of our Lord, the long gospel account of His last hours. This Gospel may be read or sung in different ways in different years, incorporating a few people or many in the congregation to intensify the liturgical experience. This day the hangings are now usually deep red and the "flowers" at the altar are usually palms.

Each year altar guilds try to find something different to do with the palms, something unusual. Although there is no rubric mandating the use of palms for decoration on Palm Sunday, tradition has made them common. Other palm-like leaves are equally satisfactory but arranging the palms themselves in one form or another is a real challenge to a flower committee. †

## SIMNEL CAKE

*Charlotte Warner*

1/4 lb. butter or margarine  
1 cup white flour  
3/4 cup sugar  
2 eggs  
about 2 oz. candied fruit  
1/2 cup currants or cut up raisins

Beat butter to a cream in a warm bowl, add sugar and mix well (until sugar loses its granule feel).

Add beaten eggs.

Mix currants and candied fruit with flour, then add to the above mixture. There is NO leavening except the eggs.

Bake in 2 small loaf pans, buttered and floured, at 300° for about 1 hour. Test after 45 minutes. The recipe may be doubled. Charlotte adds: "ENJOY"

## LENT: A TIME TO GET RID OF CLUTTER

*Carol Homer*

*Diocesan Altar Guild of Newark, NJ*

Lately I have been watching those shows about cleaning up your house, and I am hooked — even on the reruns. After the fifth or sixth repeat, I begin to actually hear the advice given about getting rid of clutter.

As a fat person, buying clothes has always been a problem. There were many years when I was unable to find stores that sold my size. Then, I had three growing children, and there wasn't enough money. Eventually, everything came together, and now I have accumulated piles of things without end.

I started looking around my home. I needed more space for a tiny person named Christina, a ten-pound bundle of sweetness, who visits me with an incredible amount of "stuff." So I took action, starting with the closets. I was using four. For the first time in my life, I was tossing, or recycling, perfectly good garments. I started getting rid of things I had hoarded for 20 years, waiting for that one moment in time to use them. It never came.

Maybe it was the longer days of a promised Spring, but each bag that left the house energized me to find more clutter to discard. This led to reorganizing the cellar, revealing some great shelving units! Suddenly, I found storage for my needlework, threads and fabrics. With sewing supplies newly organized, I looked for a Lenten project and settled on making stoles as a fundraiser for an orphanage. By halfway through the Lenten season, \$450 had been raised! In addition, two closets were reorganized with a third in progress. Now, I can actually locate clothes when they are needed!

It has not been easy to let go of a lifetime

of hoarding, but I figure baby steps will soon turn into full strides. Working our way toward the sun from a hard, cold place seems to be a human condition. Dropping hate and meanness from a life and working toward God's love is a good Lenten experience. We might as well work on ourselves as we sort through "stuff." As we come from the time of Lent into the hope and glory of our risen Lord at Easter, may we all hope to learn to love more and hate less.

Let's rid ourselves of that negative clutter and strive to reorganize, positively. Start small. Think big. †

## WORSHIP AND THE ALTAR GUILD

*The Rt. Rev. Chilton Knudsen, Bishop of Maine  
(from her talk to the Maine DAG)*

Many people go into a church service believing that in worship the congregation is the audience, the clergy, choir, etc. are the actors/actresses, and the prompter is God. They compare it to the theater they are used to.

But in the great theater of worship, the congregation makes up the actors and actresses of that theatrical event. God is the audience. What the congregation is doing, what we are doing, is expressing ourselves to God. The people "behind the rail" are the prompters to give shape and direction to the worship of the people. God listens and responds. Our worship is for God's benefit...large, magnificent, majestic. The altar guild is the property committee, the people who care for the set — the decorations, the costumes, the things used in worship. What makes good theater is truth. Our worship is about truth. †

# WHEN WE ARE REAL

## A DAILY THOUGHT FOR LENTEN REFLECTION

from [explorefaith.org](http://explorefaith.org)

Someone once said that to recognize the signs of God, pay attention to your stirrings. Look closely when you feel the swell of joy or the tightness as your throat closes up in sorrow. Live in that moment, poke around in its corners, feel the texture of its walls. Sit with it for awhile, long enough to sense the presence of God sitting with you.

For many of us, this requires discipline. We are so consumed with the goings-on around us that slowing down and looking inward is a determined act of will. For Christians, Lent is a time to do exactly that.

Beginning 40 days before Easter, Lent is traditionally a time of self-evaluation and self-examination to identify one's sins and go through a process of repentance and renewal. Many Christians fast during Lent, others mark the days by "giving up" something that is particularly delightful, if not sinful. In recent years, there has been less emphasis on *giving up* and more on *taking on*. Some will go to church more often, or serve the poor, or be more disciplined in meditation.

Another way is to use a Lenten calendar to observe this season of intention and presence. Each week of Lent, devote time for reflection on Lenten themes: stillness, examination, attention, prayer, suffering, hope and new life. As you think about these themes through the days and weeks of the Lenten season also keep in mind three things that may help you develop interior peace:

First, **live attentively**. The Buddhists call this *mindfulness*. Be aware of life. Hear the silence of the snow. Look into one another's eyes. Pay attention to every single moment and that moment alone. Feel it. Take it into your bones. Let it transform you.

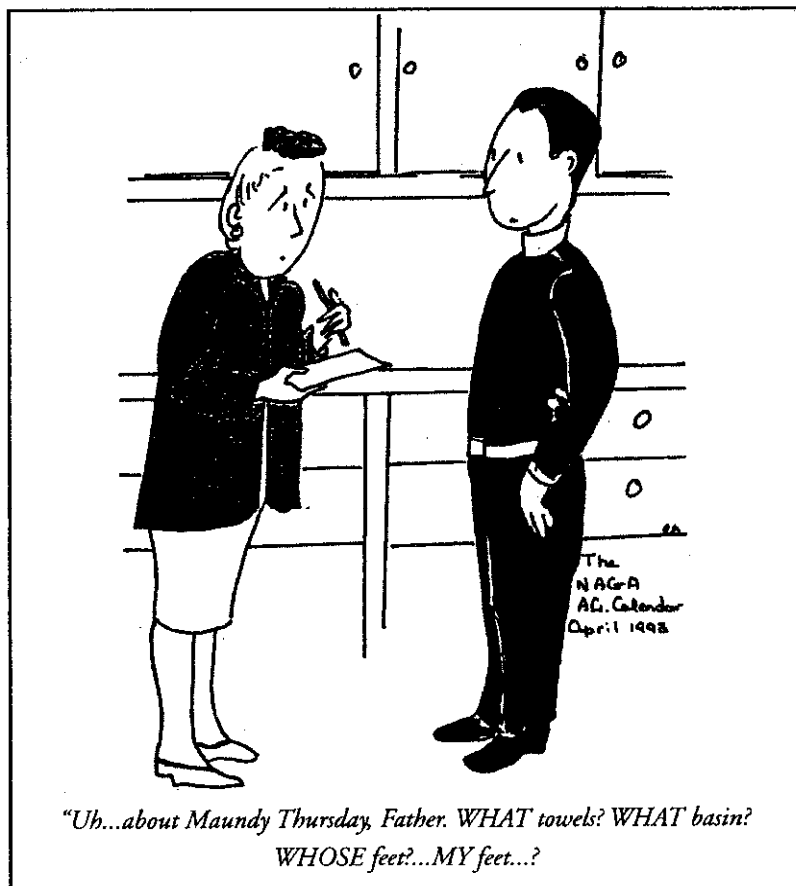
Second, **learn to let go**. Simplify your life, your possessions, your thoughts, your desires, your expectations. When you can let go, your arms are open and ready to receive all the good things God longs to give you.

Third, **develop intimacy with God**. Gather in yourself a phrase or thought of love and kindness, and let it filter through your heart and mind throughout the day. Say it when you stand in the grocery line, when eating lunch. Let it settle deeply in your heart so that it can work from within to bring you into closer intimacy with God.

Lent need not be a time to live in guilt and shame. Instead it may be a time when we pay attention to our stirrings — a place of deep stillness where the hunger of our souls and the heart of God meet.

*So shall we have peace divine: holier gladness ours shall be; Round us, too, shall angels shine, Such as ministered to thee.*

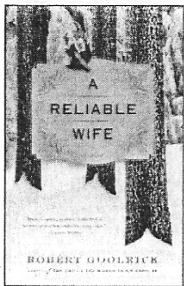
— Hymn #150 *The Hymnal* 1982 †





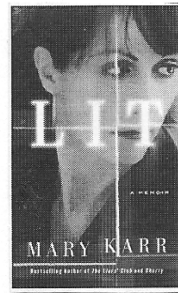
## THE BOOKSHELF

Polly Marshall



For the sheer joy of reading a good story, try the *Reliable Wife* by Robert Goolrick, who also wrote *The End of the World as We Know It*, a memoir. Answering an ad in the newspaper, a young woman sends her picture to a wealthy man advertising for a "reliable wife." Her plans are to marry him, kill him and live the rest of her life as a rich widow. His plans are different, but no less unworthy.

A cold and bleak story with characters that are difficult to like, it is nevertheless easy to have compassion for their plight. Goolrick is such a fine writer, I regret not having read him before. A Reader's Guide, discussion questions and an interview with the author are included in the back of the book. †



*Lit* by Mary Karr is the third memoir in a series for this author; the first and second one, *The Liars' Club* and *Cherry*, both award winning volumes. I approached this work fascinated by its title which indicated that it was about literature, but when I realized that it also meant being drunk,

I hesitated, unsure if I wanted to read the same old story of chemical dependency and spiritual relief. My fears were ungrounded and I remained, from first page to the last, enthralled by Karr's memories and her beautiful writing style.

This is a memoir of coming to grips with all that harms us as children and all we harm as adults. It is about letting go and about pressing on. About redemption and the power of God's love. Among the many journals and memoirs I've read, written by women I admire, such as May Sarton, Carolyn Heilbrun, Diana Athill, Florida Scott Maxwell, and Madeleine L'engle, *Lit* is one to cherish and to return to time and again.

The World Premiere of Ben Allaway's

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set against the emotional landscape  
of the Latin Mass

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