

Dear Associates and Friends,

The Lord be with you.

ALLELUIA! Our Fr. Donald delights so much in that exclamation praising God that he had written to the Holy See urging that we be permitted to use ALLELUIA during Lent also. Their reply advised him to sing it in his heart those forty days.

We have an interesting long-term retreatant. Anthony Wolfgang Hammond is a native of Ghana. He has been in the U.S.A. for almost thirty years. He put himself through Georgia Tech by working as a Pizza Hut deliveryman. His degree in accountancy has qualified him as a bookkeeper and auditor. Anthony had lived within the community at Conyers for several months before he began college. Now he wants to repeat that experience. He read about St. Wolfgang while in Atlanta, so he decided to take that name for his Confirmation.

Fr. Justin's broken bones in his foot are healing without the high priced and invasive procedures the American doctors talked about doing. Now he is going through some painful physical therapy experiences. The Canadian medical system has worked well for him.

Our Bishop, James Johnston dedicated this diocese and its people to the Immaculate Heart of Mary on the feast of the Annunciation, March 25 (nine months before Christmas). Even though it fell on Thursday in Passiontide, we took advantage of the occasion to invite the nuns and chaplain of Nazareth Hermitage to share Vespers, Benediction, and The Consecration with us...then to stay for a modest pizza celebration of our 60th Anniversary year. The co-cathedral at Cape Girardeau is dedicated to Our Lady of the Annunciation, so Bishop Johnston presided there.

Easter is special this year because Jill Johnson, our health care assistant and executive secretary for me (and factotum), had been taking RCIA instructions along with her friend Lt. Atonya Hampton of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. Deacon Joe of St. Leo's parish in Ava saw the fruit of his classes, when they received the Sacraments of Initiation at their Saturday evening Paschal Vigil. The two new Catholics came out here for 9 o'clock Easter Sunday Mass and their second Holy Communion.

Sister Rachel Dietz came from her Benedictine Monastery at Ft. Smith, Arkansas to work with us at our monthly homework sharing. As an experienced therapist and counselor, she had worked with us for a number of years. Now she is especially helpful as we carry on the program offered to us for self-study and evaluation.

Three Days

Besides being accused of anti-Semitism, the author of the Fourth Gospel might also be accused of male chauvinism.

He claims that the fishing episode with Peter and his friends was the third time Jesus revealed Himself to His disciples after being raised from the dead. According to John's Gospel the Risen Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene, and to the disciples without Thomas and then again with Thomas, and finally to Peter's group at the Sea of Galilee. That equals four times. It seems that John does not count Mary Magdalene, because either a woman does not qualify as a legal witness or he does not consider a woman to be one of the disciples.

Another possibility is that John simply wanted to highlight the number three. He was careful to point out that Jesus' healing of the official's daughter was the second sign, which He worked at Cana in Galilee. The first part of the fourth Gospel is called the Book of Signs. In that part St. John has two Passover feasts and two predictions that Jesus would be lifted up. The second part, the Book of Glory, begins when Jesus' Hour has come. That is the time of the third Passover and the third prediction of being lifted up. John mentions Nathaniel from Cana in Galilee by name as one of Peter's companions at John's third appearance of Jesus to His disciples.

What is so special about the number three?

The Lord God visits Abraham under the appearance of three angels.

There are three patriarchs-Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The Law of Moses prescribes three pilgrimage feasts yearly.

Joshua tells the people that in three days they will cross the Jordan.

Three young men were in the fiery furnace.

Jonah was in the belly of the whale for three days.

Mary and Joseph found the boy Jesus in the temple after three days

Jesus was tempted three times by the devil in the desert.

Jesus prays three hours in Gethsemane.

Our Lord predicts his death and resurrection three times.

He tells the authorities if they destroy the temple, He will raise it up in three days.

Peter denied Jesus three times. Our Lord asked him, "Do you Love Me?" three times.

Paul knew a man taken up to the third heaven.

Lucifer pulled 1/3 of the angels after him down from Heaven.

Michael and 2/3 of the angels are victorious.

St. Paul writes to the Corinthians that Christ was buried and raised up on the third day according to the Scriptures. Yet there is no definite Old Testament prophecy about the resurrection of the Messiah (or the Suffering Servant) on the third day. About the closest passage is in Hosea, where he pictures God's afflicted people saying, "Come, let us return to the Lord. He struck us and He will heal us. He will revive us after two days and on the third day He will raise us up to live in His presence."

St. Paul may have been thinking of the various Old Testament traditions of God's saving action coming on the third day. On the other hand, possibly Paul was referring to Our Lord's own predictions about rising on the third day. After all, the words of Scripture and the words of Jesus Christ are equally the Word of God, so Paul and the early Christians put the teachings of Scripture and the teachings of Christ on the same level.

What is clear is that God's Providence and inspired words made a very long preparation involving the number three. The crowning event is the Resurrection of Christ on the third day. The final mention of three in St. Matthew's Gospel is Our Risen Lord's mission to the Apostles and the disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

This tradition of the number three begins with three angels visiting Abraham and is completed with the Resurrection of Our Lord on the third day and the revelation of the Holy Trinity.

In the Sacred Heart,

Fr Cyprian