The Fourth Wednesday in Lent
Rolling Meadows -- 1981
"THE CROSS -- FROM PAIN TO POWER"

Rev. Carl F. Thrun

IN NOMINE JESU

Exodus 12: 21 - 27

You must get the picture. The people have been in the PAIN of BONDAGE and SLAVERY. They have been forced not only to work over-time -- but to make bricks without enough straw. If the production was not kept up to what the supervisor anticipated, the workmen were whipped unmercifully. There was no going on strike. ..... Finally, Moses was sent by the Lord God to give an unceasing, incessant, unremitting dictum: "LET MY PEOPLE GO!" Pharaoh played the "conning game" -- and there came the Ten Plagues -- and the Lord God finally had His Way when the "Angel of Death" killed all the first-born of the Egyptians --- but "PASSED OVER" the houses of the Israelites which had the "blood of the lamb" sprinkled on the "wood" of their "doorposts and lintel." ..... Then came the "Exodus" --- and Pharaoh shoed them out --- and then he regreted it --- losing all this cheap labor --- and sending his armies after them --- and at last getting their horses and chariots bogged down --- and drowning in the Red Sea --- while Moses and the Children of Irsael had already passed through on Dry Land. ..... They thought they were "passing from pain to power" -- to independence and prosperity. ..... But for Forty Years out there in the Wilderness the "Pain" was not to stop..... They would suffer "hunger" and "thirst" before they reached the "Promised Land" ---- and even then there would be "Pain" ---- and in spite of all their new-found "power" it would not be a "heaven on earth." ..... But one thing was for sure -- standing there

They were slaves!

-- with the blood of the lamb on their doorposts -- and the "Angel of Death" having "passed over" them -- they knew that GOD HAD SOMETHING ELSE IN STORE FOR THEM!

WE LIVE WITH PAIN -- the insistent pain of a headache -- the tearing pain of a lost loved one -- the scorching pain of suffering and sorrow. ..... At times we search for ways to forget, to embrace, to endure. We search for the POWER TO EMBRACE WHAT IS FEARFUL! We seek to go through the cruelty of the Cross to the potent power of the Resurrection. ..... Sometimes we think we have gone through the "Red Sea" into the "Promised Land" --- and we meet what is beyond us --- and we cannot immediately face the challenge, let alone embrace it. ..... Perhaps the dust of recent months or years is clinging to us -- and we are preoccupied with finding a resting place along the way. We need a basin of water -- a towel to mop away the sweat -- a place to sit in peace for a while. ..... We don't need one more problem -- one more obstacle! ..... And yet, as we live out our daily lives under THE WOOD OF THE CROSS -- THE CROSSES OF THE MOMENT -- the CROSSES-OF-THE YEARS -- the CROSSES OF THE CENTURIES ------ and they all touch us -- they do rub us -- they do insist that we attend to pain and oppression and and destitution. ..... PAIN is much larger than our own private worlds! It touches our families and our neighbors. It comes to us in the News and SHOCKS US AWAKE. ..... We hear the pitiful wailing of some who cannot seem to get the breath or the nourishment for survival. We hear the whimper of those who are helpless and afraid. We hear the final gasps of those who have quit the fight.

As the Children of Israel soon found out, PAIN can teach us something about BLINDNESS. PAIN can make us narrow and small and petty. Aching bones and a complaining friend can keep us from looking farther. ..... And that is why during this Lententide we must look toward the CROSS --- we must lift up our eyes so that we can we can see the POWER OF JESUS! ..... We must weigh our alternatives. ..... The CROSS invites us to share that trickle of WATER that is so sweet to a dry throat -- and maybe even to forego it entirely for the sake of others who are dying of thirst. Now that we are freed from the LAND OF SLAVERY AND BONDAGE we can lift up our eyes to see the POWER OF JESUS! .... And once "lifted up" we discover the hills that must be walked -- climbed -- crawled up ------ and we also discover that that is "the daily Gospet of the Cross -- the skywriting of His Own Redemptive Love for us all."

If you don't get anything else out of these Lenten Sermons, will you please hold on to this -- for your own eternal destiny: THE LORD GOD IN HIS INFINITE LOVE APPROACHES US LIKE A LOVER -- LIKE THE WELCOMING ARMS OF A FORGIVING AND REASSURING MOTHER! ..... That's the kind of LOVE that stands with people like you and me in our LONELINESS -- waits with us with utter PATIENCE -- walks with the blind with STEADINESS. ..... It is the kind of LOVE that remains awake during LONG VIGILS -- that CRIES OUT FOR WHAT IS RIGHT -- that BLEEDS FOR WHAT IS NOBLE! That's the "Blood of the Lamb."

The Cross is a way of LOVING! The Cross is learning the way of Passover. The Cross is refreshed memory of God's love for us and for all the world. The Cross certifies that "death has lost its sting." The Cross keeps filling us with HOPE -- even though it may be through a DESERT WILDERNESS! ..... Most of all, the Cross is there for our Vision -- to give us God's Power -- to reach out to us with His own tenderness and embrace us with His Arms extended.

We come back -- again and again -- to "Break Bread" and to drink from the "Cup" -- and we keep remembering that CHRIST ON THE CROSS has some bearing on our own lives. It may be in my treatment of myself -- in my disappointments -- my inadequacies -- my weaknesses -- my sinfulness.

When you want to go from "Pain to Power" -- I suggest that you ~~mistake~~ think about Mary, the Mother of our Lord, who once baked the daily bread for her family..... And then came that day AT THE FOOT OF THE CROSS -- and she was no stranger to suffering -- but SHE GAVE US HER OWN SON -- FOR OUR DAILY BREAD! ..... And it is the PASSING OVER that we celebrate when we bring the POWER OF THE CROSS to the PAIN OF THE WORLD. Amen.