

No Easter Without Good Friday

by Rev Bart Baak

For Christians Good Friday is the day on which they remember the death of Jesus on the cross at Calvary, a hill close to Jerusalem, in about 33 AD. They believe that through this death God reconciled with mankind. Through this our sins can be nullified and we can come into a new relationship with God. That's why Christians speak about Good Friday instead of Black Friday. Let me try to explain it.

Reverend John Hastings

Two months ago an English colleague of mine died. His name was Rev. John Hastings. For almost fifty years he and his wife Joyce lived and worked in the Indian subcontinent, of which 27 years was in Bangladesh. He did a lot for the Bangladeshi people during the liberation war in 1971. He stood firm behind them and set up camps for refugees. In this sense he also was a freedom fighter and — what is more important — he remained it. He was a man concerned about social matters, he saw the people in the margin of society. And so in 1992 he established "Nijera Shikhi", an organisation that dedicates itself to pushing back the illiteracy in Bangladesh. He was also very interested in religions and was a friend, yes, a brother of Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists.

Just before he died the board of "Nijera Shikhi", mainly consisting of Muslims, organised a prayer meeting for his recovery on 17th February 1998, that means a prayer meeting in John's style: inter-religious. Also I, as his friend and colleague, was invited. Of course we prayed for his recovery, though we knew that his situation was critical, but we added "not our will, but your will, O God, will prevail".

It happened that he died in England on the evening of the same day. Obviously he had heard the prayers of his friends in Bangladesh. Now he could let them go, and also his efforts for "Nijera Shikhi". After this prayer meeting a young English lady, moved by the meeting, told me that she had worked in Cairo, Egypt, for several years, but that such an inter-religious prayer meeting was impossible there.

Great!

I think the same can be said of this article and those in the past, written by Christians and published in a newspaper with almost exclusively Muslim readers. This is really great in Bangladesh and I hope that I will not shame the trust given to me by the editor. Especially now, as it concerns a matter in which Muslims and Christians differ so much from each other: the death and resurrection of Jesus (Isa).

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We need a helper

Both Muslims and Christians confess that man on earth is not what he or she should be. We all are aware of our shortcomings to Allah/God and to our neighbours. Of course, we know Allah's/God's commandments, revealed in the Holy Qur'an and the Holy Bible. They are for us the indicators of a life according to Allah's/God's will.

However, we all fail in keeping them completely. Somebody in the Holy Bible wrote about himself: "I don't do the good I want to do; instead, I do the evil that I do not want to do." He did not write these words in pessimistic humour, but because this is the reality for each of us. Can we, human beings, bring real peace in our families, our villages, our own society, let alone in the Middle East, Northern Ireland and the former Yugoslavia? Can we stop the devilish powers in the world, close by and far away? Can we bring real peace in our own hearts? Even the best among us fail in the long run.

This is clear: we need a helper from outside, from above, from heaven. We need a person who is willing and able to answer for our debts; we need a person to make it good between God and us. One of the prophets in the Holy Bible cries to God, "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down." (Isaiah 64:1) And God heard that cry. Christians believe that God in Jesus (Isa) descended that person needed to save us and to bring reconciliation or atonement between Himself and us. That happened finally on the cross, where Jesus gave his life for us. His last words were: "It is finished", i.e. "I have carried out the plan of God the Father." That's why Christians confess, that Jesus bore our sin, that God's punishment, intended for us, was on him, yes, that he died in our place. We call this substitution.

Substitution

The notion of substitution is that one person takes the place of another, especially to bear his pain and so save him from it. Such an action is universally regarded as noble. It is good to spare people pain; it is doubly good to do so at the cost of

bearing it oneself. How much fathers and mothers would want to die in the place of their dying child. How much we are moved by the story of Father Kolbe, a Polish Catholic priest in the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II (1939-1945). When a number of prisoners were selected for execution, and one of them shouted that he was a married man with children, Father Kolbe stepped forward and asked if he could take the condemned man's place.

His offer was accepted and he was placed in an underground cell, where he was left to die of starvation. In the Holy Bible there is also a moving passage on substitution through the suffering servant of the Lord, in my opinion a clear prophecy of the suffering and death of Jesus: "There was nothing attractive about him, nothing that would draw us to him. We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him. We ignored him as if he were nothing. But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God. But because of our sins he was wounded. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. All of us were like sheep that were lost, each of us going his own way. But the LORD made the punishment fall on him, the punishment of all of us deserved. He was treated harshly, but he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered, like a sheep about to be sheared, he never said a word. He was arrested and sentenced and led off to die, and no one cared about his fate. He was put to death for the sins of our people." (Isaiah 53: 2-8)

These words, written in the sixth century BC, could be written when Jesus was crucified!

Was Jesus' crucifixion necessary?

Many people, also among Christians, think that there is no suffering, no sacrifice of reconciliation necessary between God and us, "Why should our forgiveness depend on Jesus' death?" they ask. "Why does God not simply forgive us, without the necessity of the cross?" It is essential to face these questions, although it is impossible to answer them in a few lines.

People who ask in this way, in my opinion totally underestimate the gravity, depth and destructive power of sin, all over the world as well as in every human heart, individually as well as collectively.

Watch the news on the TV, read the newspapers and look at your own heart. And my second answer to them is: "You have not yet considered the majesty of God. Indeed, God is love, yet we have to remember that his love is holy

love. This holy love of God never can "condone our sins." Confronted by human evil, how could God be true to Himself as holy love? How could God be simultaneously a righteous God and a Saviour?"

At the cross in holy love God through Jesus paid the full penalty of our disobedience himself. He bore the judgment we deserve in order to bring us the forgiveness we do not deserve. On the cross divine mercy and justice were equally expressed and eternally reconciled. God's holy love was "satisfied", thus says John Stott in his excellent study "The Cross of Christ".

Nowhere in the world God's love and justice have flourished so pure as around the crucified Jesus. Therefore on Good Friday the Christians all over the world bow down and say, "God is great, great in love and justice"

Resurrection

However, Good Friday was not the end of Jesus' life. Three days later, on Sunday morning, God raised him from the dead and he appeared to his disciples.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead by God is the proclamation that God has accepted the life and death of Jesus, that the reconciliation between God and people had been finished. The stories about Jesus' resurrection and his appearances to his disciples throw light upon his death on the cross and proclaim the eternal validity of it.

In one of the Easter stories Jesus says to his disciples, "How foolish you are, how slow you are to believe everything the prophets said! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and then to enter his glory?" And Jesus explained to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures, beginning with the books of Moses and the writings of all the prophets." (Luke 24: 25-27)

The good news for people today is that we all may receive the new life in Jesus, already here and now. In him we are a new creation, already in this life.

Sure, we remain sinners till the last day of our life, we all know our failures, our shortcomings, but we may all share in the new life of Jesus. As we know that we are reconciled with God, that our sins are forgiven, we, in gratitude to God, are able to forgive our neighbours. Then we are also inspired to live in peace with people of different religions and races, and to work together for a better and more just society.

I began this article with mentioning the name of Reverend John Hastings. Let me conclude it by quoting two verses of a Good Friday and Easter hymn, made as well as set to music by himself, and sung in his funeral service, a hymn about Jesus:

I am the Way; come follow me. I am the Truth, and the truth shall set you free. I am the Life, life more abundant I give. I have loved you and died for you, you too shall live. I'm your Way, your Truth, your Life. I am the Life; be born again! die to yourself and live the life of heaven; As I have risen, you too to Living shall rise. For no one who lives with this faith ever dies. Such abundant life I give.

The author is from the Netherlands and since 1993 Principal of St. Andrew's Theological College of the Church of Bangladesh in Dhaka.

Easter Sunday: A Feast of New Life

by Father Patrick Gomes

TODAY, April 12, 1998 the whole Christian community sings with one accord "Alleluia" meaning Praise the Lord! There is an immense joy in the heart of every believer because Jesus who was crucified and put to death has been raised by God. Today is the day of Christ's glorious resurrection. Today, with rich and poor and with people of all religions and castes Christian community shares the Easter joy in a fraternal bond and communion which is expressed through sharing of delicious food. However, these external characteristics have their true meaning when we signify the Easter event through reflection, and implement its teaching in our practical life.

The Empty Tomb: The meaning directly goes to the historical fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead. The gospel narrative makes the reference to Empty Tomb. It was very early on the first day of the week and still dark, when Mary of Magdalene came to the tomb. She saw that the stone had been moved away from the tomb and came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved (Gospel of St. John 20:1-8). Having appeared, two angels who sit on the stone question the Christ-seeking curious devoted women: Why look for the living among the dead. He is risen. The gospel narrative continues saying that Mary Magdalene told her experience to Peter and John who then ran to the tomb and saw. Both Peter and John entered right into the tomb; they saw and believed. The truth on which we reflect on is that Jesus died on the Cross bringing glory and exultation and on the third day his resurrection from the dead caused by the power of the heavenly Father made him exulted and glorified. Now he sits at the right hand of the Father interceding continually to the Father for mankind. He thus becomes the risen Lord who is now present among us through our faith and liturgy.

To fulfil the plan of Salvation Christ's death was necessary for the glorification as it brought back man's salvation and opened the way to eternal life. His death brought death of and victory over sin. With his glorified state the while humanity is brought back to the state of glory which was lost by the sin of Adam.

He is Risen from the Dead: After the prayer of Consecration during the Eucharistic Liturgy (Holy Mass) the worshipping community professes its fundamental Christian faith singing: Keep in mind that Jesus Christ has died for us; he is risen from the dead; he is Lord for ever. This profession of faith clearly emphasises the close connection between the redemptive death of Jesus on the cross and his glorious resurrection. Through his death Christ manifested his greatest love for mankind. Through his death Christ obtained a tremendous power to place the universal salvation for mankind of all ages. Thus his death becomes the source and origin of universal salvation. And his glorious resurrection made him most glorified and exulted. Without his resurrection His Cross and death would have no significance in the Economy of Salvation.

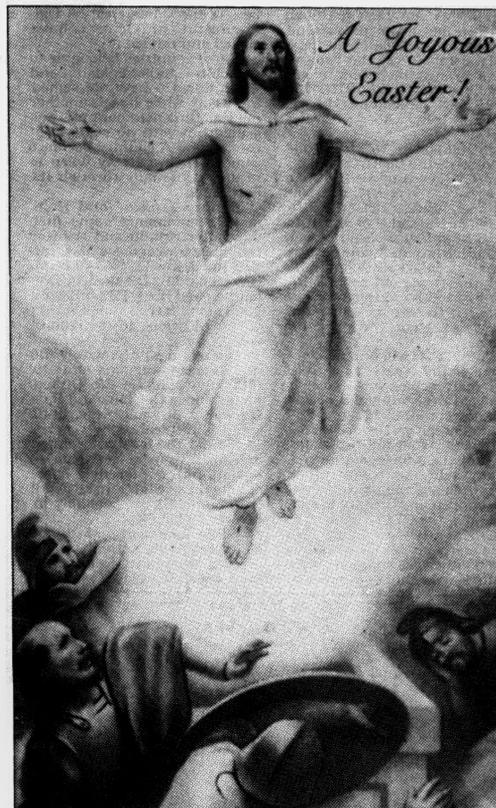
Easter Liturgy: In fact, the liturgical service culminating

Easter Sunday begins with the long but beautiful Easter Vigil held according to the tradition around 11 O'clock at night of Holy Saturday. Among significant parts of this liturgy the Preface, in Latin called the Exultet, carries the central theme: The salvation of mankind through the death and resurrection of Christ. The readings from the Bible highlight the creation story and the Exodus i.e. story of liberation of the people of Israel. The liturgy of the word concludes with singing of *Glory to God in the Highest* which liturgically announces the resurrection of Christ. The faithful then renews their baptismal promises spiritually clothing themselves with the garment of new life of the risen Lord. They now sing *Alleluia*, a Hebrew word meaning praise the Lord! And in the morning of Easter Sunday there is in the Church the Eucharistic Celebration of the greatest solemnity of Christ's glorious resurrection.

From Celebration to New Life: The celebration carries vibrantly the authenticity of the event. But the danger is there when celebration remains limited to cultic level only. An authentic celebration must reach to the actual life of a human person. The celebration must play the role of deepening his faith as well as must bring meaningful renewal of his life.

We are celebrating Christ's resurrection, one of the greatest feasts of the Christian community. If Christ's resurrection is the cause of man's glorification, then, a person's life must turn to that glorified or purified state. Christ's resurrection must make such an impact in his personal life that he is, a person freed from the bondage of all sins. This is true also for a family, for a society, for a country; this is true universally. The call of Easter is a call to embrace Christ's values in our life. Realising these values we die to our sinful nature and with his resurrection we rise to a profound new life. Then only we can sing with the Psalmist in the tone of praise to the risen Lord: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the Corner Stone." "This is the Day which the Lord has made; let us be glad and rejoice."

Conclusion: Easter Blessing: Often we are caught in our manifold sins and many other shortcomings. If we really believe that Christ has died and risen for us we too then will obtain victory over sins. Our society needs to be purified and



(Psalm 118:22-24). When a person has been renewed by the fruit of Christ's resurrection he becomes a man of peace and reconciliation, love and charity; a man guided by the Easter grace.

continually renewed by renewed religious values. This is a challenge, yet possible. May the grace and blessing of the Risen Lord Jesus Christ be in each one of us, in our families, in our country. To all our friends, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, may this greeting *Happy Easter* bring a true renewal in our personal and social life of an authentic fraternal bond of love and friendship. Alleluia! Today is Happy Easter!!

Garfield

Garfield would you mind eating a little more delicately?

BURP BURP BURP BURP BURP BURP BURP BURP

by Jim Davis

James Bond

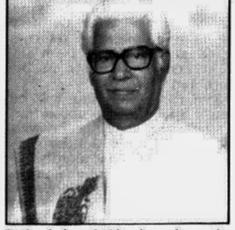
GOOD EVENING MAMZELLE PLEASE DON'T SCREAM—IT MIGHT HAVE TO USE THE GUN!

WHO ARE YOU?

LET ME ADVISE, ADVISE, CHERE—

AND IF I'M TO ADVISE YOU PROPERLY, YOU CAN'T HAVE HIM WITHOUT ME—

Metropolitan



Mohiuddin's death anniversary today

The first death anniversary of Mohiuddin Ahmed, a veteran parliamentarian and freedom fighter, will be observed today, reports UNB.

Mohiuddin was a former deputy leader of opposition in parliament and a presidium member of Awami League. He was a close associate of father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Various organisations, including Awami League and its front organisations, the national committee of Mohiuddin Ahmed Smriti Sangsad, Mathbaria Welfare Association in Dhaka and Barisal Divisional Youth Welfare Association have chalked out elaborate programmes for the day.

Ghuran khwai will be held at his Dharmadi residence in the city and village home at Mathbaria, Patuakhali.

A milad mahfil will also be held at his city residence after Asr prayers.

Obituary

Alhaj Altaf Ali Miah, a renowned businessman and social worker of Laksham Thana under Comilla district, died on April 7 at his residence. He was 87, says a press release.

Ali left behind four sons, three daughters, grand children and hosts of relations.

Adibashi Mela ends in Rangamati

The first three-day Parbattya Chattagram "Adibashi Sangskritik Mela" concluded in Rangamati yesterday at the local tribal cultural institute with a vow to uplift, preserve and focus the traditional culture and heritage of the hill people, reports BSS.

Organised by the Jhoom Aesthetic Council (JAC), the concluding session was attended by Kazi Zafar Ullah, chairman of the Privatisation Board as the chief guest, Nirmalendu Tripathy presided over the function. Gautam Dewan, former chairman of the local government council of Rangamati Hill District attended the function as the special guest.

A discussion was held on the culture of the hill people. Bir Kumar Tanchangya, noted drama artist Aly Zaker and Sara Zaker, journalist Abed Khan took part in the discussion.

Ten stalls were erected in the fair displaying the handicrafts and others products in line with the culture of the indigenous people living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Artists staged a drama in the Chakma language under the name and style of "Jhora Padar Jhinkant".

The fair was inaugurated by poet Shamsur Rahman on April 9 through a formal function with Jhimit Jhimit Chakma in the chair.

Raja Debashish Roy and Deputy Commissioner of Rangamati Shah Alam were present as special guests on the occasion.

96 arrested on various charges

Police rounded up 96 people on various charges from different parts of the city during the last 24 hours till 6 am yesterday, reports UNB.

Of them, 16 were wanted, 36 held for murder, dacoity, snatching and terrorism, 35 under DMP ordinance and nine under Section 54 of CrPC.

FBCCI proposes waiving VAT on retail price

Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) has proposed that Value Added Tax (VAT) on retail price be withdrawn for five years, reports UNB.

"Our retailers do not have enough orientation about VAT. So a five-year period should be given to build up capacity before expansion of VAT at retail sales," the federation argued in a pre-budget discussion with National Board of Revenue (NBR).

FBCCI president Yussuf Abdullah Harun presented the federation's proposals for VAT, tax and reform of revenue department to NBR Chairman Dr A K M Moshur Rahman.

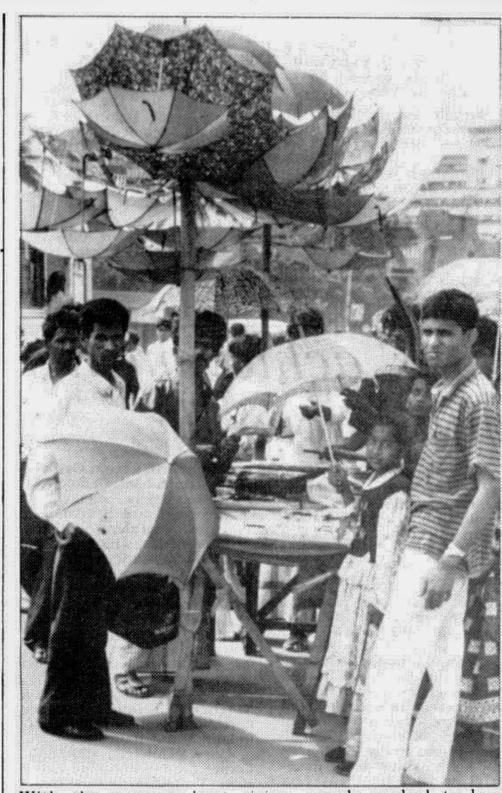
In its month-long budget preparatory drive, the NBR also listened to different chambers separately. The FBCCI also consulted different chambers and trade associations in preparing its proposals.

VAT from import level and 10 different sectors constitutes 80 per cent of the total annual revenue collection from VAT. So small industries need to be exempted from VAT to help develop a local production infrastructure and generate employment, the FBCCI said.

To cope with present market and growing investment cost, it said, the investment limit for cottage industry should be fixed at Tk 15 lakh.

It said turnover limit should be enhanced to Tk 40 lakh from Tk 15 lakh while cost limit of plant machinery and equipment be raised to Tk 10 lakh from three lakh for relieving small industrial units of VAT.

Urging for reforming the revenue department, the Federation said the existing VAT and tax management blocks the development of a modern revenue system. "It is also strengthening the hands of repression, corruption and bureaucratic harassment on entrepreneurs."



With the summer heat rising, people rushed to buy sunshades with few shops opening for business yesterday. One pavement shopkeeper at Farm Gate in the city had a bright idea. He added some colour to the sun-baked streets, hoisting multi-coloured umbrellas upside down on bamboo poles. Meteorologists forecast some relief for Dhaka city dwellers today. Thundershowers with high winds are expected to bring down the temperature a little, from yesterday's high of 34.4 Celsius. Rajshahi city yesterday recorded the highest temperature of 36.8 Celsius, while Srimangal was the coolest, with 20.8 Celsius minimum temperature.

— Star photo by Amran Hossain.

Democracy alive and well in Bangladesh: Canadian minister

Canadian Minister for International Cooperation Diane Marleau has lauded the country's democratic system saying "democracy is alive and well in Bangladesh."

In an interview with BSS before ending her five-day visit to Bangladesh, Marleau said in a democracy "it is always worthwhile to talk in parliament."

Talking on the interrelation between development, peace, stability and democratic culture, she said both the ruling party and the opposition should behave responsibly and work together for the progress of a country.

The minister, who has been actively involved in parliamentary politics for 18 years and has experiences of both being in the opposition and the ruling party, said although "opposing is the job of the opposition, it is challenging to oppose properly" through constructive criticism and deliberations.

The opposition, however, can opt for any other way as its strategy for registering disagreement with the government, she observed.

Marleau, who arrived in the city on April 5 at the head of a seven-member delegation, left for home on April 9.

Appreciating Bangladesh's privatisation programme, package of incentives for investors and the multi-sectoral reform initiatives being carried out by the government, Marleau said since these are a continuous process, "you cannot do enough at a time. We only encourage the Bangladesh government to keep on working on the reforms."

Expressing her profound satisfaction over the provision of election of women at grassroots level local government structure, Marleau said she would carry home the success stories of CIDA-aided poverty alleviation and women empowerment projects in Bangladesh. The Canadian minister directly exchanged views with a number of elected women union parishad members during her visit.

About the prospect of Canadian investment in Bangladesh, Marleau said a number of top leaders of large Canadian corporations have already visited Bangladesh and many more are expected to come here soon. Canadian companies are eager to invest in Bangladesh's energy, communications pulp and paper, and other important sectors and the Export Development Corporation (EDC) of Canada has been working hard in this regard, she said.

Canada has mobilised over two billion Canadian dollars in assistance to Bangladesh since its independence. Under the largest bilateral assistance programme administered by CIDA in a single country, Canada provided 112 million Canadian dollars to Bangladesh in 1996. Besides, the country has been extending technical assistance, food and commodity aid to implement projects in communications, agriculture, population, rural development, irrigation, flood control and energy sectors of Bangladesh.

Bangladeshi sculptor awarded

Mukul Kumar Barai, a Bangladeshi sculptor has been awarded the prestigious Dhauraj Bhagat award for "Sculptor of the Year 1997-98" in the Delhi College of Art (DCA), New Delhi, says a press release.

The Governor of Delhi presented the award to him at a special ceremony held at the DCA. He is a Master of Fine Art final year student in the DCA and is studying there as a scholar under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations' Scholarship Programme. He is the fourth son of Narayan Chandra Barai, Headmaster of Agailjhara Bhagat Halder Public Academy, Agailjhara, Barisal.

3 tribal bodies urge govt to expedite implementation of CHT peace accord

Three tribal organisations yesterday urged the government to expedite implementation of the Chittagong Hill Tracts peace accord for settling the problems in the region, reports BSS.

"The landmark peace agreement made all peace-loving Bengali and hill people hopeful. But delay in its implementation is frustrating," a joint statement of Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Pahari Gano Parishad and Hill Women Federation said in Rangamati.

The statement was released at a press conference. President of the Pahari Gano Parishad Dr Kanishka Chakma, general secretary of Pahari Chhatra Parishad Palash Khisha and vice president of Hill women Federation Uttara Chakma spoke on the occasion.

The statement also urged the government to be cautious while ratifying the accord in parliament to avoid contradictions with the provisions of the original agreement.