On which side was the spear wound?
What a treat it was to hear Fr. Eugene Hensell, OSB, a Benedictine Monk from the Archabbey of St. Meinrad, talk about St. Matthew’s narrative of the Passion of Jesus, over the course of three evenings during our Lenten Parish Mission. Fr. Hensell’s approach was two-fold: to provide a scholarly background to the text, and to color the narrative with potential scenarios and sensations, quirks of history and chance, as well as provide important insight into the person of St. Matthew. This resulted in a spiritual interpretation that the stark text lacked.

The Passion narrative, first written by St. Mark about 70 AD, is the center of our faith, containing the heart of our Christian belief, the suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew, which draws heavily on St. Mark’s work, was written 10 years later, approximately 50 years after the actual events occurred.

Fr. Hensell reminded us that the Gospels are not factual biographies of the life of Jesus, but rather they are really documents of faith, written by the evangelists based on what they believed, that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God.

Fr. Hensell emphasized how Matthew went to great pains to connect the Passion of Jesus with writings of the past, especially Isaiah. Writing at least 50 years after Jesus’ resurrection, Matthew wasn’t concerned with conveying an accurate biography: he tells the story the way he remembers it and emphasizes occurrences he deems important through benefit of hindsight.

Fr. Hensell systematically reviewed St. Matthew’s account of “Why Jesus was killed?” tossing in wonderful tidbits of information and insight. After his triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus caused the memorable ruckus in the temple courtyard turning over the tables of the moneychangers and disrupting the entire scene. He called it a “Den of Thieves” and condemned the temple system.

He was not just revolting against the increasing commercialization of ritual animal sacrifice, he was advocating an overhaul of the whole system. The Pharisees were enraged and considered this blasphemous. They didn’t care for his message that “The Kingdom of God is at hand,” for his preaching and healing of the sick. They were jealous of Jesus, saw him as a threat to their power and privileged way of life. So they conspired to have him arrested by stealth and set about to have him crucified.

One of the most startling insights was Jesus’ display of his humanity when he realized that he was going to be put to death. He did not want to die and implored his Father three times to “let the cup pass from me,” and in the end acquiesced by saying “your will not mine be done.” Fr. Hensell went on to answer an important question for many of us, who have wondered about Jesus’ outcry “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” while writhing on the cross. This outburst at first appears paradoxical. Why would Jesus think he was forsaken at this late hour when he had spent his whole life profoundly connected to his Heavenly Father?

Fr. Hensell explained that this heart-wrenching lament is the first line of Psalm 22 which would have been well known to those assembled at the foot of the cross; Psalm 22 actually being a fervent prayer of praise, hope and comfort. Jesus in his agony didn’t need to finish the Psalm for the onlookers to comprehend his message!

Another important revelation was that the disciples had many doubts and their faith was very shaky. After the temple incident, they were selfishly concerned that Jesus’ behavior would bring about retribu-
tion on him and also on themselves. Their anxiety only increased when he said, "Passover is coming and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." As the story unfolded, they proved to be of weak faith as they slept, denied, deserted and ultimately betrayed him. He went on to reflect upon the differences between the betrayers Judas and Peter. Both betrayed Jesus but for very different reasons and with very different outcomes. Judas, realizing that his insincere kiss has condemned Jesus to death, lets his betrayal define him and chooses suicide. On the other hand, Peter who is also sorry for his triple betrayal, picks himself up and moves on to accomplish great things. He knows that his sin is not the last word unless he chooses to make it so. Peter knew his life was not an unqualified success but he also knew he could rely on God's unlimited mercy. Like Peter, we are committed but not very strong and sometimes we fail.

John Steinbeck wrote "...a story must have some points of contact with the reader to make him feel at home in it. Only then can he accept wonders."

Fr. Hensell certainly provided many such points of contact with the Passion narrative. He made us aware of our debt to first century (Jewish) Christians who recognized the value of oral tradition. Wes Jackson would agree. In Becoming Native to This Place he said "...a story retold is a story re-examined over and over again at different levels of intellectual and emotional growth." The pinnacle of the Jewish Passover meal, a Seder, was in Jesus' time and continues to be, the telling of the Exodus story. The re-telling of the story has kept the memory real for thousands of years.

Jesus' last 'Seder', our story of the Eucharist, began when he pronounced the words, "This is my Body" and "This is the chalice of my Blood," And recalling the Jewish memorial tradition of Passover, when he spoke the words, "Do this in memory of me," Jesus made a memory of himself.

It was a Christian Passover, a meal of liberation which leads us to the cross. To non believers, Jesus' crucifixion is just a horrible death, a failure and a defeat, but to believers it is all about freedom and liberation, a sign of victory and exaltation. Jesus death on the cross freed us from sin and redeemed mankind.

This Palm Sunday we will read the Passion according to St. Matthew. In preparation, Father invited us all to read Matthew 26-27. As we enter into this rich liturgy, the events of Christ's Passion will have a deeper meaning to those who attended the Lenten Parish Mission. Many thanks to Fr. Hensell for exploring this narrative in such rich and informative detail. Overall it was a moving spiritual experience which helped prepare us for the Passion of Jesus and the miracle of Easter.

On Wednesday evening preceding the Mission, our regular monthly Supper consisted of a simple meal of sandwiches, chips and cookies provided by the Parish Life Committee. Attendees were encouraged to bring a canned or non-perishable food item for the March Food Drive to support the Social Apostolate. Sister Julie attended and was pleased with the generous response.

"I am very grateful to the people of the Cathedral Parish for their wonderful donation of food for our grocery program the night of the parish dinner and during the whole month of March. We are so blessed to have the Cathedral as our neighbor and our supporters. In particular, I want to thank Fr. Schreck, Deborah Wade, and the Christian Service Committee for remembering us all year long. I continue to be amazed by the generosity of your parishioners. The families receiving the food are so appreciative. You are making a difference in their health, nutrition and hope," said Sister Julie.

In addition, Gretchen Reese presented "Admiral O'Neill" with suitable headgear for his hosting of the three Cocktail Cruises which were auctioned off, for a princely sum, at the Heritage Gala.

The attendees adequately nourished their bodies at the supper before going over to the Cathedral to have Fr. Hensell nourish their souls.
American Boys Choir, one of the finest musical ensembles in the country, sang at the Noon Mass at the Cathedral on February 25, 2014. They perform regularly with world class ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Symphony and the Boston Symphony. They have appeared on stage with internationally renowned artists such as Jessye Norman and Frederica von Stade, as well as jazz legend Wynton Marsalis and pop icon Sir Paul McCartney.

According to Tour Guide John Pryor, “these boys were the best behaved group I have ever spoken to; they were all attentive and really interested in the history of the Cathedral. They took particular interest in the stories that the stained glass windows tell. I told them about how people in the Middle Ages couldn’t read and the scenes in the windows allowed the priests to talk about the stories in the bible by showing the windows. The boys all took notes for their history class.

“Another point of interest to the boys was that Catholics were initially banned in the Colony of Georgia. Since Georgia was an English colony, they were aware of this fact because of the Spanish presence in Florida and protecting against them was a priority.

“They were also inquisitive about the reredos (old high altar) and the Sacred Heart altar.

“I told many visitors during the morning that the choir would be singing at Mass and that they should come back to hear them; many did come back and we had a pretty big crowd!”

The boys, about 30 in number, ranged from the 4th to 8th grade and had incredible voices; they truly love to sing and are disciplined in this endeavor. They sang several songs from the choir loft during the noon Mass and afterwards, in order to hear the different acoustical effects, they assembled in front of the altar and sang a few more songs. Their selections included:

Bay Psalm 23 - Paul John Rudoi
Pueri Hebraeorum - Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina
Nigra sum - Pablo Casals
The Lord bless you and keep you - John Rutter

Many Mass goers stayed and listened applauding after each song. Mary Clark Rechtiene observed, “I found them far superior to the Vienna Boys’ Choir that was here last year. The sound of their voices was truly angelic. A woman in the pew in front of me, who is a parishioner, had the same opinion.”

Mac Fogle said, “It was a very successful endeavor. I have invited them to return next year to give a full-length recital. Hopefully we can work out the details.”

Photos by Mary Clark Rechtiene
Which side is Jesus’ Wound On?

By Peter Paolucci

Soon after the Rededication Ceremony in November 2000, Brother Robert organized a group of people to act as tour guides for parishioners and visitors who were interested in touring the newly restored Cathedral.

On the first day we were open for tours, a woman pointed out that the Christ’s chest wound was erroneously placed on his left side in the 14th Station of the Cross, “Jesus is laid in the tomb.” A quick check of the large crucifix installed over the St. Anthony’s altar confirmed that the wound was indeed on his right side. Perhaps the artist decorating that station took artistic license in placing the wound there, since the angle of Jesus’ body coming down from the cross, made it difficult to put it on the right side.

“Why is Jesus’ side wound traditionally depicted on his right side?”

According to Michelle Arnold staff apologist at Catholic Answers, “John, the Evangelist, who tells us that Jesus’ side was pierced (John 19:32-35), does not say which side was pierced. Crucifixes are artistic renderings, not exact reproductions, so the depiction of Christ’s chest wound on the right side may be symbolic.”

The recent presentation on the Shroud of Turin by Mr. Barrie Schwortz, the Official Documenting Photographer of an international team that performed the first in-depth scientific examination of “the Shroud” in 1978, shed some more light on this perplexing question.

During his presentation Mr. Schwortz reviewed the compelling evidence that the Shroud was indeed the burial cloth that wrapped the body of Jesus Christ after his Crucifixion and Death and therefore, the most important relic in Christianity.

The Shroud, a 14½ foot long, 3½ foot wide linen cloth, wrapped a body from the feet over the head and back down the other side of the body to the feet and bears the ventral and dorsal image of a scourged, crucified man.

Schwortz reviewed the various elements of the anatomy and blood flow that supported the biblical accounts of Christ’s Crucifixion including the crown of thorns, flogging patterns, nail and spear wound locations. After years of exhaustive study and evaluation of the data, the Final Report issued in 1981 concluded that “the Shroud image is that of a real human form, of a scourged, crucified man.”

The right side of the man’s chest, which is in contact with the right side of the shroud as shown here, reveals evidence of a large chest wound, accompanied by a pool of blood. According to the Shroud of Turin web site, “This is the most dense bloodstain on the Shroud.” It is in the area of the right side of the body image, below one of the patches in a heavy scorch area. It is often referred to as the ‘side’ or ‘spear’ wound bloodstain.” The blood appears to have oozed out by a force of gravity, rather than being pumped out, hence medical examiners believe it to be post-mortem in nature. There is also evidence that the stain is not entirely composed of blood, a clear watery material is also present. The size and shape of the wound (4.4 cm by 1.1 cm) also match what would have been caused by a Roman “lancea”, an instrument used by foot soldiers of the Roman militia.

Here at last is supporting evidence that the wound was indeed on the right side.
About a year ago during the Year of Faith, the Cathedral Parish began an Evangelization Project to spread the Good News of the Lord. The New Evangelization is the greatest priority of the Church at this time and we are all called to share our faith. Pope Francis has said, “We must create a culture of encounter.” And in his encyclical Evangelii Gaudium #33 he “invites everyone to be bold and creative in this task of rethinking the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelization in their communities.” Christ’s message to the Apostles was, “Go forth and teach all nations.”

At the outset, Lauren Morris, petitioned the Parish Council to install a Lighthouse Catholic Media Kiosk, stocked with the religious books and CDs, in the back of the Church. Lauren reminded Parish Council that this was an evangelization project. “We were more interested in saving souls than in making money.” To date, we have spent $4651 for the kiosk and materials and have received $2615 in income or a little over 50% recovery rate.

But last month, Lauren reported that through the holiday season the kiosk did break even, recouping the funds we invested during the last restocking period. The Christmas Season is a great time for evangelization at the Cathedral and the CDs have been going quickly and the books are all gone too.

So Lauren requested funds to restock the kiosk and continue this evangelization project.

But that’s not the whole story according to Lauren, “We have received many letters through Lighthouse about the people who are now are in the RCIA program or others who have come back to the Sacraments after listening to the CDs. Many letters are writing to Lighthouse Catholic Media to testify to the effectiveness of the project.”

One man wrote, “May I first say that your CDs have brought light and life into my new Catholic walk. A former critic and opponent of not only Catholicism, but of religion in general, my whole family (wife and two daughters) are now in the process of joining the Catholic Church through the RCIA program. We could not be more excited about this ‘coming home’ to Christ’s church. I am excited about my faith simply because it is truth, a truth that has transformed my life. Lighthouse Catholic Media has been an integral part of that process, as I listen to several CDs on a weekly basis. Consequently, as I travel deeper into my joining the Church, I am looking for more ways to be of service. Blessings, Scott Bowen.”

Another woman named Renee writes after listening to the Answering Atheism CD, “It helped me understand that I don’t have to defend what I believe to the atheists in my life, but rather showed me that the atheist worldview does not make sense.”

Lighthouse Catholic Media lights faith on fire. It was started to address concerns about lukewarm and fallen-away Catholics as well as ignite the fire of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all Catholics. Lighthouse is endorsed by two cardinals and over 50 bishops worldwide. It is so exciting to have this ministry at the Cathedral. We are all called to evangelize but we must have a deep understanding of our faith in order to share it with others. The materials available in the kiosk address many of the mysteries of our faith, so stop by and pick one up next time you are at church.
At the Cross her station keeping, stood the mournful Mother weeping, close to her Son to the last.

...So wrote the pen of 26-year-old Italian composer Giovanni Pergolesi (1710-1736), days before his death from tuberculosis. Commissioned by a noble fraternity to write a new musical setting of this famous text, Pergolesi raced to finish his composition, in spite of his ill health, before Good Friday of 1736. Days before the first performance, Pergolesi finished his last note, and, within days, this young Neapolitan composer died.

The Stabat Mater tells of the suffering of the Mother of Christ at the foot of the cross, and through the pen of the thirteenth century monk (probably Franciscan), asks to share in her suffering.

After it was premiered in Naples, many music critics were shocked: how dare he (Pergolesi) use musical techniques from his opera scores and apply them to a sacred text! Indeed, it has only been eight years since the text was even allowed to be sung: it was banned by the Council of Trent as being “too emotional”; Pope Benedict XIII allowed its use once again in the 1720's. Radical it certainly was: instead of the usual grand and solemn musical styles heard in the churches of the period, Pergolesi used techniques from his operatic works; while not able to give Mary an operatic character, he certainly was able to humanize her, to make her seem less remote and much more like a mother.

Pergolesi composed it in order to appeal to our emotions: just listen to the opening duet, which presents the first verse of the poem in dissonant, arching phrases to the text: “stood the mournful mother weeping”. The French philosopher Rousseau said of the opening movement: “It is the most perfect and touching duet to come from the pen of any composer.” Within 100 years of his death, the work was the most performed of the whole century.

Cathedral cantor Kelly Balmaceda and Director of Music McDowell Fogle will join with local musicians and faculty from Georgia Southern University in presenting this work on Palm Sunday, April 13, at 3:00 p.m. All are invited to attend.
Historic Cathedral Image Discovered

Monsignor O’Neill and I recently went over to the Georgia Historical Society at the invitation of Cathedral parishioner Pattye Meagher, Director of Communications for GHS, to look at old Cathedral images, in the hopes of finding a view that neither of us had ever seen before. After a while, we found a stereopticon slide of the interior of the Cathedral before the fire, which showed the old Stations of the Cross. They were not carved, stand-alone figures like we have today but seemed to be relief versions with ornate wooden frames like the current ones.

Although excited by this find, Pattye saved the best for last. Going through the last pile of photos, we came across one of the Cathedral taken before the steeples were installed in 1896, which neither of us had ever seen before. The previous image most of us have seen is a head on shot with both steeples missing, but it looks like they may have been cropped off. This image, taken on an angle from the northwest corner of Lafayette Square, clearly shows the tops of the towers with no steeples. Diocesan Archivist Gillian Brown was very excited by the find. “These are great! I have not seen them before.”

We are very grateful to the Georgia Historical Society for preserving these unique historical images of the Cathedral.

— Peter Paolucci