Vox Clamantis

Bulletin of the Society of Saint Pius X in Scotland

March 2022

"The will to do, the soul to dare"

Dear Faithful,

One of the things some of the newcomers to our churches in Glasgow and Edinburgh are struck by is the use of incense at the sung Mass. This traditional practice, prescribed by the Missal, has a long and significant history.

Already in the Old Testament Moses was told by God, "Take unto thee spices, stacte, and onycha, galbanum of sweet savour and the clearest frankincense… and thou shalt make incense compounded by the work of the perfumer… Most holy shall this incense be unto you."

It is notable that among the gifts brought by the Magi to the Christ Child was incense, traditionally ascribed as a sign of His divinity. Indeed, incense has three particular meanings:

1) of sacrifice; since it is burnt in the sight of God as every creature should be consumed in the service and glory of God;

2) of holiness; and of the holiness of Christ which permeates the church building sanctifying the faithful;

3) of prayer; which rises up before God proceeding from a heart burning with the charity of God.

This incense is primarily offered to Christ Himself, symbolised by the incensation of the altar which represents Him and then in the faithful who are His members (who are themselves incensed at the Offertory). It is also a sacramental which obtains grace for those who have a share in it.

Some, of course, have practical reasons for disliking the use of incense. Some of our younger altar boys have been known to faint and there is often the odd cough or two. One of the more amusing memes during the recent hysteria which (illegally) saw our churches closed, was a picture of an altar boy incensing the camera in church with someone watching at home coughing.

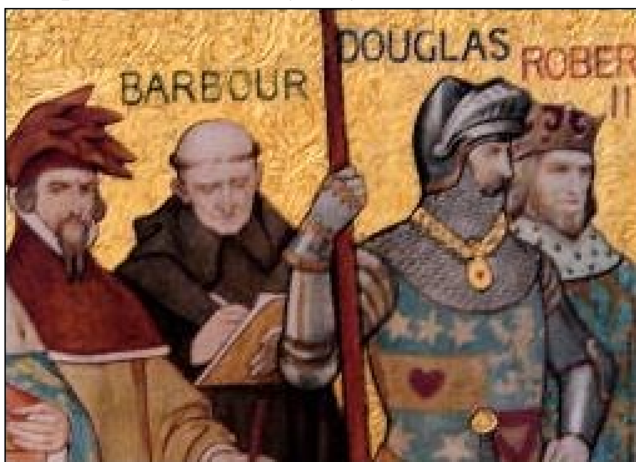
First Holy Communion of Alan Weir last month in Edinburgh

With every good wish and blessing,

Rev. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

Fastern's E'en and Lent in Scotland

As we head into the great Fast of the Church's calendar this month, I thought it would be an interesting exercise to look into the practice of Lent in Scotland before it was affected by the 'reformation' of the 16th century. As I mentioned back in March of 2019, and more recently in a sermon in Edinburgh at the start of Septuagesima this year, Lent itself has a preparatory period of some 17 days which, in the Middle Ages, became known as carnival. The various names of carnival characterise aspects of it. In England, carnival culminated on Shrove Tuesday, the day on which people were shriven, in other words when they made a confession before Lent. The Gaelic *Dimàirt inid* and the Welsh *Dydd Mawrth Ynyd* express the same idea. The word carnival itself indicates the giving up of meat. The French Mardi Gras (Fat Tuesday, the day on which fat was eaten before Lent), the Italian Martedi Grasso, and the Norwegian fettisdag (fett = fat) refer to the plenitude of food consumed on the day. In mediaeval Scotland, carnival was held on one day alone, Fastern's E'en, so it was not one of the most important calendar-related festivals. Although the monarchy dined and jousted, it was for the common people less of a holiday than Corpus Christi or May Day.



John Barbour, in the retinue of Robert II

Some fragments of evidence are available to describe the mediaeval festival in Scotland from various sources. The father of Scots poetry (famous for his epic romance *The Brus*), John Barbour (c. 1320-1395) has a few references to it. In his account of the taking of Roxburgh Castle by the Douglas on Fastern's E'en 1314, he described the garrison:

> …dansying
> Synging, and other wayis playing,
> As apon fastryn evynis
> The custom, to mak ioy and blis.

One of William Dunbar's poems is set on Fastern's E'en but, sophisticated intellectual that he was, it is not a description of the festival but a parody of it. It is in the form of a play, the dance of the seven deadly sins, in which figures of power are lampooned, a common element of carnival in many cultures. Even the clergy were not exempt from this mockery. For example, two fiends, 'Black belly and Bawsy brown', represent the Dominicans and Franciscans. The poem ends with a tournament in which chivalry is mocked through a contest between a soutar (a shoemaker) and a tailor. It was common in Northwest Europe to hold contests on Shrove Tuesday – at various times and places tournaments, football matches, cock fights and bull running. At the court of James IV tournaments were held for which payment was made for the 'dighting' (cleaning) of swords in 1505. There is a reference to a 'tulye' at Peebles in 1467, probably a football match of some kind though the word implies it was quite a rough affair. Curiously there is also a reference to 'the fluring [decorating with flowers] of the tulbuth' at Lanark in 1490.

The annual pattern of festivity in Scotland was completely reshaped in the middle of the 16th century, which suppressed anything that might be associated with the Catholic Faith and 'idolatry'. The three principal elements of the mediaeval calendar all disappeared: the Christmas cycle, the Easter cycle, and saints' days. The repression of public festivity may not have been as severe or rapid as historians once believed, but it was effective in the long term and by 1650 survivals were few. In Scotland, however, Fastern's E'en was the one religious holiday to survive the reformers' zeal, albeit stripped of its religious content and meaning. There is no comparison with Zwingli's protestant Zürich, where repeated censures did not prevent carnival from continuing on quite a lavish scale

The pleasures of Fastern's E'en, consequently, were secular. Cock fighting continued until about 1830 and local football matches

were widespread in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries and are still played to-day in a few places. At Musselburgh there was a football match between married and unmarried fishwives, an unusual example of sexual inversion in post-'reformation' Scotland. This was the sum of its public aspect, for Fastern's E'en had retreated indoors.

Fastern's E'en was not a day for heavy drinking, in contrast with most Scottish holidays. A slightly richer food was eaten, as the names of Brose Day and Bannock Night indicate. The carcake of Northeast Scotland and the skairscone further south were made with eggs and in the 19th century with sugar. It was only a faint echo of the lavish consumption of eggs and fatty dishes in other countries. Also, in the North-East, a wedding ring and trade symbols were added to the bannock, and those present took pieces and thus discovered who was to be married first, who was to remain single, and women could also find the trade of their future husband. The inclusion of divination rituals points to the acceptance of fate rather than a willingness to seek change. Though football games continued as a public event, shorn of their context they were no more than a way of relishing local identity.

Bannock on the traditional 'girdle'

So, Fastern's E'en survived in some form, then, but without it's true significance. What of Lent itself? Of course, the particular awareness of the individual's salvation, which the Church encouraged as a contemplative state during Lent, curiously fitted in with the Calvinist way of life in general so in this sense, the Scots lived in a permanent Lent after the 'reformation'. Indeed, the fasting which the Church had required was continued after 1560 by annual Acts of Parliament which did not stop until 1654. Only then was there sufficient confidence in the food supply to end the conservation of food stocks which had seemed essential to keeping people alive when the food stored for winter ran low.

Whenever we talk about fasting or abstinence, it is of necessity the withholding of legitimate, 'normal' food intake. What was the normal diet of mediaeval and later Scots? The Black Death contributed to a smaller pastoral economy and the Scot's diet adapted accordingly with less meat and more oats and barley which grew well in the climate. When meat was consumed, its quality could not be assured, as evident by the many regulations and court records of unscrupulous fleshers, or butchers. It seems likely that many people experienced eating bad quality or even inedible meat. Regulations also controlled where the slaughter took place and the quantity of meat; fleshers sold whole or side (half) carcasses or quarters of mutton.

Since meat was required to be sold in such large quantities, few ordinary folk could afford to eat it regularly, or at all. Instead, ordinary folk would have eaten sausages, offal and *mart*. From the Irish and Gaelic, *mart* was the meat slaughtered toward the end of the year and preserved through salting for the winter months. Oxen or cows, or sheep in the Borders and goat in the Highlands were slaughtered in November because many of the animals would not have survived the tough winter.

Salted meat continued to be prevalent through the mid-eighteenth century until the introduction of turnips and sown grasses, which became new sources of winter food for cattle. Even this, however, meant fresh slaughter was possible in winter almost exclusively for the upper classes. Indeed, the tradition of 'yule mart', salted meat intended for Christmas, was still prevalent in the early 20th century in Scotland.

From archaeological digs in Aberdeen, we also know that pig became more important in the Scottish diet in the 14th century. Only the nobility ate venison on occasion, a privilege protected by further regulations. Gannets or solan geese were also a popular choice for royalty in the 16th century.

Fish was also an important staple of the mediaeval Scottish diet. During Lent, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays (about half the year), the Church forbade consuming meat. Along with herring, pike, salmon, and bream, eels were also common, caught in lochs with wicker traps and barbed spears like the one below.

It seems, then, that Lent was relatively straightforward for Scots in ages past. It's up to us, in our age of plenty, to make the necessary adjustments for the salvation of *our* souls.

Mass Schedule

	CARLUKE	GLASGOW	EDINBURGH
Tuesday 1st March	**7.15am**		
Wednesday 2nd March — Ash Wednesday		**6.30pm**	**6.30pm**
Thursday 3rd March	**11am**		**7am**
Friday 4th March *(First Friday)*		**6.30pm**	**6.30pm**
Saturday 5th March *(First Saturday)*		**11am**	**11am**
Sunday 6th March — 1st of Lent		**9am & 11am**	**9am & 11am**
Monday 7th March	**11am**		
Tuesday 8th March			**6.30pm**
Wednesday 9th March	**7.15am**		
Thursday 10th March	**11am**		
Friday 11th March	**7.15am**		
Saturday 12th March		**11am**	**11am**
Sunday 13th March — 2nd of Lent		**9am & 11am**	**9am & 11am**
Monday 14th March	**11am**		
Tuesday 15th March			**6.30pm**
Wednesday 16th March	**7.15am**		
Thursday 17th March	**11am**		
Friday 18th March	**7.15am**		
Saturday 19th March — Saint Joseph		**11am**	**11am**
Sunday 20th March — 3rd of Lent		**9am & 11am**	**9am & 11am**
Monday 21st March	**11am**		
Tuesday 22nd March	**7.15am**		
Wednesday 23rd March	**7.15am**		
Thursday 24th March	**11am**		
Friday 25th March — Annunciation		**6.30pm**	**6.30pm**
Saturday 26th March		**11am**	**11am**
Sunday 27th March — 4th of Lent (Laetare)		**9am & 11am**	**9am & 11am**
Monday 28th March	**11am**		
Tuesday 29th March			**6.30pm**
Wednesday 30th March	**7.15am**		
Thursday 31st March	**11am**		

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Resident priests:

Rev. Fr. Sebastian Wall (Prior)

Rev. Fr. Reid Hennick

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CARLUKE	GLASGOW	EDINBURGH
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If you require any further information concerning one of these places, or need to talk to a priest e.g. in case of emergency for the Sacraments, please ring the phone number mentioned in contact details.