

## **EASTER 2011**

Chaim Potok wrote several insightful novels into the life of the orthodox Jewish community in Brooklyn. In one of his novels (*My Name is Asher Lev*) he writes about the relationship between a father and his son. The father is a rabbi who is steeped in Jewish ways. The son has a burning desire to be an artist and this leads him to break with his father and become far too secular for his orthodox community.

After many years of separation, the father writes to his son and invites him to come home. The son says that he can't. They go back and forth: the father persisting out of love for his son; the son saying too much hurt has taken place, too much pain. Finally the father says to his son when the son refuses to come across the wide divide of the years: "Then come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way."

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with His people: "I will be your God and you will be my people." I will be faithful to you. You must obey my laws and commands. But the people were not faithful; they broke the covenant. They worshiped false gods (today read 'sports') and they sinned. Even though they didn't come very far, God came the rest of the way. He sent Moses and Abraham, the prophets and the kings. Whenever the people disobeyed God and strayed, God opened up a new path of love.

The fullness of God's pursuit of His people came when Jesus Christ entered into human life. Throughout this week we have been remembering and reliving this beautiful story.

On Holy Thursday evening we celebrated the Last Supper. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. In an act of humility and service Jesus invited them and He invites us to do the same. In this action He said: "Come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way." At the Last Supper Jesus gave them and today He gives us His Body and Blood in the Eucharist. Each Sunday right here in this Church Jesus says to us: "Come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way."

On Good Friday we held the Service of the Passion of Christ. Jesus was mocked, scourged, and crucified for one reason and one reason only - to save us from sin. "God so loved the world that He sent His only Son into the world - not to condemn the world but to save it" (John 3: 16). In the death of Christ on the cross God opened up a whole new path of love. With arms outstretched on the cross Jesus says to you and to me: "Come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way."

Tonight Jesus invites you and me to follow Him - to come closer to Him. Will you join me tonight in taking a step closer to Christ? Tonight Jesus invites you and me to come as far as we can. So, where are you tonight? What is happening in your heart?

*1 -- Is your heart surrounded by sorrow?*

The loss of a loved one, the breakup of a marriage, estrangement from a son or daughter?

Open your heart to Christ tonight - even if just a little bit.

Stop blaming God and starting talking to Him even if you only yell at first - the cry of the human heart is the beginning of prayer.

Do you know what the Risen Christ says to you tonight? "Come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way." For only in God will your soul be at rest.

*2 -- Is your heart hardened by anger or bitterness?*

Unemployment, illness, injustice, inability to forgive.

Again, I invite you to open your heart to Christ tonight - even if just a little bit.

Surrender some of that anger to Christ.

Give Jesus the slightest opening by letting go of the anger that is mainly hurting you.

Do you know what Jesus Christ, crucified and risen from the dead, is saying to you tonight?

"Come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way." For only in God will your soul be at rest.

*3 -- Is your heart buried in disappointment and disillusionment?*

The sins of priests, the failings of the Church.

Do these scandalous things keep you from Christ and from the Eucharist? That would only allow evil to have its day. Our trust is in Christ and Christ alone. Do not let anyone keep you from Christ and from the Eucharist.

We are all sinners. We are all in need of the salvation of Jesus Christ and His nourishing love in the Eucharist.

Once again I invite you to open your heart to Christ tonight - even if just a little bit. I sincerely apologize to you for the sins of priests and the failings of the Church. I too have been scandalized but I too am a sinner. I apologize if I have ever hurt you or slighted you in these eight and a half years as your pastor. I love you. After forty years of being a priest I have one overwhelming desire that burns deep in my soul: that you come closer to Christ and to the Eucharist,

So, come as far as you can and I will come the rest of the way.