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## Box 11, Folder 34 - "The Beginning of Lent..." (E.M.S.)

Edwin Mortimer Standing

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nificant is the tableau of the Epiphany where we behold the Three Kings , with all the ancient wisdom of the East , bowing down in simple adoration before the infant who is God and Man - dispelling at once and for ever by its Divine Light the "M<sup>h</sup>aya " or "Illusion " that lies at the heart of so many "Oriental philosophies .

And as we come to the beginning of Lent what sermon on the frailty of our tenure to this mortal existence could be more effective than the ceremony in which the priests makes the sign of the cross in dust on the foreheads of those who must return to dust when the appointed moment comes . It is more impressive by far than the famous lines of

Sceptre and crown

Must tumble down

And in the dust be laid.

But most of all it is in the celebrations of the great

mm mysteries of Paschal time that the Church excels herself in the great liturgical ceremonies that have been built up around the Passion , Death and Resurrection of Her Divine Founder . The Church in Her age -long wisdom and ingenuity has thought of so many things which would never have occurred to us , so many wonderful symbols and dramatic actions . Who has not , for instance , experiences a sort of mild shock , on coming into the Church on Passion Sunday to find all the statues and paintings covered up , to be kept out of sight until the great rejoicing on Easter Morning . It comes as a mild shock to us because we have forgotten - but the Church never forgets . There is something irresistible about the progress of the Liturgy - it moves forward with the inevitability of a glacier but at the heart of it there is not ice but the burning passion of Divine Love .

And when we come to Palm Sunday the Church instead of contenting Herself with reading the account of the Triumphal entry into Jerusalem she has the Blessing of the Palms , the Procession , and later the

the distribution of the palms to the Faithful who take them home to place them in a conspicuous place on their walls , so that in this day the memory of the great event lingers on like a fragrant perfume for many days .

And so on through all the rest of Holy Week what wonderful and dramatic representations and actions does the Church place before us, the stripping of the altars on Maundy Thursday , the empty tabernacle , the altar of repose , the Good Friday Mass of the Resanctified , the veneration of the Holy Cross . Then we have the wonderfully tense and dramatic ceremony of Tenebraein which as the lights go out one by one we almost feel that we are being abandoned to the Powers of Darkness always so ready to drag us down to the pit . But the One Light remains and though it is hidden from us for a moment reveals itself as unquenchable -for though "this is your hour and the Power of Darkness " the Prince of this World has nothing in me " .

The newly appointed Vigil of Easter Service is rich in all sorts of moving ceremonies -the Lighting of the Paschal Candle with the fixing of the five grains of incense in the form of a cross , the beautiful prayer "Lumen Christe " repeated three times and the lighting of all the candles in the Church from the original light - the Lumen Christe .How beautiful and how admirable are all these symbolic actions ,and how deeply they touch our souls . Finally there comes the great moment of the " exultet " when the organ plays again after its long silence , the bells peal out and jubilant voices are raised , and all the lights go on at once ---indeed it seems as though the whole universe exults in the victory of Life over Death .

"Mors et vita duello confixere mirando  
Dux viae mortuus regnat vivus "

Cavalletti and Gobbi entitled *Educazione Religiosa Liturgia e Metod Montessori* - English edition by the Society of St Paul  
2187 Vicory Blvd , Staten Island 14 New York . ~~It~~ An interesting  
account of the work done in the form of a special Children Liturgy  
by Monsieur Lanternier of Rennes , <sup>France</sup>  
for Holy week was published in the Vita dell Infanzia Vol  
issue .

There is a wide and fruitful field for research in this  
sphere and as new developments become worked out and tested in  
different schools they will no doubt in due time be collected and  
collated and - subject to ecclesiastical approval - written up and  
published .

#### The Point of Contact in the Liturgy brings Precision

It only remains to pint out one further parallel between the  
psychology of the Liturgy and that of the Montessori Method . We  
noted above that the Point of Contact in the Montessori Method always  
brings with it a certain limitation , the limitation of precision ;  
and in this connection we commented on the manner in which the  
Montessori directress insists on the child using the materials in  
a definite and prescribed way .

So it is in the Liturgy . The "points of contact "which the  
Church prepares in the Liturgy to bring our souls in contact with  
the great truths of the spiritual life are noting if not definite and  
precise . She leaves nothing to chance or to the vagaries of the  
individual whims..Montessori herself said once - in discussing the  
liturgy that :-"The Church is a society which has fixed certain  
movements and words ; and this very precision id not caprice : it is  
something which corresponds to the spiritual life " .

We cannot do better , in concluding this chapter on  
the comarison between the method of the liturgy and the Montessori  
method than end it with another quotation form the article in the  
Osservatore Romano which from we quoted in the opening paragraphs .