

There once was a Wednesday named Ash

It's Lent, and we all know what that means: time for limericks.

by [Peter W. Marty](#) in the [February 28, 2018](#) issue

Consider yourself lucky if someone taught you along the way that the Lord has a sense of humor. Or are you one of those who have to wait until Easter falls on April Fool's Day to discover that Jesus Christ has the last laugh? (See ["The Jesus who laughed."](#))

More than a few of us were raised in solemn traditions that view scripture as containing more legalism and moralism than levity and surprise. But what if humor is one of God's chief attributes? How else might we explain the impregnation of 90-year-old Sarah? Or God afflicting the Philistines with hemorrhoids (emerods) when they stole the Ark of the Covenant? Or Mary and Martha needing to erase Lazarus's obituary?

Humor is not the same as laughter or telling jokes. It's what Viktor Frankl called "the soul's weapon" for rising above our situation. Good humor relieves us from stale living. It helps us accept the incongruities of life. Among its greatest gifts, humor helps us name our weaknesses, keep things in proportion, and laugh at ourselves.

Limericks often convey subtleties of humor. The most memorable ones hold tortured rhymes together and provide a special twist in the last line. While hunting for an unconventional way to engage his church choir during rehearsals, Christopher Brunelle landed on the idea of writing a series of limericks following the liturgical season. Some of these are published in a little book, *The Church Year in Limericks* (MorningStar), for which permission has been granted to excerpt a few. (Don't examine them too closely; humor dies on the table of dissection.)

For those suspicious of the value in connecting limericks with Lent:

Are limericks suited to Lent?

Yes indeed, in both form and intent:

*They're a well-designed ploy
To bring insight and joy
With a final, uplifting event.*

Since Passover and Easter overlap on the calendar some years, it can be helpful to distinguish one from the other:

*This week's calendar offers surprises
In both New and Old Testament guises:
One God has sufficed
For both matzoh and Christ,
But it's only the latter that rises.*

The Christian proclamation is that Christ draws all people to himself:

*While making his way down the Lent aisles,
The priest thought of Christ and the Gentiles:
How he rose from the grave
All sinners to save,
And not just the upper percentiles.*

If it seems like Lent will never end, here's a limerick to power us past the halfway point:

*Can it be that we've drained only half
Of the gall in Lent's bitter carafe?
Though we gain from such crockery
Devilish mockery
Jesus will get the last laugh.*

And finally, the meaning of Easter:

*Here's the question that Eastertide begs:
Is it all about candy and eggs?
No, the point to be praised
Is that Christ has been raised
And death taken down a few pegs.*

A version of this article appears in the print edition under the title "Limericks for Lent."