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Eucharistic Spirituality

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 125 Number 1

FROM THE EDITOR

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity has long been a favorite of mine. Once I left the religious and cultural homogeneity of my small home town in the Midwest and saw how deeply divided Christians were, often bitterly so, the Week of Prayer took on a real sense of immediacy. A close confrere of mine, a dedicated ecumenist, is quick to put it in perspective, saying, "We seek that unity *which Christ prayed for and the Father wills for his church*."

This year, though, my prayer will include heartfelt supplication for healing in our own Catholic community. The closing months of 2018 — Synod of Bishops and all — were very hard, beginning with the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report about alleged abuse and coverups decades ago, followed by an almost daily barrage of stories from around the country and elsewhere about similar circumstances.

On the website of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, you will find the beautiful "Prayer for Healing Victims of Abuse." Let me quote just one paragraph from it:

> Hear our cries as we agonize
> over the harm done to our brothers and sisters.
> Breathe wisdom into our prayers;
> soothe restless hearts with hope;
> steady shaken spirits with faith;
> show us the way to justice and wholeness,
> enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy.

Protecting the children and vulnerable adults among us must be our highest priority going forward, as well as healing the brokenness and pain of those who have endured abuse.

There is more than enough sadness and shame to go around. We all feel it, and we agonize over it. Hence, we cry out to God: "*breathe*

wisdom into our prayers . . . soothe restless hearts . . . steady shaken spirits . . . show us the way to justice and wholeness, enlightened by truth and enfolded in your mercy."

In the present storminess, as the fragile boat of the Church is "tossed about by the waves, with the wind against it" (Mt 14:24), we catch sight of the risen Lord in the distance walking on the water and bidding us, as he did Peter, "Come." We step out in faith and walk across the water toward him. But aware of the waves and the wind, and overcome with fear because of our weakness and sin, we falter . . . *until we fix our gaze again on Christ*. He alone is our Lord and Savior!

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity closes with the feast of The Conversion of Saint Paul, Apostle (January 25). Think of all that we and the Church are experiencing *as a call to conversion*, a breaking with past patterns and the undertaking of a new way of following Christ and serving our sisters and brothers. My prayer is that God give us the wisdom, courage, humility, and grace to act with justice, and so find healing and peace in his Son.

In This Issue

This issue introduces us to two men who lived in the energy of Vatican II. As a young auxiliary bishop, Marcos McGrath attended the first session of the council, was inspired by its agenda, and dedicated himself to renewing the local church he served in every aspect of its life and mission, particularly with regard to the role of the laity. Basil Pennington was a Trappist monk and one of the founders of the Centering Prayer Movement that promoted an ancient form of scriptural prayer for a new age. The Eucharist was important to each of them. James Kroeger, MM, concludes his reflection on the missionary challenges of the 51st International Eucharistic Congress, challenges applicable everywhere in our world. I suggest reading "A Celtic Prayer" in the Eucharist & Culture section as a starting-point. Let us be gentle with the Eucharistic bread Christ blessed for us!

Anthony Schueller, SSS

EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

The Fifty-first International Eucharistic Congress: Its Missionary Challenges, Part II

by James H. Kroeger, MM

We break the bread of the Eucharist in an unjust world. There is an uninterrupted continuity from the Mass to our mission as Christians in the world.

Maryknoll Father James H. Kroeger has served in Asia since 1970. He was a member of the Theological Commission which wrote the Basic Text for the Cebu International Congress (2016). It clearly reflects an Asian theological approach to the Church and the Eucharist.

II. Pivotal Mission Insights from Presenters at the IEC in Cebu

Cardinal Charles Maung Bo

Cardinal Bo from Myanmar was the papal legate for the International Eucharistic Congress 2016. His message and homily at the opening Mass on January 24, 2016, focused on the theme: "Moving from Eucharistic Celebration to Eucharistic Commitment." Some of his insights are presented here:

"We are gathered on a global stage, a global table, for a cosmic Eucharist: Eucharist as mission in Cebu. . . . After 79 years of a Eucharistic congress [1937-2016] in this great land of faith, you have come forward to celebrate this global fellowship. . . . You have proved your resilience, your faith, rising from all challenges. May this 51st IEC be the moment of healing the earth, the wounded planet, and healing the graceful people of this country and everyone gathered here."

Cardinal Bo asserted: "A short sentence changed history. They are the words: 'Take and eat, this is my body; take and drink, this is my blood.' Yes, the most powerful words in human history, the most powerful words in the dialogue of God with man. . . . The Eucharist is a spiritual jewel. . . . The Eucharist and adoration is an intense faith encounter with Jesus. . . . It was Mother Teresa who contemplated this mystery of presence. She says every Holy Communion fills us with Jesus and we must go in haste to give him to others" [imitating Mary going to visit Elizabeth].

"Adoring Jesus in the Eucharist is also accepting our fellow men and

women as created in the image of God. In a world that kills children in the womb, in a world that spends more on arms than on food, in a world that continues to have millions of poor, Eucharist is a major challenge to the whole of humanity. Can we feel the presence of God in our brothers and sisters? . . . Our adoration of the Eucharist affirms our inalienable faith in human dignity."

"Adoration alone may make us good devotees, but being a devotee is one of the easiest things. . . . Christ is calling us to be disciples, to carry his cross. The Mass of the devotee ends in an hour, but the Mass of the disciple is unending. The Eucharist of the devotee is confined to the clean, decorated altars of the church; the Eucharist of the disciples continues with the streets as altar. . . . Personal encounter with the Lord occurs in the Eucharist; and, this is precisely the personal encounter with the Lord that strengthens the mission contained in the Eucharist. Yes, Eucharist leads us to mission. . . ."

"Yes, we break bread in an unjust world. UNICEF says that every day 20,000 children die of starvation and malnutrition. . . . A silent genocide, the biggest terrorism in the world. . . . The Eucharist and the poor are inseparable. John Chrysostom said: 'He who said this is my body is the same who said: You saw me hungry and gave me food.'. . . In an unequal and uncaring world, the Eucharist steadfastly remains the beacon of human equality. . . . This calls for our commitment to a world of justice. Eucharist calls for a third world war, a third world war against poverty. . . . The Eucharist will remain a revolutionary flag hoisted every day on millions of altars, crying for justice like the prophets of old.""This I think is the clarion call to mission today for all of us."

"This congress highlights the presence of God through our veneration of the Eucharist. . . . [May this congress] make us move *from Eucharistic celebration to Eucharistic commitment in promoting the Eucharist as mission,* the Eucharist as the bread of justice to the poor, the Eucharist as the bread of peace in conflict areas."

Archbishop Thomas Menamparampil, SDB

The archbishop emeritus of Guwahati, India, spoke on the topic "The Eucharist as Mission: Mission as Dialogue," emphasizing that in diverse ways the Eucharist is an invitation to communion among peoples; the Eucharist makes the church. The "communion of believers" that the Eucharist creates is for mission. Some of his insights follow.

"During this Eucharistic congress we would like to respond, 'Stay with

us, Lord,' as the disciples of Emmaus did (Lk 24:29), especially as we feel the challenges of a changing world press hard upon us and the vision of faith grows dim all around us. His presence makes a difference; it provides the light we need and supplies the strength we lack. We pray that this is what the Cebu congress will accomplish for us."

"Saint Ephrem has a powerful image in this connection. He says that the one who eats this bread, eats *fire* and clothes himself with *fire*. The disciples of Emmaus felt as though *fire* was burning in their hearts when they heard Jesus explain the Scriptures to them. No wonder they set out on their return journey the very same night, with a sturdy sense of mission, after they had broken bread with him (Lk 24:32-33)."

"Benedict XVI says: 'We cannot approach the Eucharist without being drawn into mission' (*Sacramentum Caritatis,* 84). Jesus' example of self-giving conceals irresistible motivating power within, so that everyone who derives strength from him feels drawn to do the same (1 Jn 3:16). Faith is not an idle intellectual conviction, it is a driving force toward self-giving, even to the point of self-forgetfulness."

"'My life is the continuation of my Mass,' Blessed Alberto Hurtado used to say. Yes, the Eucharist overflows into life in the form of generosity, kindness, forgiveness, sincerity, and persevering work. It adds a quality to our decisions at home, in the kitchen, in the bedroom, in places of business and entertainment, in hospitals when the elimination of an unborn child is being contemplated, in the streets where human dignity is dragged to dust. . . ."

"It is often during silent moments before the Eucharist that a believer hears the cry of the poor, a cry that rises to the heavens (Jas 5:4). It is here that he/she finds energies to sustain a worthwhile struggle. Some have gone to heroic extent in giving their lives in behalf of the weakest as Archbishop Oscar Romero did; he brought his Eucharistic energies to radical social commitment. He combined deep faith with perceptive understanding of the situation and boundless courage."

"The Eucharist is eminently the sacrament of peace. . . . The greeting that Jesus gives his disciples is always '*Peace*' (Jn 20:19). 'Peace I leave with you,' he says (Jn 14:27). In fact, he is our peace (Eph 2:14). He urges people to reconcile before offering sacrifice (Mt 23-25). . . . But, unfortunately there are jealousies and petty quarrels even among Christian workers and fellow-worshippers (I Cor 11:18), as Pope

Francis admits. Peace must begin at home: within Christian families and believing communities. However, Eucharistic peace should have a wider significance. Peace is a mission. We are ambassadors of Christ, befriending the whole of humanity (2 Cor 5:18-20). It is our vocation to build bridges, heal wounds, remove ethnic and racial prejudices, and work for the prevention of war. . . .'Blessed are the peacemakers,' Jesus says (Mt 5:9)."

Cardinal Luis Antonio "Chito" Tagle

The archbishop of Manila spoke on the theme of the Eucharist and Dialogue with Cultures. Using a variety of striking pastoral experiences, he explored the question: "Why does the Church engage in dialogue with cultures?" For him, the simple answer is: *to serve mission*.

The Mass of the devotee ends in an hour; the Mass of the disciple is unending.

Following upon a lengthy analysis of contemporary cultures, Tagle continued: "Let me turn to the Eucharist. The Eucharist offers an experience of another culture, the culture of convocation, '*convocare,*' you are called with others. You are called to be with others, and you are called to be with others in a meal that the Lord hosts. When the Lord hosts a meal, be prepared to be with surprising others. But, in the meal hosted by the Lord, persons recognize a close neighbor, a fellow sinner, a sister, a brother, with a place at the family table. In each one, I see myself, as I see a brother or sister. I also discover myself: sinful but loved; undeserving but invited; shamed but embraced; lost but trusted. This is how Jesus hosted and participated in meals by calling together the most unimaginable combination of people to become his family, his body because he has convoked them."

"My dear brothers and sisters, let us begin the dialogue with the culture of alienating individualism in our homes. Restore the family meals. The basic unit of the meal is the table, the common table. Nowadays, the basic unit of the meal is my plate. And, if I have my plate with food on it, I can go anywhere and eat by myself; but, that is not a meal, that is just eating. Individualistic persons know how to eat, but they don't know how to participate in a meal. May I ask ourselves here: are our sacraments and pastoral services accessible to the poor? Are our parishes welcoming to the deaf and other people with disabilities? Do the wounded, lost, shamed, humiliated, and despised find a family in

our communities?"

Tagle analyzed a special type of culture, following on Pope Francis (EG, 53), the "throw-away culture." In contrast, what "culture" should permeate the Eucharist? "We propose in the Eucharist the culture of gift and sharing. . . . We could go against the throw-away culture." Then Tagle asked some pointed questions to counteract the prevalent "use and dispose" attitude.

"Husbands who are here, are you tempted to throw away your wife like a home appliance? She is a gift; don't throw her away. Wives, are you about to throw away your husbands like junk? Think twice; your husband is a gift. Parents, do you see your son/daughter that gives you some difficulties a thing to be thrown away or do you see him/her as a gift of God? Mothers, do you consider the baby in your womb a burden or a problem to be thrown away or a gift of life? Teachers, will you throw away slow learners among your students or will you treasure them as gifts, especially when you are teaching in a Catholic school? Politicians, will you throw away people's taxes for your parties and shopping or guard them as gifts for social service? . . . The Eucharist responds to the "throw-away culture" with the culture of gift. You never throw away important gifts, bread and wine, gifts of God, gifts of the earth, and gifts of human hands will become the gift of Jesus' presence, a gift of presence. . . ."

"Let us behold Jesus in the Eucharist, let us allow him to form in us a community of neighbors, brothers and sisters; no more barriers, only bridges. Let us allow him to open our eyes, to see in creation, in persons, in the poor, the discarded, but truly gift of God; no one thrown away, only gifts to be treasured. This culture of communion and gift shared will make a Eucharistic community, a real, credible presence of Christ in the cultures of the world."

Timothy Cardinal Dolan

The archbishop of New York addressed the IEC on the topic of the Holy Eucharist and Mary. He began by recalling the words of the great American evangelist Bishop Fulton J. Sheen, who asserted: "The mark of a genuine Catholic is the ability to detect the divine in a mother holding her baby in a manger at Bethlehem and in the bread and wine miraculously transformed at Mass." Dolan also recalled: "*Pueblo Amante de Maria* was the title of the hymn for the International

Eucharistic Congress held in Manila eight decades ago."

Outlining his presentation, Dolan said: "I want to speak of the Holy Eucharist as *sacrifice, meal, and presence*. I'll explain how Mary animates each of these three ways of looking at the *gift and mystery* of the Eucharist."

The Eucharist as a Sacrifice. "'Every time, then, that you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord,' writes Saint Paul to the Corinthians. . . . There is, you see, an intimate connection between the Mass and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. That's why we call it 'the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass!'. . . Now, who was there with Jesus as he was tortured on the cross? 'Near the cross stood Mary, his mother.' 'At the cross her station keeping, stood the mournful mother weeping, close to Jesus to the last.' You want to be closer to Jesus on the cross at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass? Be closer to Mary, because she's right next to him."

In the struggle for justice, Christ's presence makes a difference; it provides the light we need and supplies the strength we lack.

The Eucharist as a Meal. "As those two disciples on the road to Emmaus that first Easter recognized the risen Jesus when he sat down to eat with them, so do we recognize Jesus when he is with us at the sacred meal of the Mass. As most of the episodes when Jesus appeared to his friends after his resurrection took place at a meal, so does Jesus now feed us at the supper we call the Eucharist. The Mass is our family meal, especially on Sunday. The mother of our family, Mary, is always at the table with Jesus and us. She gave birth to the Son of God in a little town called Bethlehem, which means 'House of Bread.' There's a hint of the Eucharist at that first Christmas! She placed him in a manger, which means a 'feed box,' because Jesus was intended as bread for the world in the Eucharist."

The Eucharist as the Real Presence. After narrating the Eucharistic experience of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Dolan spoke about "Thomas Merton, a drifting, agnostic intellectual at Columbia University in New York. Thomas Merton stopped out of curiosity one day at Corpus Christi Church, and was there moved by the obvious faith and piety of the people at Mass. He watched as they reverently genuflected,

bowed their heads at the consecration, and humbly approached Holy Communion. He saw them return to their pews transfixed, obviously in union with Christ. 'They really believe Jesus is present in that wafer of unleavened bread,' he concluded. He would soon enter the Church and become a Trappist monk, and one of the great spiritual theologians my country has ever known. Such is the timeless faith of the Church: Jesus Christ is really and truly present in the Holy Eucharist, body, blood, soul, and divinity.

"Our Blessed Mother is part of this too, my friends. See, at Mass, the mystery of the incarnation continues. . . . Soon-to-be Saint Teresa of Calcutta once spoke to priests: 'You priests must feel so close to Mary. At her word, the Word became flesh at the incarnation. And, at your words, God the Son takes on the appearance of bread and wine, and is really present with us at Mass. . . . The Eucharist: *sacrifice, meal, presence*!'"

Cardinal Gaudencio Rosales

The archbishop emeritus of Manila was the main celebrant of the Eucharist on January 26, the third day of the IEC 2016. During his homily Rosales reminded the participants that the Eucharist is "more than symbolic, it is the reality"; truly, it is "not just a task, but a mission."

"Yes, the Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's saving sacrifice, just like the Passover meal that commemorated the escape of the Jews from slavery under the pharaohs of Egypt. But Christ's mandate to 'do this in memory of me' goes beyond repeating Christ's last meal on earth. . . . 'Do this in memory of me' means that as often as one eats the body of Christ, he or she announces to others the power of the faith of our Lord Jesus."

Quoting Pope Paul VI on the powerful example of lived faith, the cardinal said: "Through this wordless witness, these Christians stir up irresistible questions in the hearts of those who see how they live: Why are they like this? Why do they live in this way? What or who is it that inspires them? Why are they in our midst?"

Rosales challenged the IEC participants: "Do the Eucharist. Live the Eucharist. Release the Eucharist from mere celebration! And allow the body and blood of Jesus in you to roam the streets and byways, in

jeepneys, tricycles and busses, stores and cafés, offices and schools, in every dining table, in homes where families engage in dialogue. It [such witnessing of Eucharistic faith] could change the world!"

Cardinal Bo, the papal legate, presided at the IEC closing Eucharist on January 31, 2016. His words emphasized the intimate connection between the Eucharist and the mission of the Church.

"We came from various countries, we spoke various languages, but like the day of the Pentecost the Eucharist deepened our relationships. Today, we are returning as brothers and sisters, we are returning in haste like the disciples in Emmaus, whose ignorance was dispelled by Jesus' breaking the word and breaking the bread. This is a moment of grace. . . . Each one of you is a living bread. . . . What is the fruit of the Eucharistic congress? Renewed apostolic and missionary zeal. Eucharist is the source and goal of our mission!"

Recalling the many presentations during the congress proper, the cardinal said that he did not have to give additional catechesis. He said: "I want to talk in simple words to the people, especially to families and the young — bring in mercy and love as the core values of the Eucharist."

A culture of gift and sharing counters the "throw-away" culture of our age.

"Family, Christ in you is the hope of glory. . . . Families are the living bread. . . . The Eucharist is sown and grown in the family. The family is the first communion; the family is the nuclear church. Table fellowship is held regularly in the family. . . . This congress needs to end with a strong resolve to strengthen Catholic families, uphold the priesthood of the laity. Catholic families: Christ in you, you are the hope of glory."

"Youth, Christ in you is the hope of glory. . . . What is the status of the youth in our churches? In many churches they are the missing generation. Are they around the Eucharistic altars? Are they the lost sheep? Are the shepherds going in search of the lost sheep? Instead of expecting the youth to return to the Church, the Church must return to the youth. A church that neglects the youth writes its own death sentence. . . . Our youth deserve understanding not judgment." Then, in conclusion, Cardinal Bo summarized his final message, saying: "Eucharist is true presence; Eucharist is mission; Eucharist is service!"

Ite, Missa Est!

Every Eucharist concludes with a "sending forth" of the assembly. As noted in the Basic Text for the IEC 2016, this mission-sending character of the dismissal rite is related to the fact that both the words "Mass" and "mission" are derived from the Latin verb *mittere* ("to send"). It is also significant that this rite is described as one that missions the people "to go out and do good works, praising and blessing God."

"It has been said that those who form the assembly are gathered, disposed to listen to God's word and to take part in the Eucharistic meal worthily, always in view of sending them forth as instruments of unity, heralds of the Good News, and as bread, broken and shared for the life of the world. . . . At the dismissal rite, they are told, 'Go, [the assembly] is sent.' As in the story of the disciples of Emmaus, the encounter with the risen Christ in his word proclaimed and in the breaking of the bread has the innate power to transform the assembly into enthusiastic and zealous heralds of the Lord. The fellowship they experienced, the word they heard, and the Eucharistic meal they shared together, are now to be brought into the world in the form of coherent witness."

"The dismissal at the end of the Mass sends us indeed with an invitation and a charge to work for the spread of the Gospel and to imbue society with Christian values. There is to be an uninterrupted continuity from the Mass just celebrated and our mission as Christians in the world. . . . With this continuity, the church always emerges as a mystery of communion and mission inasmuch as the Eucharist which is at the heart of her existence and mission is the sacrament of communion and mission *par excellence*."

"The celebration of the Eucharist, and every part of it, shows that the missionary responsibility of the Church is instilled in her nature. Being a community-in-mission is part of her identity." One may slightly modify the classical adage about the mutual generativity of the Eucharist and the Church: *The missionary church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the missionary church!*

Marcos Gregorio McGrath: His Initial Contributions to the "Bridge Theology" of Pope Francis

by Robert S. Pelton, CSC

The Second Vatican Council has a special significance in Latin America. This is especially true due to the influence of Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World). This began at the Medellín Conference (1968) when Bishop Marcos Gregorio McGrath pointed to this influence through his keynote address, "The Signs of the Times."

Bishop McGrath was prepared for this moment by his earlier theological training in Europe and by his pastoral missions, especially in Chile and Panama. It was his earlier practice of Catholic Action among young lay persons that led him into the "bridge theology" that has been promoted further by Pope Francis.

"Not infrequently, an opposition between theology and pastoral ministry emerges as if they were two opposite and separate realities which have nothing to do with each other. False opposition is generated between theological and pastoral ministry, between Christian reflection and Christian life."[1]

The 50th anniversary of the watershed CELAM Medellín Conference took place last year. The theme of "reception" by the North, Central, and South Americas is assuming greater relevance. This began with Pope John XXIII's call for help in ameliorating the critical shortage of clergy in Latin America during the early 1960s. Speaking in the name of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America at the University of Notre Dame in August 1961, Monsignor Agostino Casaroli appealed for ten percent of religious to serve in Latin America.[2]

While this call for assistance in Latin America came at Notre Dame, its response came from Archbishop Marcos McGrath of the Congregation of Holy Cross. He and I were classmates throughout initial formation and graduate studies in Rome in 1953-1954. In this essay, I wish to bring together some of my own insights throughout the years of Don Marcos. I begin with *Archbishop Marcos Gregorio McGrath, CSC* (The Renewal of

Father Robert S. Pelton, a retired professor at Notre Dame University, served as a peritus to Cardinal Leo Suenens at Vatican II and ministered in Chile from 1964-1971. He was the founding director of Latin American/North American Church Concerns at Notre Dame (1985-2017) and in 2012 produced the film *Monseñor: The Last Journey of Oscar Romero*.

the Panamanian Church) and the above title, which appeared in the August 2018 Brazilian publication *Horizonte Rio*.

Particularly during the last five years of his life, Archbishop McGrath and I had a strong personal and pastoral bond as companions in Holy Cross. My provincial at that time requested that I visit Archbishop McGrath at regular intervals to be of support to him. For me, this was an honor and I continued to learn much about his commitment to the role of the laity in a post-Vatican II Church.

Undergraduate Years at Notre Dame

One of the most attractive aspects of Notre Dame were the classes in religion conducted by Father Louis Putz, who had arrived from Germany and had spent years in France. He firmly believed in Canon Joseph Cardijn's "intersection of prayer and action." Cardijn was the founder of the Young Christian Workers movement in Belgium, and the originator of the See-Judge-Act method known as the Jocist Method.[3] He also brought the beginnings of the *Nouvelle Theologie* of France, which included a growing awareness of the role of the laity in the Church. Of special interest was Yves Congar, OP, who would later become the leading ecclesiologist of Vatican II, giving special attention to the role of the laity.

From the beginning, Putz showed a special interest in young McGrath. With good reason, he saw in Mark a strong potential for future ecclesial leadership. Putz believed that Mark had seen the face of Jesus Christ in the poor and suffering people of Latin America as he grew up, just as he (Putz) had seen Jesus in the faces of the poor in the slums of Paris.

Mark and I both entered the novitiate of the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1943 and graduated from Notre Dame in 1945. We studied theology at Holy Cross College in Washington, DC, and were ordained to the priesthood in 1949.

Graduate Studies

I was sent to Rome in 1950 to study for my licentiate and doctorate. In Paris, I joined my good friend and classmate, Father Mark McGrath. Mark had spent a fruitful year in France where he came in close contact with the new thinkers of northern Europe, particularly at the Catholic Institute in Paris. At a later time in his life, he recalled the challenges

he met while doing his graduate studies:

> It was not until I found myself buried under in Rome in 1950 in this very demanding work which consumed four and a half years — of studies, research, and preparation for the dissertation — that I understood the seriousness of that question.[4] I learned the techniques of research, but more importantly, I developed a method and rigor for theological reflection which later would be a precious gift for me. . . . I had the opportunity to come in contact with the great thinkers and theological currents of Europe — Congar, De Lubac, Rahner, Guardini, the biblical and liturgical movements — as well as with the philosophical movements — personalism, Christian humanism — which were stirring at the time, and which laid the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council. (February 25, 1994)

"Those of us bishops who participated in the council are called 'fathers of the council.' I am a father of the council; I am, as a bishop, also its son."

Upon meeting in Rome, we went to the large Holy Cross House on Via Aldrovandi. There we were to experience a plethora of languages. Italian was the language of the country, the house language was French, classes were taught in Latin, and there was a Hebrew requirement for graduate students. Never having been to Europe before, I nevertheless felt at ease with the Italian people. Not surprisingly, Mark was very diligent in his work, and he took full advantage of Rome's many opportunities. I appreciated the time to interiorize many writings, especially the *Summa* of Saint Thomas Aquinas. I came to know and respect the Dominicans, particularly Paul Philippe, OP, who directed my doctoral thesis. He later became a cardinal.

The program leading to our licentiates was primarily an in-depth study of the *Summa Theologica*, in which I found profound meaning as well as many opportunities to translate its principles into daily practice in my future ministries.

The academic superiors at Notre Dame asked me to finish my studies by the autumn of 1953. Mark was granted more time as he prepared to go to Chile, and this proved very helpful for the works he would later assume. Even then, he was being prepared for greater Church

responsibilities. He would be ready for them.

I completed my doctoral dissertation that autumn and defended my thesis on December 17, was awarded my STD, and was given a private audience with Pope Pius XII — all on the same day! It was my fourth audience with the Holy Father.

Mark's doctoral dissertation was entitled "The First Vatican Council and the Evolution of Dogma." It received the highest distinction and earned him a doctorate *Magna cum Laude*. It is hardly surprising that after graduate school he was assigned to a Holy Cross mission in Chile. I was asked to teach at the University of Notre Dame. However, we were to remain in regular contact throughout the years.

McGrath: From Rome to Chile

> I have been acquainted with Chile since I first arrived in this land. I have worked here in Chile as a priest since April of 1953. I say it all when I say that I feel Chilean. . . . For these personal and pastoral reasons, it is in sorrow that I leave Chile after eight and one-half years. I leave my work as dean of the Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University, with many projects recently begun and hoping there will be no shortage of hands to carry them out. I leave my advisory position to the social action project of Saint George's College after seven years, trusting in the interest of the fathers of Saint George's in this work, and in the capacities of the new advisor.[5]

He who was determined to "walk the path of the will of God" was pressed to break the ties of close friendships and rich and fertile pastoral work in Chile. From the earliest days of Mark's priesthood, his mind was swirling with numerous projects. Despite some anxieties, he began an active and growing apostolate which prepared him well for his future responsibilities: three years of service as rector of the congregation's seminary; professor and prefect of religion at Saint George's College; founder of Saint George Social Action; seven years as professor of theology at the Catholic University of Chile, including three years as dean of the Faculty of Theology; and founder and editor of the magazine *Theology and Life*.

When Mark returned to Panama in 1961, he was appointed auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Panama. He remained there for two years

until he was named the local ordinary of Santiago de Veraguas. In 1969, he became the Archbishop of Panama.

His Experiences at the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

> To have lived, profoundly and up close, the Second Vatican Council was an enormous privilege. It was also a privilege to have experienced, up close, all kinds of meetings at the Vatican and international forums, especially at the level of our great land of Latin America, as in Medellín in 1968 and Puebla in 1979, the council which is that of Christ for his Church in today's world.
>
> Those of us bishops who participated in the council are called "fathers of the council." I am a father of the council; I am, as a bishop, also its son.[6]

In 1959, Pope John XXIII announced three changes: a synod of the Archdiocese of Rome, the reform of the *Code of Canon Law*, and a future ecumenical council. For the last goal, he assembled a preparatory commission charged with gathering suggestions for topics the council should discuss.

A letter arrived at the Pontifical Catholic University of Santiago. Dean McGrath read this letter in the Faculty of Theology before a dozen professors, but there was no great interest or excitement, due to the general feeling that Rome would not take into account the input from a church situated at the most distant corner of the continent.

> Who among us would have thought back then that four years later, at a meeting of the Commission of the Doctrine on Faith at the Second Vatican Council, two members of that friendly gathering of professors would be present — one as a member and another as an expert — and that a text from the Council of Chilean Bishops would be presented as a foundation for the new plan for the Church, prepared in large part by those professors of that beloved department . . . and that parts of that text were destined to be precious elements of the future Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*?[7]

Bishop McGrath began preparation for the trip to Rome, where he would participate in Vatican II. At the council, participation was

optional for auxiliary bishops. Bishop McGrath had originally declined to attend because he lacked the financial resources to cover the trip. The vicar general at the time, Monsignor Félix Alvarado Cucalón, took an interest and the Knights of Columbus assumed the expenses.

At the beginning at the first session, Bishop McGrath was elected to a position on the Committee on Doctrine. He was one of three Latin American prelates elected to this body, a responsibility that meant traveling to Rome every three months throughout the years of the council. As the young bishop contributed his theological training, the council was also shaping his future thought and action.[8]

In later years Archbishop McGrath spoke of the council as one does of a topic recalled with great affection. He considered the council a milestone in the life of the Catholic Church. For him, the most critical period of the council was the first stage (October-December 1961).

> Those were probably the two most decisive months for the Catholic Church in modern times. It was the historical crossroads at which this Church, from its highest officials, prepared itself to close four centuries of Counter-Reformation and definitively entered the era of "The Church in the Modern World."[9]

In the proceedings of Vatican II, his interventions are readily observable: in On the Sacred Liturgy (*De Sacra Liturgia),* November 27, 1962; On the Church, chapter on the laity, October 22, 1962; On the Apostolate of the Laity (*De Apostolorum Laicorum*), October 1964; Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*De Ecclesia in Mundo Hujus Temporis*), November 10, 1964; On Christian Education *(De Educatione Christiana*), November 19, 1964; and Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity (*De Activate Missionalli Ecclesiae*) October 11, 1965.

As the council continued, McGrath became its fervent apostle, giving lectures to bishops, priests, and laity in the United States, in several European countries, and in Latin America, including Panama, first in the archdiocese as an auxiliary bishop and later in Veraguas as bishop of the Diocese of Santiago. He exemplified and emphasized the energy of the council and its double action: return to the sources (the Church *ad intra*) and outreach to the world (the Church *ad extra*).

His contribution to the Vatican in various positions of responsibility

(Secretary for Non-Believers, consultant to the Committee on the Laity, member of the Standing Committee on the Synod, member of the Pontifical Council for the Union of All Christians) constituted a powerful testimony of the direction of the Church in the twentieth century. Of similar theological impact was his input at the Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 1969, at which it was his task to present the theological foundations of the bishops' conferences.

In the context of Latin America, his determination to bring the aims of the council to concrete reality was shown at the Viamao Meeting in Brazil at the dawn of the conciliar age (1964); at the Extraordinary Assembly of the Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Mar de Plata, Argentina, the theme of which, "The Church in the Development and Integration of Latin America," anticipated a topic often under discussion in these countries; and by the services he lent to the Conference of Latin American Bishops between 1963 and 1972, including his service in the offices of secretary general and second vice-president.

"The great work of my life has been to guide our Church in Panama in the conciliar renewal."

In the historical Medellín (1968) and Puebla (1979) Conferences, his participation was influential and decisive. At Medellín he delivered the keynote address, "The Signs of the Times in Latin America." In Puebla he was named chairman of the Central Committee on Coordination and the Joint Commission, the efforts of which resulted in a document remarkable for its depth and theological and pastoral base. His contributions were widely recognized by the Latin American bishops.

Firmly convinced of the value of the Secretariate of the Central American Bishops (SEDAC), he lent this body his support and theological and pastoral guidance. SEDAC owes to his initiative its Commission on Theological Reflection, in which theologians and pastoral ministers of the region participate.

These efforts on the life of the Church earned him recognition from various North American universities as well as the University of Louvain, where in 1970 he received the title *Doctor Honoris Causa* in theology and delivered a lecture entitled "Theology Alive in Latin

America."

The intervening years have proven wrong the prediction made by a well-known Belgian Jesuit theologian lecturing in Chile in 1961. He told Father McGrath upon his designation as a bishop that his days of theological reflection had ended. The conciliar and post-conciliar years, Medellín and Puebla, as well as his service beginning in 1981 as president of the Commission on Theological Reflection of the Conference of Panamanian Bishops were years of intense activity theologically. More importantly, they saw the translation of conciliar theology into pastoral action and daily life. In 1986, on the 25th anniversary of McGrath's ordination as a bishop, Bishop Oscar Brown noted: "During the past twenty-five years, the Church in Panama has found in Monsignor McGrath a pastor carried by the very spirit of the council."

Archbishop McGrath himself reflected on this occasion: "The great work of my life has been to guide our Church in Panama in the conciliar renewal. My greatest satisfaction has been in learning, witnessing, and living this renewal with all of you. We are very far from our goal. The enormous consequences and potentialities of the council will be manifested with the dawn and labor of generations yet unborn. But the Church in Panama — thanks to so many people represented by you — is in motion: conciliar, evangelical, and pastoral motion.[10]

Notes

1 Pope Francis, part of a video address at the International Theological Conference of Buenos Aires on September 1-5, 2015.

2 Robert Hurteau, *A Worldwide Heart: A Life of Father John Considine* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013).

3 Pozdal, *Christian Family Movement* (Private Publication, November 2008).

4 A response to his superior's question about whether he was able to spend many long hours in a chair.

5 Father McGrath on the eve of his return to Panama in October 1961.

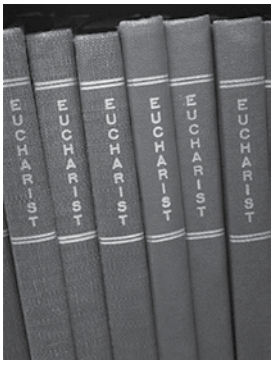
6 Archbishop McGrath at a fundraiser for his seminary in 1986.

7 Archbishop McGrath, 1976.

8 A copy of "El Pacto de las Catacumbas," an agreement made by bishops in the Second Vatican Council about how they wished to live out their pastoral leadership, can be found in the Pelton Collection in Moreau Seminary Library.

9 Archbishop McGrath, 1976.

10 Archbishop McGrath, 1986.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Basil Pennington on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

Basil Pennington's approach to the Eucharist blended his Benedictine formation, studies in theology and canon law, and the liturgical impetus of Vatican II in a rich synthesis of mysticism, spirituality, and prayer.

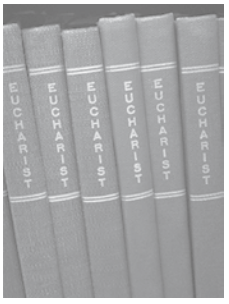
Redemptorist Father Dennis J. Billy is a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*. He has authored or edited more than 30 books and 300 articles in a number of scholarly and popular journals.

Dom M. Basil Pennington, OCSO, (1931-2005) was a Trappist monk and one of the founders of the Centering Prayer Movement.[1] He entered Saint Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, in 1951, made his first profession in 1953, and was ordained a priest in 1957. In 1959, he received a licentiate degree in theology from the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas (Angelicum) and in 1963 another in canon law from the Pontifical Gregorian University. In the late 1960s, he was instrumental in the establishment of Cistercian Publications and was one of the organizers of the First International Cistercian Studies Symposium. In the 1970s, his interest in Eastern Orthodoxy led to an extended stay at Mount Athos in Greece.

After holding various positions in formation at his abbey, he was made superior of Assumption Abbey in Ava, Missouri, in 2000 and later that same year was elected abbot of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit in Conyers, Georgia. He retired to Saint Joseph's Abbey in 2002 and remained there until his death in 2005. The author of more than 60 books, he was an internationally known author, lecturer, retreat master, and spiritual director. His teaching on the Eucharist reflects his vast knowledge of the spiritual life and the life of contemplation.[2]

Pennington's Spiritual Outlook

As a Trappist monk, Pennington was shaped by the spirituality of Saint Benedict of Nursia (circa 480-547), founder of the Benedictine tradition and the father of Western monasticism. The *Rule of Saint Benedict* moderated the rigorous asceticism of the desert fathers of



the East and shifted the focus of monasticism from a solitary pursuit of God, in the style of the hermits and the anchorites, to the pursuit of holiness through a life in community dedicated to prayer, spiritual reading, and manual labor.[3]

The goal of Benedictine monasticism was to sanctify the day through continual prayer (*laus perennis*). Chanting the psalter, spiritual reading (*lectio divina*), and manual labor were viewed as a way of sanctifying the day and giving praise to God. The Eucharistic liturgy was an essential feature of Benedictine life.[4]

The Trappists were a reform of the Cistercians, themselves a reform of Benedictine monasticism. They were, we might say, a reform of a reform. Officially known as Cistercians of the Strict Observance, they dedicated themselves to following the rule to the letter.[5]

Pennington's spiritual outlook was also shaped by his studies at two of the great Pontifical universities in Rome, the Angelicum and the Gregorian. At the former, the Dominicans gave him a foundation in the thought of Thomas Aquinas and scholastic theology: dogmatic, moral, ascetical, and mystical. At the latter, where he studied canon law, the Jesuits taught him to appreciate the role of law in the organization and life of the Church. This background served him well when he returned to Saint Joseph's Abbey and took on various roles in the theological and spiritual formation of the younger monks. As a professor of both canon law and spirituality, he shaped the spiritual outlook of many young Trappists during the years of the Second Vatican Council and beyond.

Pennington's approach to the mysteries of the faith was blended. Catholic spirituality can be either *kataphatic* or *apophatic*: it can emphasize the capacity of language to convey positive truths about the mystery of God (the kataphatic) or it can see that language ultimately falls short of saying anything meaningful about the infinite and employ instead the way of negation (the apophatic). If Pennington's spiritual outlook was shaped by the largely kataphatic tendencies of Benedictine monasticism, scholastic theology, and canon law, it was also greatly influenced by his involvement in the largely apophatic tendencies of the Centering Prayer Movement.

With fellow Trappists Thomas Keating and William Meninger, Pennington authored a series of books in the 1970s and 1980s that focused on casting out of one's mind all thoughts and images in order

to rest in the gentle but all-so-elusive presence of God. This apophatic approach to prayer has its roots in the thought of an early sixth-century Syrian monk called the Pseudo-Dionysius, whose treatise *Mystical Theology* emphasized the approach to God by way of negation rather than affirmation.[6] Centuries later, the "way of negation" was promoted in the West by the anonymous author of the late-fourteenth-century Middle English treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing*.[7]

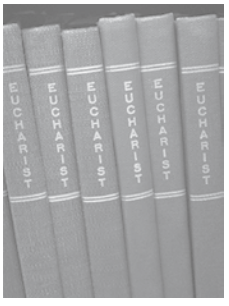
The Centering Prayer Movement presents the underlying themes of this treatise in a way that can be easily understood and practiced by today's spiritual seekers. The way to God, it states, lies not through the mind but through the heart. One must throw into the "cloud of forgetting" all thoughts, ideas, and concepts, and, instead, knock on the "cloud of unknowing" with a fervent heart repeating again and again a single word to channel one's deep fervor and desire to God.

To presiders at the Eucharist, Pennington says, "Our priesthood is a ministerial priesthood because it ministers to the priesthood of all the faithful."

Pennington's teaching on the Eucharist has aspects of both the kataphatic and the apophatic approaches to God. The juxtaposition of the "way of affirmation" and the "way of negation" reveals a presence that goes beyond mere affirmation and mere negation to reveal the living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In the Eucharist God reveals his unconditional love for us, and we, in turn, are overwhelmed and rendered speechless by the sheer gratuity of Christ's sacrifice and his presence in our midst.

Pennington's Teaching on the Eucharist

Pennington's book *The Eucharist: Wine of Faith, Bread of Life* provides a vivid picture of his views toward the sacrament of the Last Supper.[8] He says in his Introduction that he wrote the book out of a need to do so some good motivational reading on the Mass and, not being able to find any that helped, decided to write one himself. By motivational reading he means a book that generally encourages us "to live according to the fullness of the reality of our Christed person."[9] More particularly, it can mean "responding to a need of the moment such as, for example, a struggle with prayer, a need for forgiveness, or the problem of the Mass losing its meaning."[10] By responding to his own personal need to probe the mystery of the Eucharist more deeply, he



provides his readers with an invaluable tool for understanding the central role it plays role in their own lives.

In the book Pennington goes through the various parts of the Mass and discusses them in the light of the Church's rich liturgical tradition, relevant stories, and his own personal experience. When treating the introductory rites, he reminds us that the Eucharist is a time for coming together and normally begins with the ringing of a bell to summon those who can gather around the altar physically and to invite those who cannot to send their hearts.[11] He also points out that the earliest Eucharistic celebrations took place in homes and that the church should be looked upon as the place where a family gathers: "Here is where we come together to share our common story. Here is where we recall our common covenant. Here is where we drink and eat together. Here is where we come together as a family, the family of God, gathered in our family home in joy."[12]

Pennington writes of our need to humble and purify ourselves when we gather to celebrate the sacrament and says that the penitential rite should not be prayed in a perfunctory manner, but in a way that call us to *metanoia* or a radical change of heart.[13] Only then can we give praise and glory to God when we sing or recite the Gloria and collect ourselves properly at the opening prayer.[14]

When treating the Liturgy of the Word, Pennington reminds us that "the liturgy is a school: it effectively teaches us and leads us into reality if we are attentive to what is happening, what is being said."[15] The readings, he maintains, involve both proclamation and response. The bread of God's word must be broken and shared by means of bold proclamation, attentive listening, and solid reflection.

The homilist plays an important role in translating the gospel narrative: "We want to hear his lived experience of the story. We want to hear how he is experiencing the story lived out in us, all of us together in the community of the Christ, living today. He helps us get in touch with the story as it is unfolding in our lives. He wipes some of the film from our eyes of faith so that we see something more of the enthralling wonder of salvation history coming to its consummation in us. The homilist is not exegeting a text; he is sharing an event in which we are all participating."[16]

Pennington spends most of the book on the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

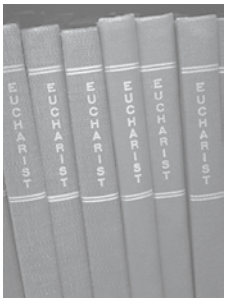
He says it is unfortunate that the offertory rite "can be a hurried thing, done with little time for reflection and virtually no community participation."[17] He refers to the Preface as that part of the Eucharistic Prayer that "invites us to transcend our particular gathering, or rather, bring our gathering into the great communion of all worshipers of all times, of all saints and angels."[18] The words of institution, he says, make Christ's sacrificial death "ever present in God's eternal *now,* coming to be present in our historical now."[19]

He then goes through each of the four Eucharistic Prayers and shows how the first preserves "a very stable tradition" of the Roman Canon,[20] the second recalls the canon of Saint Hippolytus and emphasizes the role of Jesus as our mediator,[21] the third is a new prayer that brings to the fore "the role of the Holy Spirit, through creation and salvation history, in the gathering of a godly people *from east to west*,"[22] and the fourth is based on "the *Anaphora* attributed to Saint Basil the Great."[23] He also spends considerable time discussing the three Eucharistic Prayers for Children[24] and the two Eucharistic Prayers for Masses of Reconciliation,[25] reminding us that the Church provides us with many choices to adapt the Eucharist to a variety of circumstances.

The Eucharist reminds us that Jesus accompanies us on our journey into eternity and he reveals and conceals himself along the way to help us grow in faith and love for him.

To presiders at the Eucharist, he emphasizes: "Our priesthood is a ministerial priesthood because it ministers to the priesthood of all the faithful."[26] Moreover, he points out the importance of being centered as one presides over the Eucharist: "There is, then, a real interconnection between the time the priest spends in his room or in the cell of his heart in centering or contemplative prayer and his presiding successfully at the liturgical assembly."[27]

When treating the Communion rite, Pennington sees the priest's role as mediator changing when he leads the congregation in The Lord's Prayer: "He had been with Christ, all to the Father. Now he turns to the other party of the mediation, to us, and invites us to give voice ourselves to this prayer to the Father, for we have truly been reconciled and made most dear children in Christ."[28] Although the reception of Holy Communion, moreover, preserves two traditions — reception



in the hand and reception on the tongue[29] — he points out that the recipient participates more actively when receiving it by hand, and can become more deeply aware of his or her sharing in the priesthood of Christ.[30]

The concluding rites remind us that we are called to carry the effects of the Eucharist into life: "We are sent; it is a mission, to make the passion of Christ healingly present in our world today."[31] The very name "Mass," he says, comes from the final words of the Roman rite: "*Ita, missa est*" (literally "Go, the Mass is.") and emphasizes one crucial point: "This moment of dismissal gave its name to the whole because of its prime importance. It does sum up the whole and charges each one to take it — the whole infinitely empowering experience of Calvary and Communion — out into the world."[32]

Some Further Insights

Many other things can be said of Pennington's approach to the Eucharist. The above description, while not comprehensive, underscores the central role it played in his life and points out some of the ways in which it influenced his thought. The follow remarks seek to probe a little more deeply into his understanding of this great sacrament and how it shaped his approach to life in general.

1. To begin with, Pennington was very much aware that the Church's sacramental system was an expression of the kataphatic (positive) approach to the mystery of the divine. He believed that God was capable of revealing himself to humanity and actually did so though the person of Jesus Christ. As the soteriological principle of Saint Athanasius of Alexandria (circa 296-373) — "God became human so that humanity might become divine" — suggests, God has the ability to enter the world he created in order to redeem and ultimately divinize it. For Pennington, God reveals himself through words of Scripture, the person and flesh of Jesus Christ, and the sacraments of the Church. The Eucharist is a continuation of the divinizing process begun in the mystery of the incarnation and now extended to humanity and ultimately the whole of creation.

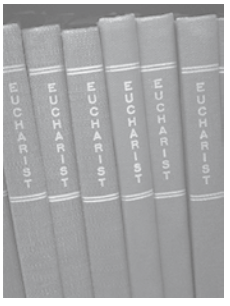
2. Pennington was also aware, however, that the Eucharist does not exhaust the mystery of Christ and that, we must ultimately put aside all attempts to explain it and simply rest in silence before it, allowing ourselves to be absorbed in the mysterious silence of

God. Pennington's emphasis on the role played by silence in the liturgy brings to the surface the apophatic (negative) dimension of the Eucharist. The God who reveals also conceals. The Eucharist is, at one and the same time, the visible presence of God in our midst and an invisible absence veiled beneath the appearances of bread and wine. This already-but-not-yet combination of presence and absence highlights the eschatological dimension of the Eucharist. As our food for the journey, it points to both the here-and-now and to world beyond. It reminds us that Jesus accompanies us on our journey into eternity and that he reveals and conceals himself along the way to help us grow in faith and love for him.

The Eucharist allows us to stand before the God who loves and cares for us as he loves and cares for his own Son.

3. For Pennington, therefore, the Eucharist expresses both the kataphatic (positive) and the apophatic (negative) approaches to the mystery of the divine. This approach, in effect, juxtaposes the revelatory dimension of God with his elusive tendency to conceal, and it creates a healthy tension in Catholic theology and sacramental practice. It allows God to both reveal himself in time and space, while at the same time veiling himself in mystery. It prevents us, on the one hand, from ever making an idol of him from the material world and, on the other hand, from making him distant and unapproachable because of his transcendent nature. If the mystery of the Trinity itself asserts that God is transcendent, incarnate, and immanent, and if the mystery of the incarnation asserts that the Word of God has become human and walked this earth in the person of Jesus Christ, then the mystery of the Eucharist asserts that the bread and wine that has been changed into the body and blood of Christ has become the primary means by which we ourselves can share in his life and mission.

4. In his exposition of the various parts of the Mass, Pennington is very conscious that God loves variety and that the Church images this love in its sacramental system. He likens the Church to a good Jewish mother who piles so much food on her guest's plate that he or she has to pick and choose what to eat.[33] Sunday liturgies, for example, have three readings and contain so much spiritual nourishment for us to digest that we must stop for a moment when they are finished so we can focus on what has touched us personally to help us grow. What



is more, the liturgy provides us with many choices regarding singing, the penitential rite, the profession of faith, the Eucharistic Prayers, and the memorial acclamation. Such choice reflects both our freedom as the sons and daughters of God and the need to adapt the Eucharistic celebration to the circumstances of daily life. The various rites in the Church, moreover, reflect God's love for the differences among people and remind us that communion does not mean uniformity but a union of hearts with the mystery of the Triune God.

5. Finally, Pennington displays a profound understanding of the divine simplicity that permeates the celebration of the Eucharist. He recognizes that the Eucharist has its roots in a simple meal and that our Lord chose to use the common food of bread and wine to transform into his body and blood. His emphasis on the simplicity of the liturgy stems, in part, from his Trappist formation, which steered away from the liturgical trappings that had accumulated in the Benedictine tradition and focused instead on austere surroundings and simple chant tones in its liturgical celebrations. It also comes from his experience of centering prayer and the awareness that we can say more by saying less and that silence itself puts us in touch with the silence of God himself, who speaks to our hearts and puts us in touch with the divine simplicity. The Eucharist, he believes, gives us the chance to stand before the God who loves and cares for us as he loves and cares for his own Son. It reminds us that we are God's children and that he touches the depths of our being, lays bare our souls, and dwells there us mysteriously in his divine simplicity.

Conclusion

M. Basil Pennington was an influential spiritual writer, retreat director, and spiritual guide in the last decades of the twentieth century and early years of the new millennium. He possessed a firm grounding in both the kataphatic and apophatic traditions of Christianity and used that knowledge to probe more deeply the mysteries of the Christian faith. As one of the founders of the Centering Prayer Movement, he did much to translate the contemplative dimension of the Christian mystical tradition to the spiritual mindset and cultural sensitivities of his contemporaries.

In his teaching on the Eucharist, Pennington shows how the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council spring from the tradition, yet speak to the concerns of the modern mind. In keeping with his

scholastic and canonical training, he proceeds in a very orderly fashion, going through the various parts of the Mass and explaining them in a way that is concise, accurate, and easy to understand.

Pennington writes as one who has not only celebrated the Eucharist, but also as one who has lived it. His insights into the Mass convey a sense of wisdom and sound practical knowledge that only a longstanding, loving relationship with the sacrament could instill. The Eucharist, for Pennington, "is a reality that pervades our lives and our world."[34]

His teaching on the Eucharist reminds us of the depth of the Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and our need to ponder its mysteries from a variety of vantage points. His use of the kataphatic and apophatic traditions to interpret these mysteries underscores that the Eucharist can be understood, but never fully grasped. By juxtaposing them, he reveals a tension within the Godhead that is resolved only by the divine simplicity. His appreciation of silence as an appropriate backdrop against which the celebration of the Eucharist unfolds reminds us we are all called to enter into that silence, rest in it, and share in the inner, mystical life of God himself.

Notes

1 For more on the Centering Prayer Movement, see http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org.

2 For more on Pennington's life, see https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=27717764.

3 See *The Rule of Benedict*, trans. Anthony C. Meisel and M. L. del Mastro (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1975).

4 Karl Bihlmeyer and Hermann Tüchle, *Church History*, trans. Victor E. Mills and Francis J. Muller, vols. 1-3 (Westminster: Newman Press, 1966-1968), 1:367-71.

5 Ibid., 3:226.

6 See *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1987), 133-41.

7 See Dennis J. Billy, *The Cloud of Unknowing: Spiritual Commentary* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2014).

8 M. Basil Pennington, *The Eucharist: Wine of Faith, Bread of Life* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 2000).

9 Ibid., xiii.

10 Ibid., xiii.

11 Ibid., 4.

12 Ibid., 14.

13 Ibid., 19-20.
14 Ibid., 21-24.
15 Ibid., 25.
16 Ibid., 41.
17 Ibid., 51.
18 Ibid., 57.
19 Ibid., 62.
20 Ibid., 71.
21 Ibid., 77.
22 Ibid., 89.
23 Ibid., 100.
24 Ibid., 107-123.
25 Ibid., 124-138.
26 Ibid., 139.
27 Ibid., 148.
28 Ibid., 152.
29 Ibid., 162.
30 Ibid., 163.
31 Ibid., 170.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 32.
34 Ibid., 171.

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pope Francis' Remarkable Ecumenical Record

by Ernest Falardeau, SSS

Pope Francis has made contacts with ecumenical and interfaith leaders a defining priority of his ministry as the bishop of Rome and leader of the Catholic Church. Why is this so important?

Pope Francis has made many headlines since he was elected pope and bishop of Rome in 2013 after Pope Benedict resigned at the end of February of that year. Immediately, the media began to research his background as a Jesuit and the cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, to know him better and to discover some of the priorities he might bring to his new position in the Catholic Church and the world.[1]

The media was able to provide a vivid picture of a man who was different from other prelates of the Church. But that is another story. What we are interested in highlighting here is the record encounters Pope Francis has had with other religious leaders in the short time of his reign, enough to make a distinct mark in the history of the Church and the shaping of religious relations of the world.[2]

Blessed Sacrament Father Ernest Falardeau has dedicated much of his life and ministry to the promotion of ecumenical dialogue and interfaith relations. He is a member of the Blessed Sacrament Community at Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City.

Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kyril in Havana

The most remarkable ecumenical event thus far is the meeting of Pope Francis with the patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church in Havana, Cuba, on February 12, 2016. The last time a pope and a patriarch of Moscow visited each other was before 1054 AD. This absence of relations between the East and West existed for a thousand years because of the mutual excommunications between Rome and Constantinople at that time.[3]

While the media paid little attention to the Havana meeting, and most people are unaware of it, the joint declaration signed by the two leaders was truly extraordinary.

Much of the text stresses the need for religious collaboration in combatting climate change, economic disparity, the denial of religious freedom, and the persecution of Christians in the war-torn region of the Middle East. The leaders deplore the hostilities in the Ukraine and invite all involved in the conflict to prudence, social solidarity, and action aimed at constructing peace. They also plead for the release of two bishops, one a Catholic and the other an Orthodox, kidnapped by the ISIS terrorists.

Other topics treated by the joint declaration concern immigration and refugees from Iraq and Syria suffering from war in the Mideast. Family life, human rights, and especially the right to life and religious freedom, are emphasized. Both leaders express their concern for young people and their need to grow in faith and religious values received from parents and forebears.

The declaration ends with a prayer of thanksgiving to God for the gift of mutual understanding during the meeting and the hope that the Blessed Virgin Mary will inspire fraternity in all who invoke her so that they may be united in God's own time "in peace and the one people of God for the glory of the most holy and indivisible Trinity" (from the Vatican News Service report).

The 500th Anniversary of the Reformation in Lund, Sweden, with the Lutheran World Federation

The second historical encounter was between Pope Francis and leaders of the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic and Lutheran Bishops of Sweden to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation on October 31, 2016-2017. Pope Francis actually offered to come to the celebration in Lund, Sweden, to show his regard for Lutherans and his desire to mark the anniversary with a personal visit to Lund, where the World Council of Churches was founded in 1952.

Pope Francis is very impressed with the work of Oscar Cullman, an outstanding theologian of the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Churches. Their understanding of the way to Christian unity is through unity in reconciled diversity. Cullman's book is entitled *Unity through Diversity* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1988.)[4]

Pope Francis in Egypt with Muslims and Coptic Orthodox Christians

A third outstanding ecumenical event took place when Pope Francis visited Cairo, Egypt, on April 28, 2017. He spoke at the Al-Azhar Centre, addressing the International Conference for Peace. His presentation emphasized Egyptian culture, religious heritage, and the role of education in handing down this heritage to future generations.

Shared prayer and the search for common ground have replaced anathemas and suspicion in today's changed religious and geopolitical environment.

While in Cairo, Pope Francis also met with the patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Pope Tawadros II, on April 28, and together they signed a common declaration updating prior common statements by Pope Paul VI and Pope Schenouda III, and Pope John Paul II and Pope Schenouda III.

This updating emphasized the mutual recognition of baptisms for a thousand years and the declarations of three ecumenical councils (Nicaea, Constantinople, and Ephesus) and the scriptural foundation of "one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph 4:5), forbidding rebaptizing Christians baptized in the Orthodox Church or the Catholic Church. The declaration gives thanks to God for the progress made in the last half-century and prays for continued progress in mutual love and collaboration in ministry, as well as joint efforts to promote human rights and religious freedom.

Pope Francis in Turin, Italy, with the Waldensians

A fourth and somewhat lesser-known event resulted from Pope Francis' ecumenical dialogue with other Christians in Argentina, where he became friendly with the Waldensian Church. This church is one of the largest Christian churches after the Roman Catholic in Italy, and predates the sixteenth-century Reformation.

The church gets its name from Peter Waldo, who in the 1170s shared his wealth with poor countrymen in Lyons, France. The Waldensians eventually found that they shared many views of the Protestants, and

some of them merged with the Presbyterian Church in the United States in the nineteenth century. The Holy Father's' visit took place in June 2015, in Turin in the Piedmont region of Italy, where the Waldensians are very numerous.

Pope Francis with Eastern Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople and Jewish Leaders

Finally, there are a number of other encounters which Francis had both in Italy and on his visits to other countries which show his interest in other Christians. Pope Francis had frequent meetings with Orthodox patriarchs and bishops, especially with the patriarch of Constantinople, the ecumenical patriarch who is considered "the first among equals." Pope Francis invited him to his installation at Saint Peter's and even as an observer of the Synod of Bishops and other stellar events.[5]

Among the interreligious relations, the Jewish-Catholic dialogue is of prime importance because of the Jewish roots of Christianity as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian New Testament. Pope Francis' interest in the Jewish dialogue developed when he was the cardinal archbishop of Buenos Aires. He published a book with a leading rabbi of Buenos Aires.[6]

This is a short list, but it indicates the breadth and depth of his dedication to pursuing the unity of all Christians and their churches, and to collaborating with other religious leaders in promoting peace and the common good.

Notes

[1] Meinrad Scherer-Emunds "Will Pope Francis Revitalize Ecumenism and Interfaith Dialogue?" *U.S. Catholic* Blogs. Scott Redd. "The Ecumenism of Pope Francis" *First Things* 10.15.15

[2] Martin Brauer. "Pope Francis and Ecumenism" *Ecumenical Review* (69) 4-14, March 2017. Various editions of this World Council of Churches article appear online, and reports on the years of Pope Francis' pontificate and some of the important visits and events which showed his keen interest in ecumenism and interreligious relations. I have selected four of these and added the importance of Eastern Orthodox relations, given the various pronouncements on this relationship. The article gives more details on the importance of ecumenism for Pope Francis.

[3] The Russian Church at the time was under the patriarch of Constantinople and while it has its own patriarch today, there is a deference to the ecumenical patriarch.

[4] Pope Francis uses the expression "unity in diversity" when speaking of Lutherans and in other contexts, e.g., in *The Joy of the Gospel,* 244-246.

[5] The Orthodox-Roman Catholic relationship is the flagship of the ecumenical effort toward unity. Vatican II underscored the first millennium as the model for restoring the unity of this relationship. The Vatican Council gives the basic theological reasons why the unity of East and West is so important.

[6] Jorge Bergoglio and Abraham Skorka. *On Heaven and Earth.* Buenos Aires, 2010 (English Transl. 2013).

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Net

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

Parables were integral to Jesus' teaching ministry. His stories engaged the minds and hearts of his listeners and revealed the deeper meaning of their lives and God's power at work in and around them.

Blessed Sacrament Father Bernard Camiré is the parochial vicar of Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City. This series on the parables of Jesus originally appeared in the parish bulletin and is being serialized in *Emmanuel.*

The Parable of the Net (Mt 13:47-50), which is peculiar to Matthew, reiterates motifs from the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Mt 13:24-30): the kingdom of God, in its present manifestation, includes both the good and the bad, but at the "close of the age" the righteous will be separated from the wicked. Again, Jesus sets before his audience the tasks of everyday life to provoke reflection on spiritual realities.

In Palestine, in ancient times, there were two principal methods of fishing. The first involved the use of a *hand-net* that was cast from the shore. When a school of fish was in sight, the fisherman skillfully threw out his net and allowed its leaded circumference to strike the water's bottom. The net with its catch was then drawn to shore.

The second method, the one referred to in this parable, was the *drag-net*, also called a seine. The seine-net was a very large oblong net having floats at the top edge and weights at the bottom. Certain members of a fishing group would stand on the shore laying out the net, while others in a boat would lead the other end of the net round in a circle till the circle was closed, the boat returning to the point of departure. At rest in the water, the net hung in a vertical position. Then, with its bottom first brought tight to prevent the fish from escaping, the net was pulled in.

The use of the drag-net was very familiar to at least several of Jesus' disciples. They themselves had frequently employed this fishing technique and were practiced at drawing the squirming catch to shore

where it would be sorted it. Fish without scales and fins, forbidden as food by the Levitical law, were discarded; edible fish were set aside to sell. The disciples were, no doubt, struck by the aptness of Jesus' imagery to describe the event of God's kingdom.

We must resist the notion of a church composed exclusively of the "perfect" and the "worthy."

Meaning of the Parable

Two great lessons are set before us in this parable. Firstly, a drag-net, by its nature, cannot discriminate in regard to the fish caught. As the net makes its way through the water, it is bound to draw in a great variety of fish. This image reminds us that the church, the instrument of God's kingdom on earth, is bound to be a mixture of many kinds of people, the good and the bad, the fervent and the lukewarm, the productive and the ineffectual.

This parable is a strong reminder that we must resist the notion of a church composed exclusively of the "perfect" and the "worthy." As we had occasion to say when considering the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds, the kingdom of God in its present stage and earthly manifestation as the church is necessarily a mixture of the good and the bad.

Secondly, this parable teaches that the time of separation, the bad from the good, will eventually come. It is the time of judgment when the just and the wicked will be sent to their respective destinations. However, that separation and judgment is not the responsibility of humans but of God. For the present, it is the church's task to invite, to welcome, to instruct, and to exhort all who will come in; and, of course, to rebuke and admonish those of its members who stray (Lk 17:3; 1 Tm 5:20). Final judgment, however, must be left to God.

The church's task is to invite, to welcome, to instruct, and to exhort all who will come in; and to admonish those of its members who stray.

Finally, we should be aware that no parable does justice to all the facts and the complexities of life. No concept of predestination can be drawn from the image of the drag-net that gathers into itself both the good and the bad, the good to be saved, the bad to be thrown away. We humans are endowed with the God-given gift of freedom; we can choose to live or refuse to live for him who draws the net.

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

You Are All His as He Is All Yours

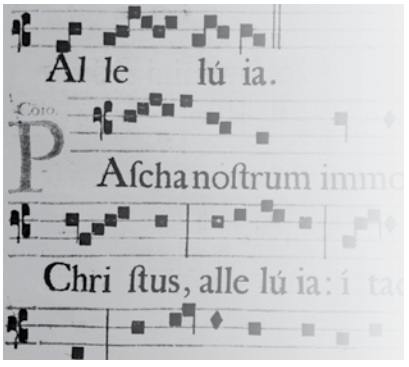
The Apostle of the Eucharist was also a guide to the interior life and to Eucharistic spirituality for many in his day. In a letter on December 8, 1867, Father Eymard expresses his spiritual closeness to Josephine Gourd and her daughter Stephanie, while recalling their attachment to the Lord. He invites them to be led by God's "gentle and holy will."

"I am praying for you and I so much want to see you. Our good Master will give me this pleasure shortly. In the meantime, I visit you in our Lord, in whom you both are ever present to me.

"*You are all his as he is all yours!* Do what he says and what pleases him. Let his gentle and holy will lead you. Consider the necessities of your position and life as the present law of his divine will. The demands of your duties and the goodness of your situation are the marks of his holy will.

"A soul that belongs to God finds its whole life in these two laws: God wills it or God does not will it. The perfection of love consists entirely in doing each thing as God wills it and in God's spirit.

"The best grace is the grace of our interior state, which then becomes our form and law of action. Always consult it carefully."



PASTORAL LITURGY

Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, Part I

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

The Catholic Church cherishes the relationship between the Eucharistic celebration and worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass.

I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF WRITING AND SPEAKING ABOUT THE LANDMARK document *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Outside Mass* (HCWEOM) for decades. You may remember an *Emmanuel* column last year marking the 45th anniversary of the document. Over the next five columns, I will take a fresh look at this document that brought together devotion and liturgy for the first time, giving them an "ordo," theology, history, and ritual to assist parishes with distributing Holy Communion, praying in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and additional Eucharistic practices that have been identified with Roman Catholic life.

It is interesting to note that Eastern Catholic rites and the Orthodox do not adore the consecrated bread outside their sacred liturgy. They focus on the presence of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in the liturgy, and not on periods of prayer or exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. We know from history and Scripture that the community cared for those not present by sharing the Eucharist with them. The Western church developed a faithful respect of the Eucharistic elements and wished to give this "holy sacrament the veneration and adoration which is due to God, as has always been customary in the Catholic Church" (HCWEOM, General Introduction, 3).

The first part of HCWEOM highlights "the relationship between Eucharistic worship outside of Mass and the Eucharistic celebration." Some pastors have the challenge in their parishes where exposition is interrupted on a holiday or for a funeral Mass or another Mass and people do not wish to join in the celebration of the Mass, but prefer "quiet prayer."

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church, Highland Heights, Ohio. He has degrees in education, music, theology, and liturgy and is the author of *Daily Prayer 2019* and *Guide to Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* (2015), both published by LTP. For questions or suggestions for future columns, contact jtlanesss@gmail.com.

Perhaps we, as Eucharistic theologians and pastors, have failed to stress what the General Introduction to HCWEOM does: that the celebration of the Eucharist is the origin and the reason for adoration or prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Incidentally, I prefer the term "prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament" rather than "adoration," for adoration stresses one style of prayer and we all know that when we pray in the presence of the Eucharist — exposed, in the tabernacle, or in other settings, even during the Mass — we use many styles of prayer and not just one.

"The fruit of the Mass is the Eucharistic presence of Christ and should always appear as such" (HCWEOM, 6). Perhaps HCWEOM, 7 should be reflected upon often, in that "the consecrated hosts are to be frequently renewed and reserved in a ciborium or other vessel [luna]." Consecrating the host for the period of exposition that will follow is important, and ending the Mass with the Prayer after Communion, followed by a Eucharistic hymn and/or procession to the chapel altar or place of prayer is helpful.

If possible, conduct exposition on the altar where the Mass was celebrated. This is highly praised in HCWEOM, 6 and makes the connection between the Mass and exposition evident, extending the fruits of the Mass. HCWEOM, 9 states a preference for a separate chapel from the body of the church to make the connection of private prayer time and worship spaces. However, many churches do not have the luxury of a separate space. HCWEOM, 8 reminds pastors of their duty to offer times of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament that are convenient and helpful for the parishioners to develop this prayer form.

Lastly, with bishops as the chief liturgists in their respective dioceses, ordinaries and conferences of bishops are to arrange and harmonize the spirit of the liturgy with texts and rituals to accommodate prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) authorized and published a ritual in 1993 for use in our country, *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Holy Eucharist*, available from Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota.

This ritual book has five chapters: 1. Opening Celebration of the Eucharist, 2. The Liturgy of the Hours, 3. Eucharistic Services of Prayer and Praise, 4. Celebration of the Eucharist During the Period of Exposition, and 5. Closing Celebrations for the Solemn Exposition

of the Holy Eucharist. Three appendixes offer scripture readings, litanies and prayers, and suggested music; the ritual also includes a supplement for the worshipper in the pew.

In our next column, we will complete this review of Chapter One and look at the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass in this overview of HCWEOM.

Reminders for January and February

The "new" liturgical calendar of the Roman Rite turns 50 years old this year. The only other time the Latin Church promulgated such a calendar was after the Council of Trent in 1570. *The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* (GNLY) helped reestablish The Lord's Day as the high point of our week and gave a better framework for the seasons and days of the year that are special moments in our Catholic life.

Another important element was having countries, provinces, dioceses, and parishes develop their own liturgical calendars in tandem with the universal calendar. The United States has special days throughout the year and an updated *Lectionary Supplement* (LS) that I will highlight in this part of the column in each issue so that we may remember these "U.S. Saints" and help the faithful continue their pursuit of holiness in union with them.

- **Thursday, January 3** — The Most Holy Name of Jesus (LS).
- **Friday, January 4** — Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, Memorial (U.S.).
- **Saturday, January 5** — Saint John Neumann, Memorial (U.S.).
- **Sunday, January 6** — Mention in the Eucharistic Prayer the saint of the day, André Bessette. This year, the Epiphany of the Lord is celebrated on this day; do not forget the optional chant following the Gospel announcing the moveable feasts of the year in the liturgical calendar. This is found in the appendix of the *Roman Missal*.
- **Monday, January 21** — Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. A votive Mass for Peace and Justice is suggested. See the USCCB 2019 Liturgical Calendar, page 7, number 10.
- **Tuesday, January 22** — Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (U.S.).

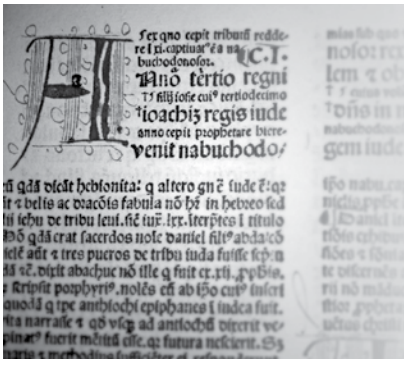
- **Wednesday, January 23** — Saint Vincent, deacon and martyr (LS) or Saint Marianne Cope (U.S.). There is a choice, and may I suggest sharing our newest American saint, Marianne Cope, for this day?
- **January 27-February 3** — Catholic Schools Week, celebrating Catholic education in our day schools and religious education programs. Encourage Sunday Mass or the Liturgy of the Hours in the evening during a session of classes this week.
- **Saturday, February 2** — Feast of the Presentation of the Lord and the World Day for Consecrated Life. Encourage people to bring their candles to Mass this weekend to be blessed.
- **Friday, February 8** — Saint Josephine Bakhita (LS).

Toward the end of February, alert the parish to your Lenten schedule and rituals, from Operation Rice Bowl, Stations of the Cross, parish mission, etc. Enjoy the elongated winter Ordinary Time in the Northern Hemisphere (with apologies to our readers in the Southern Hemisphere).

In Christ's Peace
Deceased Members

Rev. Msgr. Valentine Sheedy
Diocese of Orlando

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with A, B, C, D, and E are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during January and February.



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections—Homiletics

by Paul Bernier, SSS

January 1, 2019
Octave Day of Christmas
The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

One of the ecumenical difficulties that we face today is the devotion to Mary that is characteristic of the Roman Church. Fundamentalists are especially opposed to this and try to marshal arguments from the Scriptures against the rosary, statues, and other expressions of devotion to the mother of God. Yet because of the teaching of Vatican II, which reminded us that we should situate Mary within the mystery of the church, devotion to our Lady continues strong. The faithful in general persist in seeing Mary as a source of inspiration and consolation.

Today, as we begin a new year, we have this feast, one of the earliest in the Christian calendar. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God evokes the role of Mary in the history of salvation. Salvation is not a magical reality, but comes from within our human condition. Mary is the perfect model of the reception of grace.

From the earliest days of the church, the apostles proclaimed that "God sent forth his Son, born of a woman. . . ." By God's taking up human flesh, we are reminded that we are not saved by being taken out of our human condition, but by allowing it to be transformed by grace. This truth is reinforced by the gospel passage, which emphasizes Mary's obedience to the message that she received from God in naming her son and in following all the precepts of the law.

Like any of us, Mary had no clear idea of what would become of her son.

Blessed Sacrament Father Paul J. Bernier served for many years as the editor of *Emmanuel.* He is a popular writer, preacher, and director of retreats. Among his many published works is *Ministry in the Church: A Historical and Pastoral Approach,* Second Edition, published by Orbis Books in 2015.

She was given no blueprint of what the future would hold. Rather, she had to ponder things in her heart. Thus, Mary drew strength to renew and deepen her faith as the true servant of the Lord. Luke appropriately presents Mary as a believer and a disciple, her true glory.

Mary's example of faith-filled living underscores that when we are as open to the message of God and the working of grace in our lives as she was, we can be sure that God will "let his face shine upon us, be gracious to us, and bring us his peace." She was able to look beyond herself, resisting the impulse to focus on her life and her achievements. Mary played a vital role in salvation history precisely by making herself God's servant, remaining open to the word, and providing the human environment in which Jesus would grow and mature. Thus, she offers the church an enduring image of how we are called to live.

January 6, 2019
The Epiphany of the Lord

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

Some years ago, writers and theologians were speaking of the "death of God." Even today, many people fail to find God in their lives, especially as they look at situations of injustice or human suffering and reason that this is incompatible with belief in the existence of a loving God. Christian revelation seems to have little to offer a world dominated by a scientific view of the universe.

Salvation these days is through science, technological breakthroughs, medical advances, or other forms of human endeavor. There is little need to pray for rain if we can seed the clouds to produce it. What need is there to pray for a healthy child when gene editing can eliminate diseases and create designer babies? Many seem to find fulfillment in purely natural goodness, without any need to look outside themselves or their own world for meaning. Perhaps what needs to die is the image we have of God. . . .

The opening prayer of Mass reveals the inner meaning of this feast: "O God, you revealed your only begotten Son to the nations. . . ." It speaks of *the manifestation, the concretization, of God's desire to save that is available to all who have eyes to see.* This desire to see is especially

important. We note that those familiar with the Scriptures, the experts in its reading and interpretation, were so shortsighted that they neither understood its fulfillment in Bethlehem nor its importance for their own relationship with God.

Knowledge of the Scriptures is nonetheless important. The natural sciences were insufficient of themselves to guide the Magi to the Christ child. Familiarity with the prophets helps us, as it did them, to recognize God's manifestations today. The gospel details one of five episodes which Matthew presents as fulfilling Old Testament prophecies, underscoring that knowledge of God's past actions helps us to see his manifestations in our world today.

Matthew tells us nothing about the nativity or even the annunciation. The story of the Magi serves to remind us that the mere fact of Christ's birth is not sufficient to explain the incarnation. Most people in Bethlehem were totally unaffected by the fact of Christ's birth. The significance of God's actions can only be appreciated by those who have faith and openness of heart. This is based on the type of hope we see reflected in the Isaiah reading.

It also involves seeing ourselves in the story, as Ephesians makes clear. Our whole status before God has been changed because of Jesus' birth. God took on human flesh precisely that we might become his children, heirs to the same promises he made to the Hebrews of old. All of this has been made possible only through Christ Jesus!

This is the mystery we celebrate in the Eucharist. Our Eucharists become meaningless if we cannot look outside ourselves for meaning, if we cannot become pilgrims, like the Magi, seeking a reality that transcends ourselves.

January 13, 2019
The Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 104:1b-2, 3-4, 24-25, 27-28, 29-30; Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Luke 3:15-16, 21-22

One of the phenomena of our age is an increasing rate of suicide, even among teens. This, as well as drugs (e.g., the opioid epidemic)

and violence, is symptomatic of life having lost its meaning. In fact, many people seem to drift through life without any clear sense of direction or purpose.

This is not so much a question of a lack of ambition, but rather a lack of awareness of the meaning of life itself. Very few see more to their lives than being able to support themselves and their families in a decent manner. They do not see themselves as having any role in God's plan of redemption or of being able to contribute anything to the salvation of the world.

Jesus' baptism is significant because in each of the Synoptic accounts it is the occasion of a special revelation from God and it leads to the beginning of his public ministry. Luke is the one who most downplays the baptism itself. It enters in only as a parenthetic remark. It is after his baptism and while he was at prayer that God manifested himself to Jesus. He is anointed with the Spirit and receives the assurance that God is pleased with him and he is truly his beloved Son. Reference to Jesus' sonship is an indication of his saving mission, an affirmation of *the messianic vocation which is his in the power of the Spirit he has just received*.

Even for people who profess Christ, many see this relationship as something purely personal. It is a passive reality, not an active commitment or vocation. Both the first and second readings note the daily responsibilities incumbent on all believers, but situate these in an enthusiastic framework, stressing the splendor and glory that accompanies God's coming. Salvation is depicted as a completely gratuitous gift, a manifestation of God's great mercy and loving-kindness.

This very gift, however, is also meant to shape our ways of thinking, our sense of priorities, and how we are to "live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age, as we await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of our great God and savior Jesus Christ" (Ti 2:12-13).

What shaped Jesus' life was his consciousness of having been chosen by God for a special mission. He thereafter defined his life in terms of living and dying for others. Baptism puts all of us in a similar position. We are empowered by the grace of the sacrament not only to become beloved children of God, but to take our rightful place in the family, to work for the salvation of others as Christ did. Baptism is a vocation. As

Vatican II stated, it gives each of us an equal dignity, an equal call to holiness, as well as an equal responsibility for the work of the Gospel. Only this will give life real meaning.

January 20, 2019
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 62:1-5; Psalm 96:1-2, 2-3, 7-8, 8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; John 2:1-11

Many seem to regard religion as a "drag." It is something that cramps one's style and freedom by eliminating from our lives those things that we find enjoyable. Witness the groups that declare wine, gambling, dancing, etc., to be sinful. There are even books and plays in recent years that depict growing up Catholic as having stunted personal growth. Such stereotypes, apart from the sexual abuse issue that still plagues the Church today, rob our lives at times of the "joy of the Gospel," one of Pope Francis' favorite phrases.

In the Scripture, messianic times are hardly portrayed as somber. Rather, we have the image of a wedding feast — with the ready availability of rich wine (some 150 gallons of it!) and uninterrupted rejoicing. The Cana story is the first of the seven major "signs" around which John's gospel is built. This sign has links with Jesus' "hour" and his gift of the Eucharist, when the wine of the kingdom would be given to the whole world (cf. Jn 12:30-31). The stone water jars meant for Jewish purification are replaced by the messianic purification that Jesus will finally accomplish on the cross. This is good, new wine, not vinegar!

The water is characteristic of the old order; wine of the new. The glory of Jesus that was manifested to his disciples at Cana was the sign of his ability to mediate the kingdom of God through his ministry. The glory of God is seen precisely in the mission that he is able and willing to bestow on all through his Son. In this sense, the Cana miracle is only the beginning, a promise of good things yet to come.

The instruction of Mary to the servants to "do whatever he tells you" is also intended as an exhortation for us to seek life at its source. We must realize that Jesus is the author of life for us, and the means of our growing in discipleship. John presents Jesus as the fulfillment of

history and invites us to do the same.

The entire message of Christianity, according to John, is *newness,* new life and mission at every level. How can we present the faith as great wine rather than pallid water? Perhaps we need to intently focus on how we proclaim and apply the Gospel to people today so that it does not come across as bad news. Jesus has come to bring us life, and to bring it more abundantly!

Pope Francis reminds us that the joy and goodness in our lives are to reflect the love and mercy of God. We go out from our Eucharistic celebrations, from the table of his word and bread, to bear Christ's gifts of life and rich blessings — new wine — to the world around us!

January 27, 2019
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Nehemiah 8:2-4a, 5-6, 8-10; Psalm 19:8, 9, 10, 15; 1 Corinthians 12:12-30; Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Theology and preaching are often criticized for being too abstract. The classical theology of the scholastics (remember those old jokes about theologians sitting around and discussing how many angels could dance on the head of a pin?) seems to be a sterile process of deduction from eternal truths, with little or no relation to the actual realities of life. Furthermore, Catholic theology, especially since the Protestant Reformation, tended to be defensive and rather rigid. On the other hand, efforts to develop a theology that is pastorally meaningful and culturally attuned have at times been viewed with suspicion, if not outright rejection, even by some Church authorities.

Today's gospel gives us two passages: one from the very beginning of Luke's account; the other describing the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Nazareth. From the first reading, which highlights the importance of God's word, to the Gospel, where Jesus proclaims that word to the people of his home town, the emphasis is on the general tone of Christ's preaching and ministry.

The passage introduces the first part of Jesus' ministry with its beginnings in Galilee. The second part will describe Jesus' life as a

long journey to Jerusalem, where his redemptive work will be fulfilled. From the outset, then, Luke tells us who Jesus is, as well as what his ministry will consist in. Luke wants us to understand that this is also the continuing task of the church. He will warn us in subsequent texts that this is not always well received!

The gospel makes it clear that if any prophetic passage characterized Jesus' ministry it was the one from Isaiah 61:1-2 that Jesus read in the synagogue. Note that Luke (or Jesus) leaves out a line found in Isaiah — that he has come to announce the Lord's day of judgment. The emphasis is on the Isaian vision of restoration in the messianic age.

Christ's proclamation of the Good News emphasized *practical living of the covenant* — reaching out to the poor, restoring the sight of the blind, releasing prisoners, and setting the downtrodden free. Jesus read the text of Isaiah against the backdrop of the needs of the people of his day.

Those who aspire to preach the Good News must do the same. The challenge is to translate the text in a way that is meaningful and relates to people's lives. The pole of human need is faced with the pole of faith and the saving power of God.

Preaching and teaching in this way will yield a message that is life-changing and liberating, just as it did long ago in the synagogue at Nazareth when Jesus announced the prophetic word of God and inaugurated his saving mission. *"Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing."*

February 3, 2019
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19; Psalm 71:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 15-17; 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13; Luke 4:21-30

One of the continuing challenges of church life today is the shortage of candidates for the ordained ministry and the religious life. In many countries fewer people seem inclined to undertake these distinctive forms of service in the Church.

This might not be as critical an issue if all Catholics had a deep

realization of their baptismal call. I think it's fair to say that the perception arose over the centuries that only "priests and nuns" — by extension, ordained men and consecrated religious — "had a vocation." Everyone else was called to something less. It would be good, then, to think about our "Christian vocation."

Both the first reading and the gospel deal with the question of vocation, and the psalm gives the context in which it should be seen: deep awareness that God has been with us and known us from the time we were in our mothers' wombs. The gospel follows upon Jesus' awareness of his own messianic vocation to fulfill the prophecy of Isaiah (read last week); in fact, we hear again his bold proclamation, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21).

In many ways the passage can be a puzzling one. It is an understatement to say that the reaction to Jesus' assertion was mixed. We have the same townspeople who were favorable one moment trying to kill him the next. What was the issue? Two major ones. First, the people were resentful of the fact that Jesus seemed to be giving more attention to others than he did to his "own." They wanted to benefit from his newfound power and status. They wanted him to set up shop in Nazareth, not Capernaum.

Secondly, they had a very narrow understanding of the messianic vocation. In proclaiming the Isaian prophecy, Jesus was hoping that others would be equally inspired by the vision of the prophet. He invited them to join him in making it a reality. He began his ministry, as in the other gospels, by gathering disciples. His fellow Nazareans, however, were not interested in giving, they only wanted to get. And they resented Jesus' implying that they were remiss in feeling the way they did.

Jesus was teaching that God's reign, so poetically defined by Isaiah, required that all who believe in it *work to make it a reality*. Hence, he began his public ministry for looking for disciples. Our being told that the Scripture is being fulfilled even as we listen does not mean that all we need do is sit back and watch it happen. God's grace must be incarnated in people.

The Second Vatican Council made this same point by saying that by reason of baptism-confirmation-Eucharist, all have an equal dignity, an equal call to holiness, and an equal responsibility for the spread

of the Gospel. Ordained ministers and consecrated men and women have a special vocation within the Christian community, but *Christian initiation is a vocational call.*

God's word calls each of us today to ask ourselves what role is God expecting me to play in helping to make his kingdom of holiness, life, and justice a reality in our world? It is part of being faithful.

February 10, 2019
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 6:1-2a, 3-8; Psalm 138:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 7-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Luke 5:1-11

When we think of God choosing someone for an important work, we naturally assume that the person is especially holy. Witness the many sermons about Mary's holiness, preparing her to be a fitting mother of the Messiah. Christian theology even asserts that God pushed this process back to her birth! Since we don't feel in the category of Mary, we can easily dismiss the notion that God might be calling us to his service in some way.

We have in today's readings a rare opportunity to deal with all three readings together, focusing as they do on the call of Isaiah, Paul, and the first apostles. All of these were deeply conscious of their unworthiness and felt totally undeserving of God's trust and confidence. Nevertheless, they accepted the call. This is a key element that runs through the readings: vocation is a call from God. We are not the ones who decide to follow Christ, or even to enter into special ministries. We must be called to do so.

When God gives the call, he also makes it possible for us not only to accept the call, but to fulfill the purpose for which we have been called.

The call of the apostles in Luke is more psychologically compelling than that found in the other gospels. There, Jesus seems to come out of nowhere and issue an invitation to follow him. People simply drop everything and do so. An important feature of the call of the apostles in Luke is that it comes after those called had already had a chance to get to know Jesus somewhat. Peter had witnessed the

cure of his mother-in-law (left out of the reading) and the miraculous catch described today. They had a chance to hear Jesus teaching and to come under the sway of his personality. Thus, when Jesus called them, they were not setting off after some unknown stranger.

Prior association with this marvelous person, the crowds that followed him, the miraculous catch of fish, etc., created in Peter a sense of unworthiness, much as we see in Isaiah and Paul. It is the awe felt in the presence of the holy. Gone was any self-reliance, any pride in personal skill, any sense of personal accomplishment. *Those Jesus called to preach the Gospel were just ordinary people, with ordinary faults and failings, yet chosen to be instruments* in the hands of God for the world's salvation.

Today we seem to have reversed the process of vocation found in the Scriptures and practiced in the early church. We have made vocation a personal *inner call*. We hear women and men of every stripe claiming that they have a vocation (and a right to ordination). The readings make vocation something *external*. It is God, it is Jesus, who calls.

The early church continued this practice by choosing their own leaders. In the case of an Ambrose, when he was asked to be bishop of Milan, he was not even baptized. But understanding the voice of the church to be the voice of God, he accepted, despite his unworthiness.

We must not let an exaggerated sense of unworthiness prevent us from hearing God's call. How many have been told by priests or lay people that they would make good workers in the vineyard, and not even considered the possibility because of false humility? And how many might consider following Christ if they came to know him better — if he were preached so as to come alive in their minds and hearts?

Perhaps if we encouraged others to take up the call of Christ, they would be willing to leave all behind and commit themselves to a life of service of God and God's people.

February 17, 2019
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 17:5-8; Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26

There is a pervasive feeling among many devout people that their very devotion and holiness should act as a shield, keeping from them misfortune, whether of body, mind, or heart. Some Fundamentalists go so far as to preach that if we give generously to God, he will see to it that we are rewarded, even to the extent of enjoying financial gain. Thus, when illness or bad fortune comes along, people begin to doubt and give up on God. The sun is always supposed to shine upon God's just ones, they reason! It should rain only on those who lead sinful lives. But is the Gospel only (or mainly) to reinforce middle-class people in their sense of righteousness, or to set them on a path of commitment?

Luke has no "Sermon on the Mount." His is a "Sermon on the Plain." This is more than a change of location; it is a theological statement. If Matthew wanted to stress that Jesus was another Moses, giving his law from on high unto the people, Luke has Jesus teach "where cross the crowded ways of life." It is important to note, also, that it is addressed not so much to the crowds directly, but to the disciples in the presence of the crowd. This is not an ethic for the whole world. It is for those who have faith in Christ.

It is not "Blessed [happy] are those . . ." as in Matthew. It is "Happy are *you*," you who have been enabled by grace to receive it. Jesus fixed his eyes on his disciples, especially on the twelve apostles whom he had just chosen in the preceding verses. Jesus was instructing them in preparation for their being sent out on mission.

Luke does not spiritualize the beatitudes. He is talking about the sociologically poor (a point that should not be lost in any preaching of this text!). His Gospel, however, is proclaimed as good news for the poor, those who are hungry, who weep, who are hated because of their faith. Part of the reason is that they are not alone, but belong to a fellowship that will concern itself about their poverty ("All who believed had all things in common" [Acts 2:44] and "There was no needy person among them, for those who owned property would sell

it . . . and the proceeds of the sale where distributed to each according to need" [Acts 4:34-51]).

Jesus proposes a high ethic for his followers. Those who live otherwise will never know true happiness. Note that some of the beatitudes are couched in the present, others in the future. This is a reminder that the eschatological reality of the kingdom already has its beginning in the life of Jesus and, hopefully, in that of the church as well.

The parables make little sense to those who have no experience of Christ, who are unable to put their trust in him. "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord," we hear in the first reading. Without this trust, the beatitudes make no sense. And the world in which we live tells us that they make no sense even now. It does make sense to those who, as Saint Paul says, have become rich because of the poverty of Christ, since he became poor for our sakes (2 Cor 8:9). The blessings we receive are not freedom from pain or worry, but rather the ability to live as God's children.

Instead of wrapping the world around ourselves, reinforcing our own sense of importance, or concerning ourselves with our own physical needs, we are to see ourselves as part of a larger community of care and concern. Our lives and responses are not determined by our enemies, or even by our friends, but by the example of Jesus, who has given himself for us completely on the cross. We should learn to rejoice always, as the apostle Paul says, even when we are tempted to feel that God is too generous with others!

February 24, 2019
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

Television news brings home to us the difficulties of so many in our world who suffer from hunger, hatred, abuse, and armed conflict. On a less macroscopic scale, we see gang warfare in our cities and students having to barricade themselves behind locked doors and fences to prevent others from entering their classrooms and wounding or killing them. We certainly seem a long way from being a society where all can regard one another as brothers and sisters.

There are many themes in today's gospel, but love of enemies is the dominant one. This determined the choice of the first reading. Verses 27-31 lay down the general principle that Jesus' followers are not to reciprocate, retaliate, or copy the behaviors of those who would victimize them.

Jesus assumes that he is speaking to possible victims, not aggressors! Injuring others in any way is to be foreign to those who live under the reign of God. He tells us not to react in kind, but to act always according to the kingdom principles of love, forgiveness, and generosity.

This is not a covert strategy to kill our enemies with kindness, *but the pursuit of a life learned from God, who does not reciprocate in kind even toward sinners* (35). The point is that, though we may be victimized, we are not to regard ourselves as such, or allow ourselves to be shaped and determined by the abuse we receive from others.

Jesus ends with the injunction that *we should be compassionate as our Father in heaven is compassionate*. This saying goes to the heart of Jesus' ethic. Jesus never told us to be *holy* as our Father in heaven was holy (a theme running through Leviticus and a dominant concern of the Pharisees). The God Jesus knew was a God of mercy and love, and he patterned his entire ministry on this quality of mercy, reaching out to sinners and those in need, and not coming as the whirlwind expected by John the Baptist to avenge evil and mop up the floor with God's enemies.

To love an enemy is simply impossible. For an enemy is by definition someone hated rather than loved. So great is the contradiction implicit in Jesus' words to us today that we can easily resort to any means to wrest the passage into some manageable form. Perhaps this is what Jesus was getting at. One who is loved is no longer an enemy. One who is fought, even if vanquished, remains an enemy.

We will never transform the society in which we live into the kingdom Jesus lived and died for by perpetuating the evils that already exist in our world. Likewise, neither will we succeed if we allow others to transform us into reflections of themselves (vengeful, angry, hating others). Only when we begin to pattern our behavior on Jesus will we earn the right to call ourselves Christian.

Jesus himself is the model for us in this regard. On the cross he prayed

for those who nailed him there, as well as for those who betrayed him. He was not dragged to the top of Calvary kicking and screaming, or cursing his enemies. He did not let the evil and pain he suffered rob him of his peace of mind or drag him down to the level of those who conspired to kill him. Thus, he remained free, in the freedom of all God's true children. This is his gift to us as well. 

Art • Music • Film • Poetry • Books

Art Review

"The incarnation made visible the invisible. God became a man. Spirit and flesh were brought together, as were the invisible and the visible" (Grace Carol Bomer).

Word and Image. Logos and Eikon. Theological aesthetics has been drawn again and again to these perennial Christian touchstones, like a moth to a fluorescent flame. John's gospel begins with the Word becoming flesh and dwelling amongst humanity. Thus, Word and Image seem indelibly joined in the incarnation.

But debate instantly springs forth on numerous fronts when considering what this might mean for the arts. The veneration of images, the Old Testament ban on producing graven images, the question as to whether representations of Christ are permissible, whether there is a way in which Christ can be depicted such that both his humanity and divinity are respected, a sacramental manner of seeing the world, the possibility of inculturated depictions of Christ, all of these find their way back to the incarnation, Word and Image.

Of course, these are questions mostly for theologians. Artists have long since gone their own way, leaving Church constraints aside and following their own muses. Western art, so indebted to Christian subjects and Church patronage has pursued other philosophic and aesthetic goals in modern and post-modern times. A plurality of styles and ideas now reign.

However, given time, distance, and creative freedom, it seems like some of the dust of these often-contentious art movements and explorations is beginning to settle. Internationally renowned artists like Gerhard Richter and Sigmar Polke have received and completed large-scale commissions for liturgical art. Artists well versed in current aesthetic ideas and styles are directing their energies to engaging

THE VISION OF THE SEVEN GOLDEN LAMPSTANDS

SEEK THE TRUE CENTER
Grace Carol Bomer
gracecarolbomer.com

John Christman, SSS

religious subjects. And even the distinction between "word" and "image" seem much less hard and fast in contemporary art.

Enter Grace Carol Bomer, whose aesthetic language is equally adept with palette-knife swaths of color as it is with scrawled poetic script. Her paintings are filled with dramatic colors and religious texts. Here a biblical passage drives through the layers of paint like an ice-breaking ship, there a pericope emerges from a thick encaustic mass like an archeological discovery. Neither word nor image compete for primacy upon her canvases, nor do they rest in an uneasy tension. Instead, the opposite is true. Word and image find beautifully harmonious and ecstatic expression in her hands.

In lesser hands, references to poems or scripture passages could make a painting illustrative. The enigmatic and evocative elements are lost, and the painting becomes secondary to the text. Great art aspires to more than mere quotation. When the illustrious artist Cy Twombly scribbles a line from Rilke across a sea of murky white and green paint, we don't simply read a quotation as much as we encounter a profound exegesis that illuminates a spirit that animates artist and poet alike. Twombly is not attempting to illustrate Rilke's subject. Instead, Twombly and Rilke are pursuing the same subject.

The same could be said of Bomer's artistic endeavor. Her paintings are animated by the same transcendent longings as the poets and religious writers whose words emblaze her canvases. However, whether they are her words or the words of Scripture, they merge seamlessly with her exuberant colors and forms to direct the viewer to the divine. Abstraction plays an important role here, for how can a person imagine the divine? How does the finite evoke the infinite? The task is impossible, and yet artist and poet alike cannot refrain from artistically expressing their awe and wonder.

An excellent example of this is her painting entitled *Seek the True Center*. A cascade of blacks and vibrant blues speckled and streaked to conjure an abstract, starry firmament slowly opens to a warm light. The subtle orange and yellow glow creates an intimacy within the vast space. The lightning-bright gold leaf pulls our gaze, keeping us from getting lost in the depths. The energetic lines swirl and coalesce into words, "Seek the True Center." The artist directs us to the Beauty that brings all things into being.

Perhaps less enigmatic, but nevertheless equally inspiring is her work entitled *The Vision of the Seven Golden Lampstands*. Here, Bomer draws more explicitly from biblical sources, namely, the Book of Revelation. Revelation, chapter 1, verses 12-13 convey John's description of the messenger of whose words follow. It reads: "Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven gold lampstands and in the midst of the lampstands one like a Son of Man, wearing an ankle-length robe, with a gold sash around his chest."

In Bomer's imagining of John's vision, the golden lampstands cleverly frame and contextualize the experience, but what is of unique artistic insight is the figure of "one like a Son of Man." The white paint in the upper half of the painting gently shifts to a subtle purple as it underlies the figure. This aesthetic device makes the gold leaf figure practically leap from the canvas . . . radiating its own light.

And what is the figure? It is the Hebrew text for *Jesus*. It is "The Word." Indeed, in Bomer's hands, it is both "Word" and "Image" seamlessly presented as one. In works such as these, Grace Carol Bomer clearly demonstrates that she has a contribution to make not only to Christian art, but to theology as well.

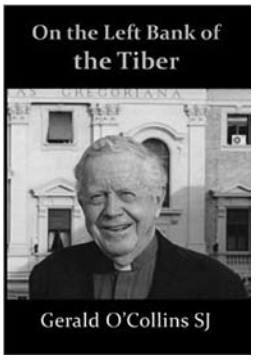
Poetry

A Celtic Prayer

Be gentle when you touch bread,
let it not lie uncared for — unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted.
There is so much beauty in bread,
beauty of sun and soil,
beauty of honest toil.
Winds and rain have caressed it.
Christ often blessed it.
Be gentle when you touch bread.

Author Unknown

Book Reviews



ON THE LEFT BANK OF THE TIBER
Gerald O'Collins, SJ
Leominster, England: Gracewing, 2013
332 pp., $20.00

The Gregorian is a Pontifical University that dates its founding to Saint Ignatius Loyola in 1551. Its name honors Pope Gregory XIII, who gave it a great new building some years later. Among its alumni are 17 popes, 72 canonized or beatified saints, a third of the present College of Cardinals. and 900 living bishops.

Presently, it has 3,800 students from 150 countries. Most of the students are seminarians, priests, or religious who are there to do a graduate course in theology, but it also offers a number of licentiate and doctoral degrees. In recent years, a growing number of lay men and women have studied at "the Greg." It is under the authority of the Society of Jesus and most of the faculty are Jesuits.

Father O'Collins is an Australian Jesuit who was invited to teach at the Gregorian in 1974 and retired to Australia in 2006. That's 32 years! A person, especially one living in Rome, can experience a number of adventures, meet a myriad of people, interact with a global faculty, and develop keen insights on how the Church operates. As I read this book, I imagined a great uncle who had been away from the family for many years. He gathers everyone together in the den around a warm fire and begins to tell stories of where he has been and what he has been up to. That's pretty much the nature of this book.

O'Collins primarily taught systematic theology courses to students at the master's level, but he did help licentiate students and doctoral students with their dissertations. As Rome pretty much closes down in the summer due to the heat, the universities are closed. O'Collins was encouraged to accept invitations to teach at universities elsewhere in summertime. These experiences are part of the narrative.

He tells stories of some of the more illustrious and some of the quirky Jesuits who lived with him at the Gregorian. He writes of the intrigue in the Vatican and the absolute meaninglessness of the phrase, "Rome thinks." There are far too many sources, which are in some cases diametrically opposed, which express what "Rome thinks," to make any of them truly credible.

During his years in Rome, O'Collins served under three popes — the very end of Paul VI's years, the 33 days of John Paul I, and the long

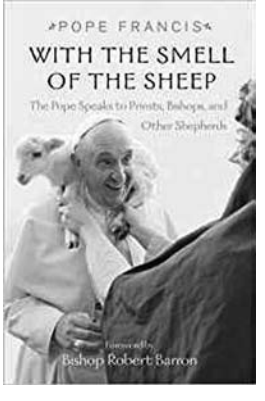
pontificate of John Paul II. He holds all three in esteem and had great regard for John Paul II, except for three areas which he discusses at some length: the increased centralization of the Church under his influence, the pope's interference in the government of the Society of Jesus with his appointment of Father Paola Dezza as interim superior general, and his very negative assessment of "liberation theology." He dedicates an entire chapter to the funeral of John Paul II, which was truly an international event.

The Gregorian University has as its chancellor the prefect of the Congregation for Catholic Education and its vice-chancellor the superior general of the Jesuits. As a first-class university of scholars, many of its professors publish. (O'Collins himself has written or co-authored 61 books.) Some of these books have been negatively received by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and one of them was written by the Gregorian's former dean of the School of Theology, Jacques Dupuis, one of O'Collins' friends and a fellow Jesuit. The book in question had to do with religious pluralism and the CDF came down hard on some of Dupuis' ideas. O'Collins served as Dupuis' representative in the hearing.

While the Dupuis case was a difficult time, O'Collins records the fond memories of the youth he worked with, the international friendships he developed, his many lively dinners in Rome's innumerable cafes, and the interfaith encounters he enjoyed.

Alumni of the Gregorian will enjoy the book as it will spark memories of their own time at this esteemed university. Other will enjoy the stories of this man who made Rome his home for over three decades.

Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor
Emmanuel



WITH THE SMELL OF THE SHEEP: THE POPE SPEAKS TO PRIESTS, BISHOPS, AND OTHER SHEPHERDS
Pope Francis
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2017
320 pp., $18.00

Without a doubt this is the best book I read last summer! This book is filled with homilies, talks, and texts penned from the hand of Pope Francis and delivered by him from 2013 through 2016. Fifty-three homilies or talks, all of which were offered to priests, bishops, or members of the Roman Curia.

The texts contained in the book are not always given in their complete form, as the editor, Giuseppe Merola, tried wherever possible to limit what is in the book to those passages in which the pope referred explicitly to priests or bishops. From Chrism Mass homilies in Saint Peter's Basilica to ad limina visits, from Christmas greetings in Clementine Hall to visits to priests in Bolivia, in the grandeur and beauty of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to the simplicity of the Mass chapel at the Casa Santa Marta, page after page is filled with wisdom, wit, inspiration, insight, fraternal correction, and fatherly advice as only a Shepherd of God's people could give.

Bishop Robert Barron wrote the Foreword and highlights four significant points about the writings of Pope Francis that can be found on every page of this book. Bishop Barron suggests that Pope Francis' writing expresses a spirit of closeness and pastoral availability, a spirit of spiritual detachment, a spirit of joy, and, finally, a spirit of prayer. These four elements are at the very heart of what the Shepherd of the Church is calling priests and bishops to cultivate in their ministry and their service to all of God's people.

The book is an easy read, in that no one talk or homily is more than four or five pages. It is the kind of book that can be used for personal spiritual enrichment or as fruitful food for retreat talks and ongoing formation for clergy. I would especially recommend this read for priests' prayer groups to use as a source for conversation over the course of a few months or a year's worth of meetings.

I highly recommend *With the Smell of the Sheep*. I suspect this book will not simply be a good book for the pile next to your easy chair or a book that will collect dust on the book shelf. It has the potential to be used as a wonderful resource for years to come!

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A comic and film critic in academic robes, Terry Lindvall brings the perspectives of scholarship and popular culture to *God Mocks*. As the C. S. Lewis Chair of Communication and Christian Thought at Virginia Wesleyan College, he is the author of ten books on a spectrum from the academic to the light-hearted, including *The Mother of All Laughter: Sarah and the Genesis of Comedy*. While *God Mocks* stakes its claim at the academic end of this range, it is accessible in style and abounding in entertaining examples.

GOD MOCKS: A HISTORY OF RELIGIOUS SATIRE FROM THE HEBREW PROPHETS TO STEPHEN COLBERT
Terry Lindvall
New York, New York: NYU Press, 2015
384 pp., $35.00
(Kindle edition also available)

Lindvall opens with an Introduction that identifies religious satire as "moral outrage expressed in laughter." Taking his title from Psalm 2:4, "The one enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord derides them" (NAB), he reminds us that satire holds a mirror up to society. What's more, if we look with fond or biting humor on the community of faith, we have to account for ourselves, with all our faults and foibles, in the crew.

Chapters present well over 200 practitioners of religious satire, in a chronology that begins, as promised, with the Hebrew prophets and ends by invoking Monty Python, *The Onion*, and *The Colbert Report*. Early chapters recall the joy with which Christian martyrs faced death, including Saint Lawrence, burnt on a grill and now patron of butchers and chefs, and the burlesques on parade in the medieval Feast of Fools.

Galloping from Jerusalem and Rome to Canterbury, Utopia, and Lilliput, Lindvall packs his middle chapters with satirists familiar and unfamiliar. Rabelais and Marguerite of Navarre, one of very few female authors noted, rub elbows with the lesser-known pseudonymous Martin Marprelate ("bad prelate"). A chapter on Continental works of the modern age describes not just the parables of Søren Kierkegaard but also the Don Camillo stories, modeled after Camillo Valota, a priest who survived Dachau. Historic U.S. authors range from Ben Franklin and Mark Twain to H. L. Mencken, who took on the Bible Belt during the Scopes "Monkey Trial."

As a visual device, Lindvall draws what he calls the Quad of Satire, created from two intersecting axes, the horizontal stretching from ridicule to moral purpose and the vertical from rage to humor. The graph repeats in each chapter, with satirists' names on banners positioned according to Lindvall's assessment. Inserted also is a signature of 16 glossy pages with satiric visual images; and end materials include not just an index but 48 pages of notes and six

pages of bibliography.

If the Introduction observes that in the church "laughter resides in both the pulpit and the pews," the Conclusion warns that, despite its noble goal to "bring about positive change through humor and wit," satire can be misunderstood. Readers of Lindvall will certainly understand satire better, while homilists who borrow from his wealth of examples will prompt at least a few hearty laughs from the pews.

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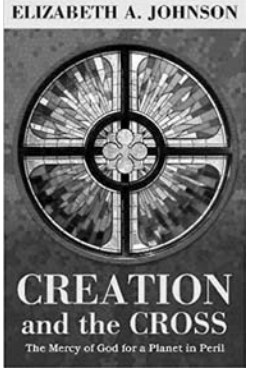

CREATION AND THE CROSS: THE MERCY OF GOD FOR A PLANET IN PERIL
Elizabeth A. Johnson
Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 2018
xvii and 238 pp., $28.00

Elizabeth Johnson, one of America's premier theologians, has written a provocative treatise on redemption. Although aimed at a popular audience, the work presents a comprehensive critical analysis of Anselm's satisfaction theory, and attempts to bring readers to a contemporary understanding of redemption as it applies to all created reality.

While the satisfaction theory served well enough in its time to make sense of the crucifixion, it failed in several ways to account for New Testament beliefs. For example, it sacralized violence and neglected the resurrection. These and other deficiencies motivate Johnson to look for a more adequate theory of redemption.

Eventually, Johnson settles on a theology of accompaniment to describe redemption as God's companionship with creatures everywhere on their journeys through creation. She offers a good analysis of how the Wisdom tradition lies behind the Johannine theology of the Word. She borrows Niels Gregersen's concept of "deep incarnation" to emphasize that, when the Word became flesh (Jn 1:14), it became not merely *human* flesh but it ". . . entered personally into the natural sphere of what is fragile, vulnerable, perishable . . ." (184).

Johnson's text seems ambiguous. At times, she says that God simply connects in a new way with all creation as "God lays hold of matter as a human being" (185). But then she claims, along with Gregersen,

that "God shares the life conditions of foxes and sparrows, grass and trees, soil and moisture," as if God were incarnationally present in them (185).

Johnson builds on the idea of the deep incarnation to develop the notions of the "deep cross" and "deep resurrection." These concepts enable her to claim that God is sympathetically present to the pain of every creature, and that every creature will eventually share the joy of the resurrection. This implies that "God-in-Christ is with all flesh that suffers and dies, not just human beings. . . . Christ is with every field mouse that is devoured by a hawk" (188).

It is unclear what these notions properly add to a traditional theology of grace. She writes that in virtue of the deep cross and resurrection, dying animals ". . . are not alone, but knowingly accompanied in their anguish and dying with a love that does not snap off just because they are in trouble" (189). What does it mean to say that prior to the deep incarnation and resurrection, field mice died alone but now they "knowingly" feel the companionship of the Lord?

Although Johnson cautions that "the transformation to come escapes our imagination" (192), her images often involve knotty problems that go unrecognized in the text. For example, she shows sympathy for the field mouse, but does not mention the hawk that needs to eat the mouse to sustain its life.

Nature itself seems cruciform to Johnson (188), yet she states several times that the cross is not necessary to salvation (27, 50, 108, etc.). While Johnson claims that God does not require the cross, perhaps the necessity of the crucifixion (see Mt 16:21) rests on the fact that Jesus must confront the principalities and powers that rely on death.

The author spends much time discussing the salvation of individuals, but much less on the cultures that produce those individuals. René Girard has shown the special significance of the cross for Jesus who needed to convert not only individuals, but also the principalities and powers behind those formative social structures. In my opinion, she treats the principalities and powers far too lightly and summarily. She refers to the havoc caused by the principalities and powers, but apart from their strategy of death (123). Death is a primary culprit in society (along with sin), making the resurrection particularly relevant as the "anti-death" answer of God.

Johnson presents an ecological ethics (193) that builds on humanity's mutual responsibility with the natural world (206). Drawing liberally from Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*, she insists that humanity ought to look to its kinship with natural creatures rather than to exercise domination (206). In keeping with her version of the deep incarnation, she asserts that the killing of every polar bear is a murder of God, and that the extinction of a species should be looked upon as a death in the family (211). Should people really mourn the extinction of the dinosaurs?

At various points in the text, Johnson will present a controverted position without alluding to the complexity of the issue. For example, when she rejects dualism (99), she fails to consider issues raised by theologians such as Joseph Ratzinger and Gerhard Lohfink who claim that the endurance of the soul beyond death is needed to preserve the identity of the individual in the resurrection. Their position finds support in Scripture. For example, Paul expressed his confidence that to die is to be with Christ (Phil 1:23). Luke used "Abraham's bosom" as an image of the afterlife where Lazarus now enjoys heavenly bliss and could warn others of the dangers of wealth (Lk 16:19-31).

For Johnson, humanity no longer occupies the top of the pyramid in creation. When it comes to how people should view animals, she prefers "kinship rather than domination" (206). The author looks for passionate commitments to the natural world "in tandem with all the earth's poor and marginalized people" (226). But what if environmental commitments would harm the poor?

Renewable energy costs consumers far more than fossil fuels. The director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center, Bjorn Lomborg, claims in an article in the *New York Times*, that without cheap electricity, the poor have little chance to better themselves ("The Poor Need Cheap Fossil Fuels," 12/3/2013). Johnson fails to recognize such predicaments. She asks us to "feel our way" (216) into the community of creation, but it is not clear how her theology can guide her readers to do so in a reliable way.

In my opinion, Johnson has taken her agenda a step too far, especially for a book aimed at a popular audience.

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This book is well researched with explanations from New Testament texts using clear, "on the ground" theological language. The author clarifies some previous biblical translations and uses 75 primary texts and biblical journals, along with a huge bibliography of other biblical scholars. He combines all of that to expand his title in explaining the use and misuse of money in the New Testament.

To make the explanations even more clear, Collins gives examples of some of the same customs and biblical teachings on wealth from Jewish, Greek, and Roman sources from the same period. Each chapter ends with an additional section, "So What?" where he describes actions, examples, and statistics in similar situations today. They include quotes from Pope Francis and articles in the news media. In one sense the text is an illustration of the same misuse of wealth and robbing from the poor throughout history.

From each of the gospels and letters, he notes what is common to them and what additions there are that make them different. He explains how money is used, positively and negatively: greed, wages, collections for the poor, taxes, *corban*, almsgiving, etc., and devotes the longest explanations to greed, a "staple of every list of Christian vices."

One of Collins' focuses is the parables, such as the payment to laborers, the rich man and Lazarus, and others. His treatment is very thorough, and I found many of his insights new and refreshing. The last section of the conclusion on "The Prosperity Gospel" is another example of Collins' thoroughness. It is short, blunt, and to the point.

The book is a very thorough treatment of wealth and its relationship to the poor. The "So What?" section at the end of each chapter brings the Scriptures to life in a very concrete way. This work would be excellent for a study group or an undergraduate course in social ethics.

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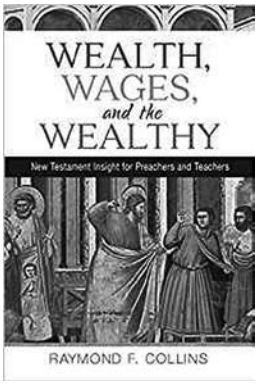

WEALTH, WAGES, AND THE WEALTHY: NEW TESTAMENT INSIGHT FOR PREACHERS AND TEACHERS
Raymond F. Collins
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EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

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Eucharist means "thanksgiving." Eucharist is a reminder that all I am, all I have — my faith, my family, my friends and parish community, my material possessions — comes from God and is his gift to me. Attending Mass as often as possible and spending time with our Lord in adoration allows me to give thanks and praise. He doesn't need anything from me; I am the one who needs him desperately.

Mass and the Eucharist is my lifeline. Daily life, joys, and challenges present me with choices. I don't always make the best choices; sometimes I lose my way. The Eucharist is the "bread crumb trail" that leads me back to Jesus to begin anew. Christ gives himself to me. It is humbling that he loves me and longs to be with me despite my sins and imperfections. The Holy Spirit lifts me up, Christ reconciles me, and God welcomes me back with arms full of love and mercy.

All of us know the importance of eating a balanced diet. For our bodies and minds to perform at their best, we need water, protein, fruits, vegetables, and the occasional sweet! The Eucharist is food for our spiritual journey. We become what we consume when we invite Jesus into our bodies and allow him to transform our hearts and minds. In this transformation, we become Christ for those we encounter, whether it's a smile, encouraging word, helping hand, or listening to someone who needs to talk.

Meeting Christ in the Blessed Sacrament during adoration is always calming. It is the calm in the eye of my stormy, chaotic, and blessedly stress-filled life. In the quiet, God's love envelops me, renews, refreshes, and meets me wherever I am at in my spiritual journey. I always feel better after spending time with our Lord.

My spiritual journey began to include regular adoration almost 20 years ago. Jesus was inviting me to spend regular time with him. How was I going to do that with four school-aged kids and being pregnant with my fifth? Once a week, a neighbor girl would watch the kids after school for an hour while I went to adoration. It wasn't always easy; sometimes one, two, or four of them accompanied me. And the Lord welcomed them as well! I have never regretted accepting Jesus' invitation. I grew to trust Jesus and came to understand that putting God at the center of my life and keeping him there, everything else would work out. It does not mean that life won't be challenging, but I am never alone.

I will close with a prayer I pray after receiving Jesus at Mass and in adoration. It fills me with hope. "Lord, take the best of me and change the rest of me." Amen.

"The Holy Eucharist
is the center
of all
catholic worship
its life,
its kingdom,
its heaven
– it's all –
Christ,
Emmanuel,
God with us,
among us, and for us."
Saint Peter Julian Eymard