

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 125 Number 2



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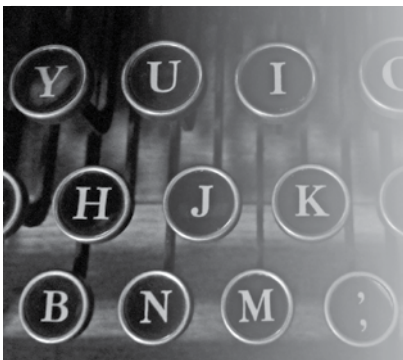
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FROM THE EDITOR

A few months ago, I officiated at the funeral of a woman who died one day before the twenty-fifth anniversary of her husband's death. His was a rapid descent into complete dependence due to ALS, "Lou Gehrig's Disease"; hers was a slow death, the result of age and infirmity. As her children and I sat down to prepare the Funeral Mass and other rites for their loving mother, we were all keenly aware of having done the same thing a quarter-century earlier for their dad. At one point, one of the daughter's acknowledged this and said simply, "It feels like we're closing the circle."

I have thought a lot about the meaning of the phrase "closing the circle." One etymologist defines it in this way: "... drawing a circle, and the last bit of that, when you connect to the beginning, is 'closing the circle.'"

It occurred to me that the Lent-Easter cycle, which starts in a few days and continues through the second Sunday of June, Pentecost, is God's way of "closing the circle."

The story of salvation begins "in the beginning." The Book of Genesis tells us of the fall of the first human partners through pride and disobedience. This sin — the origin of every selfish act and desire — fractured the original innocence and harmony of Eden and set humanity on a downward spiral toward eternal death and damnation.

Only Love — pure, limitless, unconditional — could rescue our fallen world. This is the ineffable mystery of God's definitive response to sin and evil that we remember and celebrate liturgically in the days of the Sacred Triduum. And it is this love that leads us to the waters of rebirth, sanctification, and enlightenment during the Paschal Vigil on Holy Saturday night.

Since I first heard the Easter Exsultet as a minor seminarian many decades ago, the words of the Church's hymn of rejoicing have

touched my soul and resonated in my heart.

"This is the night,
when Christ broke the prison-bars of death
and rose victorious from the underworld.

"Our birth would have been no gain
had we not been redeemed!

"O wonder of your humble care for us!
O love, O charity beyond all telling,
to ransom a slave you gave away your Son!
O truly necessary sin of Adam,
destroyed completely by the death of Christ!
O happy fault
that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!

"O truly blessed night,
worthy alone to know the time and hour
when Christ rose from the underworld!"

Lent and Easter Time "close the circle" of God's redemptive plan. "Our birth would have been no gain had we not been redeemed!" To be so loved by God in Jesus Christ creates in my heart and, in the heart of every believer, the desire to live a new life worthy of the gift and the Giver. We arrive back at the "beginning," but now as redeemed and grace-filled children of God!

In This Issue

I believe you will find this issue of *Emmanuel* filled with rich, diverse fare . . . as well it should for two months that include the end of winter Ordinary Time, the great penitential season of Lent, the Sacred Triduum, and the beginning of Easter Time.

I would especially like to call your attention to an article written by Peter J. Riga, whose work appeared in this journal two or three times a year. He died suddenly in March 2018.

Weekly, an envelope or two would arrive from Peter, often addressed only to "Emmanuel Editor, Op-Ed." He wrote on a wide range of topics: politics, society, morality, church discipline, theology, and spirituality. How fitting that one of his last pieces sent should be entitled "Can We Offer Our Sufferings?" May he now offer his praise in God's presence!



Anthony Schueller, SSS
Editor



EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

The Role of the Laity in the Catholic Church: Reflections on the Experience of the Church in Chile

by Robert S. Pelton, CSC

The Second Vatican Council has a special significance in Latin America. The experience of that local church has much to say to the wider Church about renewal in its life and mission.

Father Robert S. Pelton, a retired professor at the University of Notre Dame, 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 from 1985-2017, and in 1987 inaugurated the annual Archbishop Romero Conferences there.

Medellín (1968): The First Council of the Church of Jerusalem for the Latin American Church

THE SECOND CELAM CONFERENCE AT MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA, IN 1968 WAS its first official gathering since the conclusion of the Vatican Council in 1965. Medellín was perceived as somewhat sensational since it brought the ancient Church into the modern world. It was to achieve this through its emphasis on the call to peace and the social dimension of justice. Because of the limited time since the council, the preparation was not as thorough as that of later CELAM meetings.

The methodology of Medellín was to have a prepared text which was amended and changed in discussion sessions. This led to 16 conclusions, which included human promotion, evangelization, and the promotion of small communities. Medellín was seen as “pentecostal” in a certain sense in the call to lay Christians to enter into an increasingly secular society. As was the case with the Second Vatican Council, modern methods of communication were yet to be really developed at international meetings. However, a modern Pentecost had begun. It was Marcos Gregorio McGrath, the bishop of Santiago de Veraguas and second vice president of CELAM, who gave the keynote address, “The Signs of the Times.” In it he dealt with the rapidity of change, increasing secularism, and economic globalization. His primary source for this address was Marie-Dominique Chenu, OP.

Bishop McGrath had spent an earlier year, right after ordination in 1949, in Paris. There he became acquainted with the newer ecclesial

elements — biblical, liturgical, and patristic — and also the need to study more carefully the historical roots of these contributions.

Puebla (1979): A Modest Step Forward

The meeting of the Latin American bishops in Puebla, Mexico (January 27-February 12, 1979) was the third such continental meeting. The first took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1955, and this resulted in the formation of the Episcopal Conference of Latin America (CELAM). The second, Medellín, Columbia, in 1968, was the response of the Latin American bishops to the directives of the Second Vatican Council. Finally, the meeting in Puebla was an effort to reflect on the lived experience during the years after Medellín, during which time the “grassroots” groups of Christians increased dramatically. Puebla also provided an opportunity for Mexican Catholics to manifest their sustained loyalty to the Church during many years.

The theme, “Evangelization Today and Tomorrow in Latin America,” had its origin in the Second Vatican Council, particularly in the documents on the Church (*Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes*) and on missions (*Ad Gentes*). In the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome, the theme was also “evangelization” and in 1975 Pope Paul VI synthesized this and added his own insights in *Evangelii Nuntiandi*. In this document the Holy Father stressed that evangelization includes not only a personal response to the grace of the Lord, but it also implies a deepening awareness of the need for social changes.

As Puebla opened, the bishop participants could be roughly categorized into three groups: 1. those who had “interiorized” the Medellín agreements; 2. those who were distrustful of Medellín; and 3. those “in between” the two preceding positions, i.e., those who subscribed in theory to some aspects of the Medellín documents but at the same time were uncomfortable with other parts.

Basically, the presence of the Holy Father in Puebla was positive and pastoral. It was not always easy to read his influence at a particular moment. Often it was necessary to reflect on his gestures and observations in the context of his own background, the beautiful bond which he developed with the Mexican people, and the subtle, varying influences in the background of Latin America and the conference itself. From the beginning of his visit to Mexico, John Paul showed a great pastoral sense which became sharpened and sensitized even further during his days there.



Doctrinally, from the beginning of his stay, and particularly in his opening homily at the Basilica of Guadalupe, he made it clear that Medellín was to be the “take-off point” for Puebla and that the years of experience since Medellín needed to be reflected on and respected. His theological observations tended to relate directly in varying degrees to the lived reality of Latin America; his observations about social issues struck right to the heart of the challenges of that continent.

Especially in the third part of his presentation at Puebla are to be found the elements of theological concern of the Holy Father. For one thing, he feared a division between the institutional Church and the popular church. The Puebla document clearly unifies these. In pastoral practice there does not seem to be a problem when official Church leadership has reached out to the “grassroots” in order to give them support and direction.

The pope was also concerned lest there be a “parallel magisterium” in the Latin continent in place of the one teaching authority of the Church for doctrinal matters. Again, Puebla unifies this question of doctrinal teaching authority. One wonders here what might have been the basis for concern. Might it have been that the Confederation of Latin American Religious (CLAR), with its own theological resource persons, saw it necessary to discern the pastoral and particular role of religious in that continent?

John Paul II advised against certain “re-readings” of Scripture which could lead to a denial of, or at least being silent about, Christ’s divinity, due, partially at least, to too great an emphasis upon his humanity. In the deliberations at Puebla, and in the document itself, this concern is respected. At the same time, the Latin Christologists Jon Sobrino and Leonardo Boff continued to stress the “incarnational” and suffering aspect of Christ in the pastoral reality of the continent, while keeping in mind what John Paul had said.

It was in the area of “liberation theology” that John Paul made a strong doctrinal contribution. Drawing heavily upon *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, he insisted that liberation theology be strongly rooted in the Scriptures and that it include all the elements of the human person. In this context the economic aspect, while important, is seen as one element among others. The liberation theologians themselves subscribed to these views and were aware that this young, important discipline had other

areas for review and development, e.g., “the spirituality of liberation.” Contrary to some published reports, the pope did not condemn liberation theology. He, in fact, contributed needed observations for its strengthening. An expression of liberation in practice consists in the lived experience of the basic ecclesial communities (CEBS). Because of the importance of these, we shall return to them in a moment.

The social influence of John Paul in Mexico was most challenging. In a number of places in Mexico, beginning with his talk in Oaxaca to the natives, he indicated his solidarity with them, acknowledging that they were sometimes exploited and that they had a right to effective help. He referred to the *obreros* (workers) at Guadalajara as his “companions” and encouraged them in the defense of their own rights. At Monterrey he did the same, and in a particular way, emphasized the importance of the correct treatment of Mexican immigrants to the United States. These social addresses call for a careful reading and also application to other parts of the world. They show the strength and experience of the pope himself, and they reflect his theological sensitivity to social issues.

The late Archbishop Marcos McGrath identified three challenges for the Church today: the rapidity of change, increasing secularism, and economic globalization. Institutional violence is a fourth.

Earlier in this article, reference was made to the varying mentalities of the bishop participants at Puebla. Pope John Paul issued a call for unity among them, keeping in mind that the teachings of Medellín were to be considered as given. Before Puebla, tensions existed concerning liberation theology, the understanding of the role of the small Christian communities, and even the degree to which CELAM itself should have a type of teaching authority over other Church organizations in Latin America. The then-secretary general of CELAM and its new president, Bishop Lopez Trujillo, favored a stronger central voice. This question would be a cause for tension for some in the years ahead.

Medellín had called for the establishment of small Christian communities to strengthen the pastoral efforts of the churches of Latin America.¹ There has been a phenomenal increase in the number of these groups, and they express an ever-greater desire to be a dynamic part of a consultative process in pastoral planning. In



the years between Medellin and Puebla, CEBs sometimes faltered due to the lack of clear Church support or because they were used for overtly political purposes. Puebla stood strongly behind the CEBs, encouraged their even closer union with the Church, and asked that pastoral leaders take them more seriously.

These small communities have led to a strengthening and diversity of ministries, and surely are the greatest contribution of Puebla to the universal Church. As they grow, we will experience a double strengthening in ministry: that of the priesthood or ministry of all people and that of the ordained priesthood itself.

How might one assess the near future of the Latin American Church in terms of the Puebla experience? CELAM is seen as a service organization to the national episcopal conferences. The manner in which this service is carried out can change tensions into opportunities for growth. The Puebla document is one with which pastoral leaders can live and grow. In a separate statement of the bishops, entitled "A Message to the People of Latin America," Puebla's strengths are summarized: it assures the principles of Medellin; it manifests a "preferential option for the poor"; it challenges the leaders of Latin America to build a new society; and, finally, it calls upon *all* people to collaborate seriously in facing the monumental tasks facing Latin America.

Puebla may be seen as a step forward, with, however, the inherent tensions and contradictions which any growth entails. The Latin American Church was coming to life!

Santo Domingo (1992): A Controversial Meeting

In preparing for the Santo Domingo Conference, three participants decided to work together: Father Alfred Hennelly, SJ, of Fordham University, the editor of the conference proceedings; Father Edward Cleary, OP, the keynote presenter at the conference; and myself, an accredited journalist from the University of Notre Dame.

Some of the delegates, especially from the Roman Curia, strongly supported methodological changes. In particular, these critics were against employing the See-Judge-Act method employed at the earlier CELAM meetings. Apparently directly from Rome, the arch-conservative Cardinal Jorge Medina became co-secretary. The already-prepared consultative document was rejected by the cardinal. When

Hennelly shared his "Report from the Conference," we agreed that it was an accurate appraisal of the experience.

The Synod of America (1997)

As the experience of the Santo Domingo CELAM meeting indicated a malfunctioning of that gathering, the pope and a number of his advisors felt that the solution to the many problems could be achieved through a Synod of America. This would include bishops from all of the Americas, and it would be held in Rome. Even Archbishop Luciano Mendez of Brazil stated that it might develop into a Magna Carta for the Church of the Americas. Archbishop Mendez, together with Bishop McGrath, influenced quite strongly the progressive efforts of the CELAM conferences of Medellín and Puebla. However, as the synod was beginning, McGrath's health and energy were weakening.

The experience of small ecclesial communities is a gift of Latin America to the universal Church.

There were learning experiences in Rome which could influence a clarification of the mission of the Church in the Americas. My own synodal experience was as a registered journalist. I also resided at and shared regularly with a small Christian community from the United States. The synod contact who proved to be of the greatest assistance was Archbishop Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga of Honduras. He was later to become a member of the team of cardinals who advise Pope Francis.

The theme of the synod, "The Encounter with the Living Jesus Christ: The Way to Conversion, Communion, and Solidarity," led to the development of a working paper for the synod.

The synodal participants had returned to a consultative process. This was a positive move. From this were developed the three special themes of the synod: economic justice, solidarity, and evangelization. This would imply new evangelization, better collaboration, and economic justice.

Economic Justice. Was there to be a continuing preferential option for the poor? What was to be done with the increasing challenge of



economic liberalization? What is the role of the social teaching of the Church in the light of these issues? What is the challenge of internal corruption in the governments of the Americas?

Solidarity. This was key, especially in the growing acceptance of lay ministry, and in the form of the emerging small church communities. There was also a growing awareness of indigenous rights. This respect for the appropriate role of the indigenous continues in Church practice. However, much remains to be done.

Evangelization. Following from the theology of Vatican II, the Latin American pastoral meetings up to this time worked hard to discover new manners of evangelization. One of these was through an increased ecumenism. This was, and continues to be, a challenge in the mission of the Church.

Aparecida (2007): The Second Council of Jerusalem for the Latin American Church

As the health of Pope John II became quite fragile, it was decided that the next CELAM meeting should be in Latin America. Finally, Aparecida, Brazil, was chosen.² This was a blessed choice. For the pastoral ministers who had been deeply moved by the Medellín and Puebla Conferences, the possibility of this spirit being renewed was good news. Cardinal Rodriguez Maradiaga of Honduras was a very positive enabler of this restoration.

I quote here from the opening observations of my book, *Aparecida: Quo Vadis?*:

Having participated in the Second Vatican Council and in all the CELAM meetings since Vatican II as an accredited journalist, I was delighted to be selected as an observer at CELAM V, the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean, held in Aparecida, Brazil, during 13-31 of May 2007.³

“Significantly, the bishops re-adopted the inductive See-Judge-Act method of discernment that proved so fruitful at Medellín and Puebla, whereas the 1992 Santo Domingo Conference employed a deductive and more theoretical methodology. CELAM V unequivocally endorsed and expanded three key concepts of the Latin American Catholic

Church: the preferential option for the poor, ecclesial base communities (CEBs), and opposition to structural sin within the modern context of globalization. It did so in an enlightened and collegial manner that may diminish the controversy that has sometimes arisen from popular misunderstanding of these principles.

“Small ecclesial communities received an endorsement that underscored an inclusiveness that always existed in reality but was not universally perceived in terms of their relationship with the institutional Church. The ‘preferential option for the poor’ was expanded at Aparecida to become the ‘preferential and evangelizing option for the poor,’ making it clearer that the option is not solely a matter of socio-economics.

“In a concrete demonstration of the necessity and potential of that preferential and evangelizing option for the poor, the bishops issued a statement to the leaders of the G-8 nations, calling for the elimination of extreme poverty from all the world’s nations before 2015, making that goal ‘one of the most urgent tasks of our time’ and one that is ‘inseparably linked with world peace and security.’ The bishops also criticized ‘environmental aggression’ against the Amazon rainforest, warning that Amazonia — which replenishes much of the world’s atmospheric oxygen supply, contains twenty percent of the world’s fresh, unfrozen water, and nourishes thirty-four percent of the world’s forests — will cease to exist within thirty years if present patterns of corporate, profit-driven destruction continue.

It is time to discern carefully the role of the laity in the Church in accord with the theology of the laity as presented by Vatican II.

“Many bishops displayed acute concern about the challenges posed by globalization, rapid urbanization, the changing roles of family and youth, and the demand for real dialogue with the indigenous and African-American communities — despite the lack of concrete action in these areas. They also recognized the need for greater decision-making roles for women in the Church and for greater clarity on the roles of the ministry and the laity.

“That the bishops are now focusing more attention on these issues than at any other time suggests their deepening understanding of the full scope of Medellín and Puebla and their growing adaptation



of the mandate of promoting social justice to address the demands of present realities. Optimism about the full realization of Vatican II was strong in the 1970s, but it gradually receded throughout much of Latin America as Pope John Paul II's episcopal appointments so rarely challenged the status quo maintained by the national security states of that era.

All of these efforts were influenced by "The Signs of the Times" presentation by Bishop Marcos McGrath at Medellín. The rapidity of these changes, including secularism and economic changes, were rushing forward. In order to better understand the changes, it is important to not only be conscious of the rapidity of change but also to recall the past conciliar objectives of CELAM. With this in mind, it is helpful to look at the three recommendations of CELAM V and their fulfillment today. The following are taken from *Aparecida: Quo Vadis?*:

"There is a call to discern the signs of the times in the Aparecida document; there is a reaffirmation of the preferential option for the poor, and a commitment to social justice; an inductive methodology should be used in achieving these objectives, unlike Chile today where the option for the poor is acknowledged more in theory than in practice."

Ecclesial Base Communities⁴

At the time of Aparecida, these communities were still alive, but in Chile today they have lost leadership. In its earlier history, during the final years of Vatican II and the years of the Pinochet regime (1971-1990), the Chilean Church leadership showed strong pastoral leadership that gained the respect of key Catholic leaders. During the last session of Vatican II, working with Cardinal Suenens, I became aware of the close working relationships between the ecclesial leaders of the Southern Cone of Latin America and the ecclesial leaders of Northern Europe: France with Congar, Belgium with Suenens, the German Rahner, and others. These experts met so regularly that some lightly referred to "the council of Louvain."

I first went to Chile in 1964. In 1965, I was invited by Cardinal Suenens to work in an advisory capacity. In March 1966, I was named by Cardinal Silva as Episcopal Vicar for Religious Institutes of the Archdiocese of Santiago, Chile. The appointment lasted until 1972, when I was called back to the United States. This was a golden moment of the Chilean

Church. It was an honor and a privilege to be part of that historical period.

The Future of the Chilean Church: A Roadmap for the Future

The Fifth General Conference of Aparecida had proved to be successful, and it has shown that the institutional Church is able to execute at the regional level while remaining in a constructive relationship with Rome. However, is this in fact what happened in Chile as the country moved into the post-dictatorship era?

We saw in Chile that the chief resistance to General Pinochet came from the pastoral leadership of the Catholic Church. In the midst of great suffering, the Church paid a steep cost in lives, and it gained real transparency and acceptance. This was the Church of Cardinal Raul Silva, Monsignors Manuel Larrain and Enrique Alvear. It was a Church whose pastoral leaders had dialogued regularly with intellectual leaders of Northern Europe before, during, and after the Second Vatican Council. These leaders included notable names such as Yves Congar, OP, Karl Rahner, SJ, and Cardinal Leo Suenens.

However, as the Chileans moved ahead, something threatening was taking place: Chileans were starting to lose their spiritual fire. Why might this be taking place? Had they become exhausted after their courageous resistance to the dictatorship? Had the quality and style of the Church leadership changed since Aparecida? What was the role of the laity in light of the council? As I said at the end of *Aparecida*: Where are you going?

Also, what had happened to the solid professional work of COPACHI that was later to publish the Ford study from the University of Notre Dame, a human rights study that had great influence throughout the world, especially in South Africa and Guatemala?

The Congar Factor

Earlier, we referred to the influence of the theology of Yves Congar in an increasing understanding of the role of the laity in the initial development of Catholic Action. Was there evidence that this actually took place in the case of Chile, Guatemala, and other Latin American countries?



Following Aparecida, there were other challenges to be met. This was true not only for Chile but also for other post-Vatican II churches in Latin America. We should return to CELAM II, the dynamic Conference at Medellín. At that time Bishop Marcos McGrath, in the opening keynote address, had predicted the “signs of the times”: 1. the rapidity of change that was to take place in the Church of Latin America; 2. the marked increase of secularism in the Latin American Church, and 3. the economic globalism that would likely take place.

There is also the important Medellín contribution of the challenge of “institutionalized violence.” This is a step beyond personal violence that can include business concerns, political parties, and even religious groups. Another possible way of expressing this could be the difference between personal and social sin. Institutions can sin socially.

Now let us return to the January 2018 “roadmap,” which includes the challenging visit of Pope Francis to Chile. The international press was quite aware of the scandal awaiting the visit of Pope Francis. It had to do with the questionable procedure of naming a local ordinary in southern Chile. In his news release of February 26, 2018, Robert Mickens, a Vatican journalist, states that the decision to appoint Juan Barros Madrid as the bishop of Osorno has been strongly criticized by many. The critics especially believe that the voices of the laity were not heard. Cardinal Sean O’Malley stated publicly that there was a lack of due process in this case. In June 2018, Pope Francis accepted the resignation of Bishop Barros.

The “protectors of the institution,” including the current and prior cardinals of Santiago, are losing influence. In view of this, what seems to be an appropriate agenda for the Catholic Church of Chile and CELAM? This will extend even to the Catholic Church itself. It implies an ongoing process. Clearly, it is time also to discern more carefully the role of the laity in the Church in accord with the theology of the laity as presented by Vatican II; discern why the role of small Christian communities has radically diminished in the Chilean Church in contrast with the other Catholic Churches of Latin America; pray and reflect to determine reasons for the breach between the rich community development and its present emphasis on individual material success.

In light of everything discussed here, two more questions need to be considered in this article: 1. *Aparecida: Quo Vadis?* How should

its recommendations be applied now? Is this the time to support the clear proposal of the Italian historian Silvia Scatena that CELAM could be the “lesson” of a regional experience in searching for forms and styles of effective collegiality? This might be an invitation to Latin American pastoral leaders to welcome those who have other tools to search for forms of effective collegiality in the prospect of building a communion of regional churches.⁵



Notes

¹ In the 1974 Roman Synod, the then-president of CELAM, Cardinal Pironio, characterized “basic ecclesial communities or groups” as the “primary cells of the entire ecclesial edifice, centers of evangelization, and the most important factor of human development.” *Pro Mundi Vita*, Bulletin from Rome, 62.

² For more information on CELAM V at Aparecida, see CELAM 2008 and Aparecida 2007.

³ Robert S. Pelton, *Aparecida: Quo Vadis?* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2008).

⁴ José Marins, *Base Communities, A Return to Inductive Methodology*.

⁵ Scatena, 2017, 266-288.

In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

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 F, G, H, and I are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during March and April.



EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

The Words of Everlasting Life

by John Zupez, SJ

The word of God is eternal, but it is also directed to men and women of faith in every age and circumstance. What is God saying to us and to the Church today?

Father John Zupez, SJ, has authored more than 50 journal articles and 400 Wikipedia articles. He has taught in major seminaries, served as a pastor, and at 82 is involved in parish work and prison ministry.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IN YOUR PARISH IF THE PRIEST DID NOT SHOW UP ON A Sunday morning, but he had invited the poor, the hungry, the homeless, and the shoddily clothed, and the church was packed with them. Would anyone get the idea to step forward and invite each family to take some of these people home with them, just for Sunday morning, and tend to their needs?

This may not ever happen, but it makes a good modern parable to reflect upon. It might bring to mind Jesus' saying, echoing the prophet Amos in the Hebrew Scriptures, that God desires mercy as our sacrifice.

One crucial learning from this parable is that we are not here on earth very long, and if we truly believe what Jesus taught, then we should make each day count, for our eternity depends upon it. We will be rewarded to the degree that we treated the poor, the hungry, the naked, and the stranger in the same way that we would treat Christ. This is all we know about the last judgment, and it's in Chapter 25 of Matthew's gospel.

Discerning the Time

The Catholic Church is at a critical juncture today. We may attribute this to the leadership. Some may say that the answer is to retreat into our communities and decry the lack of faith around us, "out there." But how about the faith *in* us? Can Jesus be very pleased with the ordinary run of Christians? Or does he feel like throwing up his hands and starting over again with truly committed followers?

Is it like in John, Chapter 6 where Jesus told a parable about how close he wanted everyone to be to him, to be assimilated into him that they might have life in them? Most of those listening to him that day turned away and went back to the lives they led before meeting him. When he asked the Twelve if they, too, would leave him, they answered, "To whom shall we go, Lord. You have the words of everlasting life."

In today's Church, each of us must ask which church we can truly believe in. Which does Christ want? The bishops of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) called for the renewal of the Church by returning to Scripture, going beyond our philosophy — even scholastic philosophy and its formulations — and examining our roots, where it all started.

Anyone with a knowledge of church history understands that the Church's teachings need reflection and critical updating to address the real situation in each age. Is it true of some of our treasured beliefs and practices that "the letter kills, but the spirit gives life"? Is this what Pope Francis is pointing to in examining the God of Jesus Christ, for whom mercy and love for all is the one unchanging norm?

Decision Time for Each of Us

For our own eternal good we must pray, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Yes, we are busy people; yes, we have enough to do; yes, we have problems at home. However, if someone close to us suffers a tragedy, we are able to clear the deck and devote all of our time and energy to helping.

We are not here on earth very long. If we believe what Jesus taught, then we should make each day count, for our eternity depends upon it.

But do we also hear Jesus' saying in Luke 6:32-36 about not loving only those who love us? Do we reach out to those who are not naturally close to us, but who are tragedies of our dechristianized society? Do we truly "hear the cries of the poor" or do we just rhapsodize about doing it?


Would we have a problem getting the young to join us in the church if our way of speaking and acting outside of church really distinguished us from most of our neighbors who have no faith? In our participation at Mass, do we gather close around the table of the Lord and boldly



share our faith in song, to make our Eucharistic celebration an effective means of transforming us into dedicated Christians, bent on presenting the face of Christ to the world?

We may look out on the world today and see only the dark side. But Jesus poured out the promised gift of the Spirit in our hearts, and that Spirit shows us where there is hope for the future. The Holy Spirit is leading all peoples to see each other as brothers and sisters, as beloved children of one God, who is love.

In these days of instantaneous communication, we are becoming increasingly aware of our disconnectedness from one another at a very basic level. Amid the messiness, God must see globalization as a step forward. What is our response? Will we be a part of the great divine project to bring all peoples together in Christ? Or will today's Christians fail the test and leave it to the people of another age to see the way forward?

Our God is a patient God. It may take a thousand years, but as Christians we must acknowledge the direction in which the Spirit of Christ is leading us, toward greater concern for all peoples. Will we follow or will we dig in where we are, and become a part of the problem? 



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Henri Nouwen on the Eucharist

by Deniis J. Billy, CSsR

Henri Nouwen was an influential spiritual author. His writings touched on a wide range of issues and were flavored by his own struggles and experiences. The Eucharist was one of the mainstays of his spiritual journey.

HENRI J. M. NOUWEN (1932-1996), A DUTCH PRIEST, PSYCHOLOGIST, PASTORAL theologian, and spiritual writer, was one of the most widely read Catholic authors of his day. The oldest of four children, he did his priestly training at the major seminary in Rijsenburg, was ordained a priest for the Archdiocese of Utrecht in 1957, and studied clinical psychology at the Catholic University at the University of Nijmegen from 1957-1964.

The author of some 39 books and numerous academic and popular articles, he taught at the University of Notre Dame, the Catholic Theological University of Utrecht, Yale Divinity School, and Harvard Divinity School. He also had extended stays at Saint John's University (Minnesota), the Pontifical North American College (Rome), the Trappist Monastery of the Genesee (New York), theological centers in Bolivia and Peru, and the L'Arche Community in France. In 1986, he joined the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Richmond Hill, Ontario, and remained associated with it the rest of his life. His teaching on the Eucharist reflects his deep concern for the healing of the physical, psychological, spiritual, and social wounds of God's people.¹

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Nouwen's Spiritual Outlook

Throughout his life Nouwen was interested in drawing connections between the Christian faith and daily life. He was not afraid to write about his personal struggles with loneliness, his need for intimacy, his sexual identity, and his own struggle with depression. These deeply personal issues struck a chord in his readers and attracted followers



from many religious traditions, both within the Catholic Church and outside of it.

Nouwen's willingness to share such private concerns gave a ring of authenticity to his writings that lent credence to the saying, "The most personal is the most universal." His need to connect with others carried over to his literary works. Because of this, he was able to touch his readers' hearts and convey to them a sense that they were his fellow companions on life's journey. His choice of the personal diary as a way of conveying his insights into the spiritual life made him, in many respects, an "open book" that others could read and find traces of their own stories and personal struggles.

In one of his early works, *The Wounded Healer*,² Nouwen presents a theme reflected throughout his writings: "In our woundedness, we can become a source of life for others." This sentiment reflects the words of the apostle Paul:

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you. (2 Cor 4:7-12)³

His spiritual outlook was thoroughly Christ-centered. Like Paul, he looked to the sufferings of Christ to find meaning in his own daily struggles and he found healing in the wounds of the risen Lord. If Jesus was the Wounded Healer par excellence, then Nouwen saw himself as one of Jesus' weak, vulnerable disciples who ministered to others from his own woundedness and, in doing so, became for them a source of life and hope.

Nouwen's relationship to Jesus was central to his life and carried over to his relationships with others, which at times became strained and the cause of much pain. Through Jesus he saw the need to forgive those who had hurt him and from whom he had become estranged. In his book *The Return of the Prodigal Son*,⁴ he interpreted Rembrandt's

painting of the famous parable in Luke 15:11-32 to bring home to his readers that we are all beloved by God and that, if we receive the Father's forgiveness, we must also be willing to extend it to others.

Doing so was no easy feat, but he maintained that all things were possible with Jesus' help. In his mind, we are all returning prodigals in need of the Father's unconditional love and mercy. Jesus, the Wounded Healer, heals our wounds and enables us to be a healing balm for others. He invites us to share in the drama of his redemptive suffering and be nourished by the sacramental fellowship of his body and blood.

Nouwen and the Eucharist

The Eucharist was central to Nouwen's faith, priesthood, and ministry. He saw it as a way of reaching out to people and inviting them to share in the fellowship of Jesus. Ever since he was a child, he had a profound sense of Jesus' presence in the sacramental mystery of breaking the bread and passing the cup. For him, the Eucharist was an action of Christ given to his followers not only as a way of remembering him, but also as a way of having his living presence ripple through the corridors of time and space. He once wrote: "The Eucharist is the most ordinary and the most divine gesture imaginable. That is the truth of Jesus. So human, yet so divine; so familiar, yet so mysterious; close, yet so revealing!"⁵

For him, the simple Eucharistic ritual revealed the mysterious nature of God's love for humanity: "It is the story of God who wants to come close to us, so close that we can see him with our own eyes, touch him with our own hands; so close that there is nothing between us and him, nothing that separates, nothing that divides, nothing that creates distance."⁶ The Eucharist, in his mind, was an unconditional action of hospitality that forged unity among those participating despite their differing beliefs and practices. It was the sacrament of table fellowship that celebrated life and bridged the gap separating those who gathered for it. In this sense, it was for him a sacrament of unity.

As a Catholic, Nouwen believed in Jesus' real presence in the consecrated bread and wine. He wanted that presence to be a unifying and transforming force in the daily lives of those he served. For this reason, he sometimes departed from normal Catholic sacramental practice by inviting everyone present to partake of the sacrament,



regardless of their religious tradition or denominational background.⁷ This stemmed from his firm belief that Jesus entered our world to bring people together and to heal their wounds. The Eucharist, in his mind, brought Jesus, the Wounded Healer, into our midst and allowed him to touch us and make us whole. To put it simply: Jesus ate with sinners and tax collectors during his earthly life; he continues to do so today in his post-resurrection existence through the Eucharist.

Moreover, Nouwen believed that Jesus' presence in the Eucharist had a unifying and transforming effect not only on humanity, but on the whole of creation. The transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ was but the first sign of the world's divinizing *theosis*. The Eucharist, for him, was the sacrament of the new creation.

Nouwen's spiritual outlook was thoroughly Christ-centered. The Eucharist is an experience of healing and transformation in the power of Jesus, the Wounded Healer and the risen Lord.

This sacrament came not without great cost. Nouwen was very much aware that the Eucharist was the sacrament of the suffering Christ and that it was instituted on the night before his horrific death. He understood that the transformation of humanity and, indeed, of the whole world came at a great price and that Jesus' suffering and death on the cross was the means chosen by God to achieve it. The Eucharist was a time for us to unite our sufferings with those of Christ.

Nouwen understood that celebrating the Eucharist required a willingness to drink of the cup from which Jesus drank. In this respect, the Eucharist was, at one and the same time, a cup of sorrow, a cup of joy, and a cup of blessing.⁸ It was a celebration of life and death, a gesture that put us in touch with matters of ultimate concern and helped us to understand them. He knew that life was defined, at least in part, by the reality of death, and vice versa. To celebrate the Eucharist, therefore, was to celebrate life and death by looking beyond them and drinking in the joys and heartaches of the present moment. The sacrament was a way of finding the eternal in the present moment. It gave flavor to life and enabled us to savor its subtle tastes.

Some Further Insights

While this brief description of Nouwen's approach to the Eucharist does not exhaust his views on the sacrament, it does give us a sense of his general concerns and helps us to understand his use of it in ministry. The following remarks expand on this description with the hope of providing deeper insights into the place of the Eucharist in his life and thought.

1. To begin with, it is important to point out that Nouwen's understanding of the Eucharist evolved over time and reflected the times and circumstances in which he lived. Raised in a devout Catholic family in the 1930s and 1940s, he entered the seminary at an early age and was shaped by the theology and spirituality of the pre-Vatican II Church. His view toward the Eucharist changed with the teachings of the council, which sought to make the liturgy more accessible by introducing the vernacular, having the priest face the congregation, and including more lay involvement. These changes in practice brought on a period of experimentation in the liturgy that Nouwen was familiar with as a young priest and participated in throughout his priestly ministry.

2. The fact of his being a professor in ecumenical and interreligious environments such as the divinity schools at Harvard and Yale likely contributed to his going beyond normal Catholic practice to a wider interpretation of Eucharistic participation. We can also imagine that his visit to South America, his stay with the Trappists at Genesee, his life at the L'Arche Daybreak community (to mention but a few of the many places he visited) also contributed to his approach to the sacrament. Nouwen was a widely-traveled teacher and lecturer. He incorporated these experiences into his growing understanding of Jesus and the Christ event. These gave him a deep appreciation of our common humanity and the way the Eucharist could help us celebrate it.

3. Nouwen's training as a clinical psychologist also impacted his approach to the Eucharist. Aware of the frailty and poverty of the human condition, he was more concerned with the direct impact the Eucharist had on people's lives than with the fine points of theology. He used psychology as a tool in pastoral theology and saw the Eucharist as a way of bringing Jesus into people's lives and relationships in a very real, palpable way. That is not to say that he was not concerned



with sound theology, but only that his priorities regarding the Eucharist were more focused on the bonds of fellowship it created and the healing it mediated in the midst of our wounds and common brokenness.

4. The Eucharist, for Nouwen, also had important anthropological implications, not the least of which was a deeper understanding of our bodies as an integral dimension of our human makeup. His own words speak for themselves: "The greatest mystery of the Christian faith is that God came to us in a body, suffered with us in a body, rose in the body, and gave us his body as food. No religion takes the body as seriously as the Christian religion. The body is not seen as the enemy or as a prison of the Spirit but celebrated as the Spirit's temple. Through Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection, the human body has become part of the life of God. By eating the body of Christ, our own fragile bodies are becoming intimately connected with the risen Christ and thus prepared to be lifted up with him into the divine life."⁹

The Eucharist is an act of unconditional love on Christ's part. Nouwen wrote: "The Eucharist is the most ordinary and the most divine gesture imaginable."

5. Nouwen's approach to the Eucharist was thoroughly Christocentric. For him, the sacramental Christ was continuous with the Jesus who walked this earth, was crucified, and conquered death. For him, the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith were one and the same person. The Eucharist, in other words, made the risen Lord palpably present in our lives: "It is the presence of Jesus coming among us, real and concrete that gives us hope. It is eating and drinking here that creates the desire for the heavenly banquet; it is finding a home now that makes us long for the Father's house with its many dwelling places."¹⁰ The Eucharist provided people with an opportunity to encounter the same risen Lord whom the two disciples had encountered on the road to Emmaus.

6. The Eucharist, for Nouwen, was the sacrament of God's unconditional love for humanity manifested in the symbolism of a meal and characterized most strikingly in the hospitality of those gathered around the table of the Lord. Through it, God extended

his unconditional love to us by virtue of our common humanity and invited us to share in his divine life by partaking of his body and blood. Doing so enables us to celebrate life and to mourn its passing. The sacrament, for him, was a visible sign of the kingdom that was, at one and the same time, both in our midst and still to come.

7. For Nouwen, the Eucharist brought Jesus, the Wounded Healer, into our midst as food and drink. Partaking in the Eucharist means opening our own wounds, presenting them to Jesus, and allowing him to touch us with his healing presence and unite them with his own. In his resurrected state, the wounds of his passion and death have become a soothing and healing balm. They exist there in a transformed state that he promises to share with us and make our own. Whenever we eat the body and drink the blood of Jesus, the power of that transformation comes to us. Our wounds are opened, cleansed, cared for, healed, and ultimately divinized. As members of his body, our lives are now mysteriously tied up with the life of the risen Lord.

8. The Eucharist also put Nouwen in touch with the deep hunger that touches all human lives. He relates one such experience when he distributed Holy Communion at a Good Friday service at the L'Arche Community in France: "I took the chalice and started to move among those whom I had seen coming to the cross, looked at their hungry eyes, and said, 'The body of Christ,' 'The body of Christ,' 'The body of Christ' countless times. The small community became all of humanity, and I knew that all I needed to say my whole life long was 'Take and eat. This is the body of Christ.'"¹¹ This small community was, for him, a microcosm of the whole human family. The Eucharist was the food that eased its pain and satisfied its deep spiritual hungers.

9. The Eucharist, for Nouwen, also makes us more sensitive to the whole of nature. It delves beneath appearances and helps us ponder the meaning of much deeper realities. His words again speak for themselves: "We will never fully understand the meaning of the sacramental signs of bread and wine when they do not make us realize that the whole of nature is a sacrament pointing to a reality beyond itself. The presence of Christ in the Eucharist becomes a 'special problem' only when we have lost our sense of his presence in all that is, grows, lives, and dies. What happens during a Sunday celebration can only be a real celebration when it reminds us in the fullest sense of what continually happens every day in the world which surrounds



us. Bread is more than bread, wine is more than wine: it is God with us — not as an isolated event once a week but as the concentration of a mystery about which all of nature speaks day and night.”¹²

10. Finally, it bears noting that, despite his departure from normal Catholic practice (at least with regard to reception of Holy Communion), Nouwen embraced the three major elements of Catholic Eucharistic teaching of banquet, presence, and sacrifice. The Eucharist, he believed, was a sacred meal and a foreshadowing of a heavenly banquet. It brought the real presence of Jesus into our midst in the form of bread and wine. It healed the wounds of the world by putting us in contact with Jesus’ sacrificial suffering and death. Nouwen presented these themes in a way that met people where they were, addressed their needs, and took their own suffering and personal sensitivities into account. In this respect he was an interpreter of the Catholic tradition for the people of his day, someone very much in touch with his own wounds and personal frailties, who shared them with others and encouraged them to do the same.

Conclusion

Henri J. M. Nouwen was one of the most influential spiritual authors of his day. His writings touched on a wide range of issues and were flavored by his own struggles and experiences. He was a restless man, always traveling, moving from place to place, searching for that ever-elusive peace of mind and heart. Throughout his wanderings the Eucharist gave him glimpses of that peace, nourished his hope of one day finding it in all its fullness, and gave him the courage to face the fragmented and broken world to which he belonged.

Nouwen embraced the three major elements of Catholic Eucharistic teaching of banquet, presence, and sacrifice.

The Eucharist was one of the mainstays of Nouwen’s spiritual journey. It was always there for him, always an important part of his life. It nourished him from his early childhood and accompanied him throughout his priestly training, scholarly activity, and pastoral ministry. It put him in touch with Jesus, the Wounded Healer, and gave him a sense of the type of person God was calling him to become. It represented God’s unconditional love for humanity and was a

celebration of life and death. It put him in it in touch with the drama hidden beneath the appearances of things. It encouraged him to take deep, hearty draughts of life. It invited him to share in the divine hospitality and encouraged him to go and do likewise.

Nouwen was both a free spirit and a conflicted soul. He suffered greatly from his own personal insecurities, but he was also given the grace to face them squarely and to share his struggles with others. He tried not to put on any masks when he wrote, for he knew that, in the end, the truth would be revealed. He believed in the power of language to cut through worldly pretensions and touch the heart.

Nouwen believed even more in the power of God to break through the boundaries of time and space and be with his people. The Eucharist was precisely that: "God with us," here and now. It was God *being* with us, *living* with us, *suffering* with us, *dying* with us, and, ultimately, *rising* with us. It was a seed of hope pointing to something both still to come and already present beneath the appearances of bread and wine. It was a celebration of life and a joyous expectation of the fullness of life yet to come.



Notes

¹ For more on Nouwen's life, see *Henri Nouwen Society*, <http://henrinouwen.org/about-henri/his-life/>.

² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer: Ministry in Contemporary Society* (New York: Image Books, 1972).

³ This scripture quotation comes from *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁴ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming* (New York: Image Books, 1992).

⁵ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *With Burning Hearts: A Meditation on the Eucharistic Life* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994), 67.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ See Michael O'Laughlin, *God's Beloved: A Spiritual Biography of Henri Nouwen* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 116-23.

⁸ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Can You Drink This Cup?* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1996), 31, 41, 63.

⁹ Ibid., 118.

¹⁰ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Lifesigns: Intimacy, Fecundity, and Ecstasy in Christian Perspective* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 122.

¹¹ Ibid., 121.

¹² Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Seeds of Hope: A Henri Nouwen Reader*, ed. Robert Durback (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), 100.



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Can We Offer Our Sufferings?

by Peter J. Riga

Can we "offer" our sufferings? And for what purpose?

Peter J. Riga, a Houston, Texas, attorney and prolific writer on religious topics, died on March 29, 2018. This article was among the last he submitted to *Emmanuel*.

IN POPULAR CULTURE, SAYINGS LIKE "OFFERING OUR SUFFERINGS," ALONG WITH THE use of traditional words like "redemption," "expiation," and "salvific" to describe the suffering of Christians, are not generally well received or understood today. The expression "suffering is useful" does not resonate with many. These words can even lead us to rejoicing in suffering as a sign of divine predilection.

The mystery of suffering has confounded people throughout the ages, not just in our own time. Scripture underscores that God is not the origin of evil nor does God delight in the misery of his creatures. Jesus, in fact, sought to counter evil and suffering through his ministry as a healer and an exorcist.

Suffering is an evil, the result of human sin and disobedience, not divine will. Certain sufferings, especially those which are severe and prolonged in nature, dehumanize the one undergoing them and can lead to a crisis of faith, and even the denial of God. How, then, can we speak of "offering our sufferings" to God?

Learning from Christ

Many spiritualities have examined the theme of suffering with relation to suffering of the Lord Jesus on the cross, a suffering which Christian faith asserts is saving, a suffering that has changed the world. In this view, the cross is a grace, the greatest sign of God's love and a constant reminder of the extent to which God would go in Christ to redeem the world. *Greater than the suffering itself is the manner in which one endures it!*

Living in an imperfect world, and being subject to sin (and thus imperfect ourselves), the mystery of the cross is always in our lives in

one way or another. Pain is the place where we can unite ourselves to Christ on the cross, and the cross is the place where we can learn most powerfully from Christ.

Learning from Christ by way of suffering does not imply mere “offering.” It is union to the sufferings of Jesus with this certitude: Jesus suffers with us just as he rejoices with us. He is with us in all things, in every experience of life.

There are two ways of communion. The first is sacramental, while the second is the acceptance of God who desires without ceasing to be one with us in the joys and sufferings of daily life. The pain of everyday life can find meaning and become an economy of love among us as long as it is united with Jesus on the cross.

Learning from Christ by way of suffering does not imply mere “offering”; we are called to union with him.

What does this mean? It is the giving of self, the offering of one’s person, which is redemptive and brings meaning to suffering. In our love for God and in our appreciation of how Christ has suffered for us, we unite our individual joys and the sufferings of men and women throughout the world. We surrender our lives to God, This is a gift made in union with Christ on the cross.

For the Love of All Who Suffer

In a world of suffering, our personal suffering has a place. It is inserted into the mystery of the cross; it is united with Christ’s self-offering on the cross in his paschal mystery. Edith Stein, the Jewish convert who later became Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, spoke often of this. She lived with the sufferings of Jesus as the place of sharing and of love.

Edith was one in the pain and death of the Jewish people. Hers was not a taste for suffering. What was at stake was a sharing with Christ and, in Christ, with all who were taken to their deaths in concentration camps under the Nazis. She suffered, by love, with and for the millions of Jews who were deported and condemned to die, in imitation of Christ crucified, who died in solidarity with all humanity. She wrote:

“I told our Lord that I knew it was his cross that was now being placed upon the Jewish people; that most of them did not understand this, but that those who did would have to take it up willingly in the name



of all. I would do that. At the end of the service, I was certain that I had been heard. But what this carrying of the cross was to consist in, that I did not yet know.”

And elsewhere: “Things were in God’s plan which I had not planned at all. I am coming to the living faith and conviction that — from God’s point of view — there is no chance and that the whole of my life, down to every detail, has been mapped out in God’s divine providence and makes complete and perfect sense in God’s all-seeing eyes.”

The Conventual Franciscan Maximillian Kolbe, also a martyr during World War II, did not enter the bunkers of death to offer his sufferings, but he was a gift of love for his companions whom he accompanied to a painful death. It is by Christ crucified, by his perfect love, that the world is saved. And it is by our union with Christ that we participate in this mystery and know the joy of salvation.

Christ has saved us by his love, a love which is memorialized and proclaimed in the Eucharist.

Kolbe wrote: “The cross is the school of love” and “A single act of love makes the soul return to life.”

Conclusion

Thus, we can better understand the words of Saint Paul who suffered much for Christ and said: “Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh, I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church” (Col 1:24). These words of the apostle were repeated by Christians during the persecution of the early church. It was not a glorification of suffering, but a joy-filled experience of conformity with Christ on the cross, the only model for life and death.

We may no longer speak of “offering our sufferings.” But we can affirm this Christian truth: Christ has saved us by his love, a love which is memorialized and proclaimed in the Eucharist. Greater than the suffering itself is the manner in which he endured it!

In uniting our lives with his and in striving to give ourselves as completely and as trustingly as he did, we do our part in realizing God’s great work of redemption.





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Body, Mind, and Spirit

by Robert Owczarczak

A young man and his father begin a journey that will change them. Like countless pilgrims before them, El Camino de Santiago will leave its indelible imprint.

BEAUTIFUL SUNRISSES, BREATHTAKING SUNSETS, THE SWEET SOUNDS OF BIRDS chirping, the stories of new friends, the awe-inspiring cathedrals, and blisters — *many blisters* — are just some of the great and painful experiences that I encountered during my pilgrimage, El Camino de Santiago, the walk of Saint James the Apostle. July 2018 will be a month that I will never forget, as my father and I embraced the challenge of walking 799 kilometers from Saint Jean Pied de Port, France, to Santiago, Spain. Thirty-three days of walking the Camino brought us to see sights and to meet people who would change our lives for the better.

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After watching the film *The Way* in 2014, I felt a deep call to undertake this journey before I was to be ordained to the priesthood. Two months before my diaconal ordination, I was permitted by my seminary to take this journey across France and Spain. I decided to ask my father, my spiritual mentor, to accompany me on this pilgrimage where body, mind, and spirit would all be tested.

When I was walking the Camino, I met many wonderful people, as I was not shy about walking next to strangers and asking them where they were from, what they did, and the purpose of their journey. Many of these conversations lasted hours as we walked for six to eight hours every day. Some were short, due to the barrier of language in encountering people from all over the world.

On the first night of our journey, while speaking to two Italian men who walked from Italy, they explained to me how the Camino was broken into three sections. The first ten days tests your body, as the body is not used to walking up and down mountains with a 20-pound



backpack. The second ten days, we were told, was about the mind, as you enter into the Meseta, the very hot and flat part of Spain. The landscape does not offer much to look at nor shade, leading you to clear your mind. Finally, the last ten days, as you enter Galicia, is where the walk challenges your spirit and you work on your relationship with God.

Body

The body is not used to walking an average of 16 miles a day for 33 days. Traveling the French way, one starts at Saint Jean Pied de Port and typically walks to Roncesvalles, or for a shorter walk one can stop at Orisson. My father and I chose the latter. After hiking up 1300 feet over the course of 9 kilometers in the stifling heat of July, we decided to call it a day and extend our walking one more day. Fortunately, it was here at Orisson that our Camino family started to grow.

After taking a shower and washing our clothes, we met people from all over the world and started to share our story. We discussed our aches and pains and our hopes for the journey. Doubts of being able to finish the entire journey lingered in the air, as people used weight issues, old knee injuries, and arthritis to fuel their own hesitation. The conversations started off superficial. What's your name? What country are you from? What do you do for a living? How did you prepare for this? But they then gravitated to our research of the trip. We often looked to the pilgrims who were making the Camino for a second or third time as wise gurus. We asked questions that came to mind. They were all willing to discuss their experiences and challenged us to experience our own journey, giving us the motivation to continue on.

The second day was harder than the first. One often thinks walking up a mountain is hard, but for my father and I, walking down was torture for our knees. After the day of walking, our knees trembled and needed their rest. On arrival at the *albergue* — inexpensive housing for pilgrims along the way — my father and I saw our new friends and our spirits were lifted as we shared our aches and pains over a glass of wine.

We began to ask more personal questions and inched ourselves closer to becoming a Camino family. We were advised that after the second day everything was going to become much easier; however, the third and fourth days were rough. Our bodies were not used to the strain

of a backpack and the blazing heat of the sun. To prepare for the Camino, many people used their weekends to hike, but after three days of strenuous walking on the path, the body is expecting a break, which it will not get for another month.

It was during the next two days that we started to lose some of the people that we were accustomed to seeing in the town or the *albergue*. Some may have walked further than us, some may have quit, some may have decided to make their trip a little bit longer and not do as many miles, but the idea that we might see them in Santiago filled our hearts with hope and excitement as we looked forward to hearing the stories of their journey from our last encounter.

I offered up the pain of the journey for the people in my life who needed God and who had been struggling.

To our surprise, many people did the Camino in sections. One year they would walk a section of the Camino on their vacation and come back the next year to continue where they had left off.

As the walking continued, and we were nearing the end of the first ten days, our bodies were getting accustomed to the walking. My father and I fell into the routine of waking up at six o'clock in the morning, getting ready in the dark, and starting the trek. We became familiar with the culture of the Camino and started to see why people have been walking this route for over a thousand years, and why tens of thousands make this journey every year, and do it again and again.

Mind

After walking to the major city of Burgos, the pilgrims start the second leg of the journey in the Meseta. It was recommended that we skip this section and take a bus to León, missing a week of walking that was previously described to us as boring, tedious. However, after talking to some other pilgrims, they stated that this section was their favorite.

Following the advice of our new Italian friends, I decided this section of Spain was what I needed, as I had to make sure my mind was clear. At issue, I felt, was being comfortable with the decision of making the



promise of celibacy.

The Meseta was, as people described it, flat fields for mile after mile. In the previous section of the Camino, every corner you turned, your breath was taken away in awe at the beauty and grandeur of God's creation, but in the Meseta it seemed that the days became longer, almost ever-ending.

The Meseta was my time to pray. My dad started his journey everyday saying multiple rosaries, one for my mom, one for my brothers and sisters, and one for a person or a group of people he decided to dedicate the day. I thought this was a great idea, so during my time here I really tried to focus on the people in my life that needed to experience the presence of God.

But as my prayer life increased, my body aches and pains also increased! It was during the Meseta that my blisters became almost unbearable. I walked with twelve blisters on my feet. My heel was covered in blisters as well as the tips of my toes. Every step hurt, every hour felt like a day, but I knew that I had to go on. I had to get to Santiago. So, I offered up the pain for the people in my life who needed God and who had been struggling. This gave me the strength I needed.

Needless to say, I was not able to clear my mind in the Meseta. My father, on the other hand, encountered the Holy Spirit in a powerful way and built a relationship that he never had before.

Spirit

After leaving the Meseta, we entered the last third of the Camino. After walking with blisters for close to 200 kilometers, I became much more tolerant of the pain. We could see the Cantabrian Mountains in the distance, and I was reminded of the enjoyment I experienced during the first part of our journey. Now, with only ten days of hiking remaining, the end was in sight.

Our Camino family was growing, as our group moved to a deeper level of understanding of each other. We discussed our fears, worries, and dreams. We shared what we were looking forward to most when we got home. We discussed our relationships and how we were going to be different people upon completion of this journey, and how the experience had changed us.

The last ten days were interesting, especially the twenty-fourth day as we entered Cruz Ferro. At the start of the journey, it is a tradition that each pilgrim carries a rock with him or her that represents what is being left behind in Spain. At Cruz Ferro, the pilgrim says a prayer and places the stone at the foot of the cross. This was the highlight of my father's whole trip . . . and the toughest part of mine.

When I left the rock, I wanted to be completely sure of my choice in giving up a family. I wanted one-hundred-percent certitude that I was going to give my life to Christ and that I would have no regrets. When I reached the cross, I placed my rock down and wept. I knew that God was calling me to a life of celibacy to serve the people of God as a priest. But part of me wanted to pick up that rock, leave the seminary, get married to a wonderful woman, and start a family. I wanted that feeling to go away.

At journey's end, I wanted certitude that I was going to give my life to Christ and would have no regrets. When I reached the cross, I placed my rock down and wept.

Why was I more comfortable with the promise and gift of celibacy before I started the journey? As I was leaving, I begged God to take away this feeling, but as I walked, I heard God speaking to my heart, and I knew that this was going to be a cross that I would carry my whole life, but he would be there carrying it with me. My spirit was being transformed.

The Camino family now stayed almost every night in the same *albergue*, and as new pilgrims arrived to do the last 100 kilometers, we became more self-aware of the 700 kilometers that we accomplished so far. Our thoughts became more and more about our own families and returning home.

The night before entering the city of Santiago, the Camino family had a family dinner. We laughed, we drank, and we shared. These people that I encountered changed my life. They saw the real me with all my faults and all of my strengths. They built me up, encouraged me, and supported me. They were family.



When we arrived in Santiago, we walked in together as a family. Tears of joy streamed down our faces as our tired feet, our wobbly knees, and our aching backs went silent. The journey of 799 kilometers was complete. We did it! We did it together! Body, mind, and spirit were in harmony, but, more important, our hearts were open to the love of a stranger. Fellow pilgrims were now family.

This trip strengthened my bond with the Lord and my father, and helped me discover who I am and how I can be an example of Christ's love to all I meet.



Deacon Robert Owczarczak and his father Gerald Owczarczak on the pilgrimage trail.

(Article Header photo on page 99:
Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela)



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Bishop Fulton J. Sheen: Life Is Worth Living

by Victor M. Parachin

Beyond his public persona as a media personality and a prominent churchman, Fulton Sheen was a thinker, a believer, a priest, and a man of prayer.

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 7, 1946, FULTON J. SHEEN STEPPED INTO THE PULPIT OF New York's Saint Patrick's Cathedral. Those who packed the church were stunned to hear Sheen criticize and castigate the United States for dropping atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Delivering that sermon less than a year after the horrific event, Sheen, speaking much like a biblical prophet, called the bombing "immoral," adding that "we have invited retaliation for that particular form of violence." Noting the devastating impact upon residents of the cities, Sheen's outrage piqued when he said the use of atomic bombs was "contrary to moral law" because they "do away with the moral distinction that must be made in every war, a distinction between civilians and the military."

That sermon was delivered at a time when Americans overwhelmingly approved that military action, believing that the use of atomic bombs shortened the war and spared the lives of many American soldiers. Sheen's sermon was courageous, confident, compelling, and done without fear of personal consequences, public repercussions, or professional backlash.

Though Fulton Sheen was a Roman Catholic priest, his reach extended far beyond American Catholicism. Via his immensely popular radio and television programs, Sheen became a spiritual teacher to millions. He was listened to by people of all classes, races, denominations, and religions. Along with his broadcasts, Sheen was a prolific author, writing more than 50 books, many of which were bestsellers found in homes as well as Protestant church libraries all over North America.

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Sheen's Life

The man who would become “the most famous preacher in the U.S.,” according to a *Time* magazine cover story in 1952, was born on May 8, 1895, in the small town of El Paso, Illinois. He was baptized Peter Sheen, but changed his name to John at confirmation and then adopted his mother’s maiden name — Fulton — as his first name. Sheen attended Saint Viator’s College in Illinois and seminary in Saint Paul, Minnesota. That was followed with additional graduate studies at The Catholic University of America. By 1923, he had earned a PhD in philosophy from the University of Louvain, Belgium, and, one year later, a second doctorate in theology from the Angelicum University in Rome.

Returning to his home diocese, Peoria, he was assigned as an assistant pastor for a year before receiving his bishop’s blessing to accept a position as professor of philosophy at The Catholic University of America. Because of his effective and powerful communication skills, the National Council of Catholic Men asked him to be the speaker on their *Catholic Hour* Sunday evening broadcast on the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), beginning on March 2, 1930. The program was at the time carried on 17 stations. As word of Sheen’s compelling presentations spread, more and more radio stations picked up the program. By 1940, he was on 118 NBC affiliates as well as on short-wave radio worldwide. Sheen was so well received that he began getting as many as 6,000 letters daily, with at least one-third written by non-Catholics.

As radio programming shifted to the new medium of television, Sheen began a weekly television series on the American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) titled *Life Is Worth Living*. There, he was slotted into the “dead time” of 8:00 p.m. because it was believed that no program could compete against the enormously-popular comedian Milton Berle, who was on at the same time with another network. Amazingly, this unpaid Catholic priest, speaking in front of a live audience without a script or cue cards and supported only with a chalkboard, drew ratings as large and sometimes larger than Berle’s.

Even the editors at *Time* were in awe of Sheen’s television presence and program. They wrote: “Sheen’s TV performance is remarkable not only for its length but for its ad-libbing. He speaks for 28 minutes straight without script or cue cards. Without even a written outline, he produces

facts, dates, six-digit statistics with the precision of an electronic calculator. For about ten minutes before the show, he usually meditates on an unused part of the stage set for a murder mystery or a comedy show. Once on the air, he never fumbles or rambles. He prides himself on the fact that in a quarter-century of broadcasting he has never finished more than two seconds early or late."

By 1956, Sheen's program was carried on 123 ABC stations and 300 radio stations. It was estimated that he had an audience of 30 million people weekly and embraced people of all faiths. His mail surged to between 8,000 and 10,000 letters daily and some days as high as 30,000. In 1952, Sheen won an Emmy Award for his program and he accepted the award with humor saying, "I feel it is time I pay tribute to my four writers — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John." His program ended in 1957, but continued to be syndicated for years following.

Sheen's Philanthropy

As Sheen's media presence expanded, so did his personal wealth. While he lived comfortably, Sheen was also extremely generous, particularly to the poorest of the poor across the United States. In *America's Bishop: The Life and Times of Fulton J. Sheen*, biographer Thomas C. Reeves notes "Sheen's extraordinary generosity."

One example was in 1938 when Sheen was included in the will of a Mrs. William J. Babington, a wealthy patron of the Catholic Church. She left Sheen \$68,824, an enormous sum during the Great Depression. Reeves writes that "Sheen spent his inheritance within a week, sending most of it to the Diocese of Alabama." There, he asked the Sisters of Mercy to use the funds to build a small maternity ward for black women (now Saint Martin de Porres Hospital). At that time in America's Southern segregated states, blacks could not use white hospitals. In fact, T. J. Toolen, the archbishop of Mobile, proudly noted that Sheen's gift created "the only hospital in the city for colored, and is very much appreciated by them."

Though Sheen was a bestselling author and the host of an award-winning television program, he always remained a pastor to people, particularly those in crisis. One example cited by Reeves comes from 1952 when Sheen received a desperate letter from a Marian Cahill. She was frightened and grief-stricken over news that her five-year-old daughter, Suzanne, had been diagnosed with childhood leukemia



and had less than six months to live. In addition, Cahill was pregnant and soon expecting another child. Sheen responded promptly, inviting Cahill, her husband Vincent, who was an FBI agent, and the daughter to visit him in New York City. They accepted the invitation, and it proved to be a great source of hope and comfort to the family.

Vincent Cahill recalls the visit: "He greeted us with great warmth, and was extremely cordial and gracious and went to great lengths to make our visit a happy and memorable one. The bishop gave Suzanne several lovely gifts to delight a child, including a gold ring and an ivory rosary, both of which were subsequently buried with her. In addition, he gave her his biretta which he autographed as well as a statue of the Blessed Mother and an ivory crucifix. He presented my wife with a beautiful World Mission rosary and gave me a heavy Saint Christopher medal for my car."

Of the 45-minute visit, Cahill said: "We cherish this visit deeply since it gave us a considerable amount of strength and consolation to stand behind us for what we were to face." Sheen continued to remain in touch with the family, writing frequent letters of encouragement with a standing invitation to be in touch if there were ways he could be of assistance.

Of particular concern to Sheen were the incarcerated. He often sought permission to conduct retreats inside prisons, permission which was readily granted. Conducting a retreat for prisoners was quite different from conducting a retreat for priests and laity, he said, describing his approach this way: "Before you, there may be two thousand inmates, all of whom pay you the courtesy of thinking you have on the white hat and they have on the black hats. This is the way I solved the problem: 'Gentlemen, there is one great difference between you and me. You have been caught; I was not. In other words, we are all sinners.' From that point on, it was very easy to deal with them."

At one retreat an inmate consulted privately with Sheen. This man immediately told Sheen, "I'm in here for a meatball rap." When Sheen asked what that meant, the man explained: "I have been convicted four times, and under the Sullivan Law in New York that means life imprisonment. I stole a suit of clothes; I stole an automobile; I forged a check; and once I robbed without violence, and so I'm in for life." The man told Sheen he had now been in prison for 26 years.

When Sheen left the prison, he wrote a letter to the governor of New York, saying: "Papers never change; men do. This man is just the same on paper as he was 26 years ago, but this not the same man inside as the paper man." Sheen then asked the governor to consider parole. A few months later, Sheen was surprised by a phone call from the prisoner letting him know that he had just been released. Sheen asked what kind of job he had in prison, and the man told him he had been a cook. He immediately invited the released prisoner to come over to his residence and cook a meal for the two of them to celebrate the release. Sheen sent a car for him, and the prisoner arrived with one of his few personal possessions, a French cookbook. The bishop and the prisoner enjoyed an elegant French meal together.

"Nothing ever happens in the world that does not happen first inside human hearts."

Because he was so readily recognized, Sheen was often stopped by strangers seeking advice. On one occasion he was driving by a Cadillac dealership in Washington, DC, when the owner, Floyd Akers, recognized him stopped at a light. Akers invited the bishop to his office for a consultation, explaining that he was having serious labor issues with his employees and asked Sheen what advice he might offer. "Why not give the workers a share in your profits since in addition to their daily labor for which they receive a salary, they also serve the general good and add to your capital, for which they receive no remuneration?" Sheen then proposed the agency owner give one-half of his yearly profits back to the employees. Akers accepted the idea and gave each employee profit-sharing based on years with the dealership. After the first checks were distributed, employee morale and productivity improved dramatically. Akers was so pleased that every year after that he gave Sheen the use of a new Cadillac. "When the new models appeared, he would ask me for the old one to be serviced and then would send me back with a new one," Sheen said, explaining how he came to drive a luxury vehicle.

Sheen also used his influence to speak out on social issues. Just as he critiqued American use of the atomic bomb during World War II, Sheen also spoke in opposition to the Vietnam War. In July 1967, he called for an end to that conflict, pleading with President Johnson to announce, "In the name of God, who bade us love our neighbor with



our whole heart and soul and mind, for the sake of reconciliation, I shall withdraw our forces immediately from southern Vietnam.”

Bishop Sheen

Along with his media ministry, Sheen had been consecrated a bishop on June 11, 1951, serving as an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of New York. In 1958, he became the national director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, dedicated to raising funds to support Catholic missions worldwide. His efforts were enormously successful. In 1966, he was named the bishop of Rochester, New York.

Sheen never seemed to grow weary of a workload which would stagger most people. The source of his strength came from a decision he made on the day of his ordination in 1919: to spend one hour every day in meditation. He maintained this practice throughout his life. In his autobiography, *Treasure in Clay*, Sheen says the hour was the source of growth and joy in his life. He describes it as grounding and transformative.

“If you don’t behave as you believe, you will end by believing as you behave.”

Calling the time a “holy hour,” Sheen said that “quite apart from all its positive spiritual benefits, (it) kept my feet from wandering too far. . . . The holy hour became like an oxygen tank to revive the breath of the Holy Spirit in the midst of the foul and fetid atmosphere of the world.” Asked if spending an hour daily in meditation was difficult, Sheen explained: “Is it difficult? Sometimes it seemed to be hard; it might mean having to forgo a social engagement or rise an hour earlier, but on the whole, it has never been a burden, only a joy.”

Fulton Sheen died in his New York City apartment on December 9, 1979, at the age of 84. Several memorial services were organized, the major one taking place on December 13 at Saint Patrick’s Cathedral. The massive church was packed to capacity. Present were Governor Hugh Carey, Mayor Ed Koch, evangelist Billy Graham, Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, four cardinals, 48 bishops, as well as thousands of Sheen’s family, friends, and supporters. Later, an editorial in the Jesuit journal *America* summarized his life and influence this way: “The secret of Archbishop Sheen’s power was his combination of an educated and thinking head with a generous and feeling heart.”

Wisdom from Fulton J. Sheen

“Spiritual aid to needy souls has not kept pace with the material aid we gather for needy bodies.”

“Any book which inspires us to lead a better life is a good book.”

“Unless there is a Good Friday in your life, there can be no Easter Sunday.”

“Love people and use things, rather than . . . love things and use people.”

“Love is a mutual self-giving which ends in self-recovery.”

“All my sermons are prepared in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. . . . The most brilliant ideas come from meeting God face to face.”

“The greatest love story of all time is contained in a tiny white host.”

How to Be Like Fulton J. Sheen

Go to Jail

Bishop Sheen was unique in conducting spiritual retreats for incarcerated men and women. Do something similar. Take your skills into a local prison or jail.

Tap into Your Potential

American psychologist and philosopher William James observed: “Most people live, whether physically, intellectually, or morally, in a very restricted circle of their potential being. They make very small use of their possible consciousness and of their soul’s resources in general.” Sheen was a priest, preacher, professor, journalist, author, and media personality. Be all you can be.

Live a Purpose-Driven Life

Establish for yourself a life philosophy and adhere to it, work it, live it. Sheen rightly observed: “Some change their philosophy of life with every book they read. . . . They have their quivers full of arrows, but no fixed target.”



Establish a Spiritual Practice

Not a day in his busy life passed without Fulton Sheen devoting himself to what he called his “holy hour.” Identify a spiritual practice for yourself . . . and do it faithfully.

Put Faith into Action

Stand up for the poor. Speak out against injustice. Support those on the margins. Though fiercely patriotic, Sheen nevertheless criticized America’s use of the atomic bomb and the war in Vietnam.

Be Open to All

Sheen counted among his friends people of great wealth and those who knew only poverty.

Practice Kindness

Treat every person with kindness. Engage in random acts of kindness. Bless strangers. Bishop Sheen’s philosophy was kindness: “There are three rules of dealing with all those who come to us: kindness, kindness, kindness.”

Stress Equality

Sheen was far ahead of both the Church and the country in his opposition to racism. He donated generously from his own funds to build facilities for segregated blacks in the American South. Speak out against all forms of discrimination.

Pay Respectful Attention to Others

Give people the courtesy of your complete and undivided attention. A man told reporters: “When one is with Sheen, one has the feeling of being important. He thinks that I am just as important to God as he. Maybe I am.”

Choose Hope

“Each of us makes his [or her] own weather, determines the color of the skies in the emotional universe which he [or she] inhabits,” said Sheen. Choose hope over despair and negativity.





EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Lost Sheep

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.

THE PARABLE OF THE LOST SHEEP (MT 18:12-14) HAS BEEN CALLED THE SIMPLEST of all the parables of Jesus: a sheep wanders away from the fold, gets lost, and is sought and found by the shepherd of the flock. Such an occurrence, in ancient Judea, was not uncommon on the pasture lands of the hill country. Only a few miles across, the grazing lands were narrow, without natural enclosures and somewhat sparse in pasturage. The sheep, if they strayed from the grass of the plateau, were liable to meander into ravines or onto high ledges where escape would prove difficult. An experienced shepherd had little trouble tracking down lost sheep and was prepared to brave the dangers of rugged cliffs to rescue a stray.

In Jesus' day, sheep were often kept in communal flocks. They were the possession, not of an individual, but of an entire village. This meant that a flock would be herded by several shepherds at a time, making it possible for one shepherd to leave the flock ("the ninety-nine") in the care of fellow-shepherds and go in search of a stray.

A good shepherd was prepared to make the most strenuous and even sacrificial of efforts to retrieve a lost sheep. It is no surprise, then, that the Good Shepherd was Jesus' favorite image of God and of God's love for all humans, even sinners.

Image of Divine Love

The Parable of the Lost Sheep conveys several telling characteristics of God's love for humanity. First of all, it is a *personal* love, a love of

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great concern directed to the individual. Just as a loving parent of a large family would never take an attitude of indifference towards a son or daughter who drifted into some difficult or life-threatening situation, so a good shepherd would never be content that ninety-nine of the flock were safe and sound, and discount the loss of only one. He would scour the hillsides, cliffs, and ravines in search of the lost one; he would make every effort to return it to the flock. Such is God's love for each of us, even when we stray spiritually.

The Good Shepherd was Jesus' favorite image of God and of God's love for all humans.

Moreover, God's love is a love filled with *patience*. Sheep, being skittish creatures, are susceptible to behaving in an unpredictable and foolish manner. The shepherd, then, can never take the attitude that the sheep has only itself to blame if it wanders into danger. The sheep's irrationality will not be a reason for the shepherd's unconcern and neglect. The shepherd's long-suffering forbearance is a touching picture of God's great patience with us humans — creatures who, endowed with free-will, have only ourselves to blame for our sins, but who nonetheless are pursued by God.

Lastly, God's love is a love marked by *rejoicing*. Jesus says that the shepherd has greater joy over the lost sheep that has been found than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Here, there is nothing of harsh words, rough handling, or beating — only rejoicing.

How unlike the reaction of the parable's shepherd is the behavior of persons who, when dealing with a delinquent, are prone to attitudes of recrimination and contempt. But that is not God's way of dealing with us when we sinful and are gathered again into his embrace. On the contrary, "God does not always rebuke, nurses no lasting anger, does not deal with us as our sins deserve" (Ps 103:9-10). When we have strayed and are once again found, all is rejoicing.

What great reassurance and consolation is offered us in The Parable of the Lost Sheep! Even though we may wander into the foolishness and deception of sin or lose our way spiritually, the Good Shepherd's eye is always trained on us; his concern and love are ever fixed on us, seeking to rescue us with great patience and bring us home with joy.





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Hold On to the Anchor of the Will of God

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 March 21, 1851, Father Eymard wrote to Madame Franchet, reminding her that if turmoil in our lives causes something to die in us, it is to make something new in us be born, flower, and bear fruit.

“Be assured, Madame, that storms do not last. Winter purifies the weather and kills the insects which devour the plants. Your soul seems to be dying in the midst of suffering. That is true, but it is in order to be reborn from its ashes. Have courage!

“When we are on the edge of a precipice, we must not look at the bottom, but look determinedly above. . . .

“Fix your heart on our Lord. Rest assured that he is there within you, contemplating your struggles and preparing to reward them.”





PASTORAL LITURGY

Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, Part II

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

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

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WE CONTINUE OUR REVIEW OF *HOLY COMMUNION AND WORSHIP OF THE EUCHARISTIC Outside Mass* (HCWEOM) by looking at the last part of Chapter One.

We frequently hear of special devotions where people expose the Blessed Sacrament with no connection to the Mass/Eucharistic Liturgy. Some prefer the quiet time with the Lord away from the crowds. Often young people prefer such prayer experiences to the Mass. Paragraphs 13-15 underscore that there should be a clear relationship in order for the faithful to know the importance of Mass and the difference of Communion outside of Mass.

Chapter One (15) explains the importance of sharing Communion with people who are sick or in danger of death. Communion may be given outside Mass on any day or hour (16), but within the proper contexts. The chapter focuses on the minister of Communion (17), the place of Communion outside Mass (18), especially for those unable to visit a church because of difficulties like poor health or imprisonment, and regulations for giving Communion (19-22). An important segment on the disposition for Communion is included as well as a reminder that Communion is the source of every grace and the forgiveness of sins (23). Many have learned the importance of the fasting for an hour (24), but there are times when one does not need to fast; these reasons are set forth in paragraph 24.

Paragraphs 26-53 are the Rite of Distributing Holy Communion Outside Mass with the Celebration of the Word. In the United States, various publishers have published separate ritual books for this. The rite emphasizes that "the people should be nourished by the word of God . . . and nourished by God's word, led to grateful and fruitful

participation in the saving mysteries” (26). The ritual begins almost like Mass with a Penitential Rite. While not in the ritual itself, one could bring holy water from the font in the church for the Communion Service, and especially during the Easter Season to have the communicants recall their baptismal covenant and bless themselves with the newly-blessed holy water.

Every Catholic liturgy since Vatican II includes a celebration of the word of God. Since this is the title of the ritual, there are options given, either from the Mass readings of the day, the votive Mass of the Holy Eucharist or the Precious Blood, or readings from the Lectionary. There may be one or more readings, with the first being followed by a psalm or chant or a period of silent prayer (29). The ritual also contains other readings that may be more appropriate in a setting where brevity is necessary.

The celebration of the word ends with the Universal Prayers, formerly called the General Intercessions. The rubric is in paragraph 29, but no sample intercessions are provided. These may come from the *Roman Missal* or be offered spontaneously by those gathered as they share their own concerns. It is helpful to keep in mind the four basic intercessions — for the church, for public authorities, for those burdened by difficulties, and for local concerns (see *GIRM*, 70).

The last part of the ritual is Holy Communion itself. It begins, like Mass, with The Lord’s Prayer, the exchange of the sign of peace, and the Invitation to Communion (“Behold, the Lamb of God...”), and the showing of the host. As at Mass, a psalm (antiphon) or a song of praise may be sung (37) or a period of silence.

The ritual concludes with a Closing Prayer, samples of which are given in paragraph 38, and the Blessing. A priest or deacon uses the customary formula; a lay minister says, “May the Lord bless us, protect us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life” (40). A second formula, again making the sign of the cross oneself, as is the custom when a layperson leads.

This ritual offers strength to those on the journey of faith through loving recourse to the word of God and Holy Communion.

In our next column, we will continue our ongoing examination of HCWEOM, Chapter Two.

Reminders for March and April

This section focuses on the fiftieth anniversary of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* (GNLY). The months of March and April include four liturgical seasons this year, a rarity: the end of winter Ordinary Time, followed by the penitential season of Lent, the Sacred Triduum, and Easter Time. (Note: GNLY uses the original names of the seasons for the *Roman Missal* and Saint Pope John Paul II updated some of the names of the liturgical year.)

In the Roman Rite, we celebrate Lent from Ash Wednesday until 4:00 p.m. on Holy Thursday. The counting of the forty days begins with the First Sunday of Lent to Holy Thursday inclusive. The days before the First Sunday of Lent are a “vestibule” into the holy season of Lent, helping to prepare the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the paschal mystery (27). The Church created this period of Lent to prepare for the sacraments of initiation and to renew those already initiated.


For the season of Lent, it might be helpful to review the purpose of Rogation and Ember Days, found in paragraphs 45-47 in GNLY.

Another point often overlooked is the “Easter/Paschal Fast” from Good Friday to the Easter Vigil (GNLY, 20). With Lent ending with the Evening Mass of the Lord’s Supper, people are at times confused about when Lent and its fasting ends. The “Easter/Paschal Fast” is a separate fast that is actually two days (from Good Friday until the beginning of the Easter Vigil).

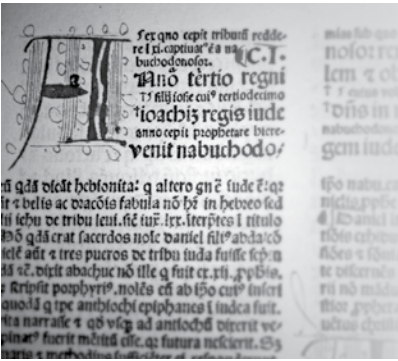
The Sacred Triduum ends with Evening Prayer II on Easter Sunday (GNLY, 19). This is the only time when we have two liturgical seasons overlap — the Triduum and Easter Time on Easter Sunday.

Help your parish community continue to learn and experience the importance of the highest liturgical season, and the shortest one — the Sacred Triduum.

- **Ash Wednesday, March 6 — Beginning of Lent.** Operation Rice Bowl materials and other resources for Lent may even be given out the weekend before.
- **Rite of Election — First Sunday of Lent, March 10.** This is also the beginning of Daylight Saving Time in many places.

- **The Rite of Penance (RCIA) — Second Sunday of Lent, March 17.** This rite is for those who are already baptized but becoming a Catholic Christian.
- **The Scrutinies (RCIA) — Third through Fifth Sundays of Lent.** These are not optional.
- **The Sacred Triduum — Holy Thursday, April 18, through Easter Sunday, April 21.** Faithful to its Jewish roots, the Triduum is observed from sunset to sunset.
- **Passover.** The Jewish Passover begins on the evening of Good Friday, April 19, this year.
- **Professionals Day — Wednesday, April 24.** Appreciate your staff! 

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BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Barbara Shanahan

Barbara Shanahan is an alumna of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. She has led the Buffalo, New York, Catholic Bible Studies Program since 1992.

March 3, 2019 Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Sirach 27:4-7; Psalm 92:2-3, 13-14, 15, 16; 1 Corinthians 15:54-58;
Luke 6:39-45**

A strong wisdom theme runs through the readings for this Sunday. Wisdom writings do not focus so much on the mighty acts of God accomplished amid great signs and wonders; rather they invite us to look at the world around us, consider the patterned order of nature, and adapt these patterns to human behavior. The premise is that in precisely such ordinary workings, we encounter God.

How do we meet God if he does not appear to us in a burning bush or in the parting of the sea? Wisdom would say that we should observe nature and take a lesson from the orderly way creation works. We can do this! We are invited to be careful observers of the infused wisdom of the cosmos and by replicating that order we would insure harmony and peace among all God's creatures. "The spirit of the LORD fills the earth and is all embracing" (Wis 1:7).

Wisdom writing is no less important than the accounts of God's mighty deeds in the record of salvation history. Both provide insight into the ways of God. Our need for God is the basis of salvation history. Here, God is revealed as redeemer and savior, shepherd and king. By contrast, in wisdom writings humankind is set within a world of immense complexity and beauty; and from this starting-point, we seek to discover the mystery of God to be found "here, there, and everywhere."

The short piece from Sirach is human wisdom. How we use the gift of

speech is an important theme throughout wisdom writings (e.g., see Proverbs 10). We can lift up or cut down, bring peace or disharmony, depending on what comes out of our mouths. By drawing on familiar things (husks of grain, firing pottery, ripe fruit), the wisdom teacher instructs the learner in ways that will lead to a life of harmony and peace. Observe nature and let this give understanding.

Who cannot make sense of the wisdom contained there? How wise the words that conclude the passage: praise none until you are certain of their integrity which is revealed in the words they speak. Indeed, we judge ourselves by the people who have a place in our lives. Such simplicity in these words. But do they not test us to our core? How easy to miss the point they make!

In today's gospel reading, Jesus takes on the role of wisdom teacher. If reference to creation and human behavior earmarks wisdom writings, think how often Jesus makes reference to seeds, lilies, sparrows, yeast bread, etc., as a way to draw us into living in right relationship with ourselves, our world, and God.

Integrity seems the keyword for the various examples Jesus gives. Be who you say you are, be what you are. How easy it is to not be aware of the tiny speck in our own eye that can grow, without our awareness, into a beam? A "disciple" is a "learner" whose ear is open and receptive to instruction. In the wisdom tradition, this is the "child," another favorite image we find in Jesus' teaching. The "child," like the disciple, is docile, receptive to learning, and humble, one who is not resistant to change and growth, but righteous (in right relationship) with God.

"The righteous will flourish like a palm tree and grow like a Lebanon cedar" (Ps 92:13).

March 10, 2019 First Sunday of Lent

Deuteronomy 26:4-10; Psalm 91:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 14-15; Romans 10:8-13; Luke 4:1-13

"When you have come into the land..." In the storyline of Deuteronomy, Moses is in the desert with the Israelites, about one month short of the completion of the "40 years" of wandering (see Dt 1:3). Possession of

the Promised Land is in view! The entire book of Deuteronomy sounds like Moses' last words to the Israelites. He and they have been through a lot. You have to know the whole story to appreciate this. But here, he looks forward and instructs them to "remember and never forget."

Among the things he tells them are: 1. Be thankful to God who has always provided for them in the wilderness, and who now gives fruitful harvests. 2. Honor God by going to "the dwelling place of your name" (i.e., the temple) and publicly declare your belief in all God has done. 3. Remember the story of deliverance that goes back to Abraham and find yourself in the story!

Take note of how generations seem to collapse and every future generation is to consider itself one with those who first crossed into the Promised Land. The message is addressed to "you," implying the contemporary hearers of these words — today! What they and we should always remember is how God was present, watching over and providing for them along the way. In the desert Israel became God's own. The desert lessons of simple dependence on God must never be forgotten. Being wanderers under God's protection did not only describe the wilderness generation, but all of us who know ourselves to be the people of this God.

Luke links Jesus to his desert roots in today's gospel. The account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness begins by reminding us of his baptism when the Spirit came down on him in the form of a dove (Lk 3:22). Here, he is still "filled with the Spirit," the presence of God that will accompany him throughout his ministry. This same Spirit leads him forth into the wilderness.

There are several reasons why the desert is a fitting starting-place for this phase of Jesus ministry. We have just recounted the significance of the desert in the story of Israel. It was here God led his people from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land. The desert was a problematic place for the Israelites. There, God "tested" the Israelites to determine whether their hearts were truly with him. They grumbled a lot there and had a hard time coming to understand the ways of God. Jesus will be study in contrasts to this, remaining faithful to his Father.

Luke has also mentioned a piece of information: that John the Baptist had been arrested by Herod (3:20). Might John's arrest be cause for Jesus, a follower of the Baptist, to seek safety in a deserted place?

Perhaps he needed some distance, time to think things over. What would be his next step? He wrestles with many conflicting thoughts presented to us in the dialogue between the devil and himself.

This is a very human picture of Jesus. We sometimes forget that he was truly human and so would have experienced the fear of impending struggle, the loneliness, the threat to his life. As we do in our struggles, he, too, would have had one consolation: to call on God for support and to lift the weight of his fear. We see where his strength and his thoughts find their source: in the word of God that he knows well:

"Not by bread alone do we live, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3).

March 17, 2019 Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 15:5-12, 17-18; Psalm 27:1, 7-8, 9, 13-14; Philippians 3:17-4:1; Luke 9:28b-36

The story of Abraham and Sarah traces a journey of many dimensions: a geographical journey from Ur to Haran to Canaan; a spiritual journey from barrenness to birthing many descendants; a journey of faith culminating in belief that is grounded in God rather than in the blessings and promises God makes because in no way could these promises ever be realized in the short lifespan of this man and woman.

Faith. How do you define it? Does your definition include some element of reward, something you stand to gain for your belief? Perhaps we begin with such thoughts: "I'll do this or that so I get to heaven." But as faith grows, conditions become less important, and faith becomes the simple certainty that God *is*. And that God *is more* than we can possibly imagine. The words of the psalm become our own: "Be still and know that I am God."

There is a wonderful image of God and Abraham standing outside on a starry night, God telling his friend about things Abraham could not begin to understand. Abraham knows God, and believes what he says despite the darkness of the night. Is this faith — believing when we

do not see what it is we believe? Is this what credits Abraham as being in right relationship with God?

The writer of Genesis couches his story in darkness, a deep sleep, a profound sense of awe . . . and God who comes as light in the darkness! It would seem that there cannot be faith if there is not darkness. Faith is placed in something we cannot see or touch. But trust keeps us hopeful that this light (God) will eventually come to our darkness. What can this teach us?

How valuable is this gift of faith? In the midst of unimaginable challenges to living faithfully, we need to know that God *is*! Faith is not a list of things we hold as true. Faith is placed in the very existence of God whom we attempt to define with definitions and words. But, essentially, faith is intimate knowledge of one with whom we wish to be in relationship. There will always be something unequal in the divine-human relationship, but we know that going in!

Attend to some of the similarities in the transfiguration account from Luke's gospel. Peter, James, and John are said to have fallen into a deep sleep and a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice is heard and the apostles become fearful. God is present as a voice that bears witness to Jesus. The scene bespeaks a mysterious encounter with God, similar to the account in Genesis.

Scholars tell us this is similar to a resurrection appearance story, placed here in each of the Synoptic gospels just before Jesus makes his way to Jerusalem and the cross. The gospels are told looking backwards, so such a placement could serve to encourage the disciples as they face the troubling days ahead. Holding onto faith!

Try to imagine how difficult it must have been to be one of Jesus' first followers. We have the experience of a faith tradition that defines everything for us. They did not. Yes, they had Jesus. But would you have been among his followers?

What the readings from Genesis, Luke, and Philippians say is that faith requires from us a long view. Faith looks beyond the lives of an elderly, barren couple and sees their descendants; it wakes up from sleep and hears a voice that comes from where we do not know; and it places stock in a homeland that is beyond sight and reach.

"Of you my heart has spoken, 'Seek the face of God.' It is your face, O LORD, that I seek; hide not your face from me" (Ps 27:8-9).

March 24, 2019 Third Sunday of Lent

Exodus 3:1-8a, 13-15; Psalm 103:1-2, 10-11, 12-13, 15-16; 1 Corinthians 10:1-6, 10-12; Luke 13:1-9

An important idea we are prompted to think about this week is "What is God like?" The question we should put to the reading from Exodus is not "How did that happen?" but "What does it mean?" What is the biblical writer trying to communicate to us? The bush is a focal point, but it is not the message. The story tells us that Moses encountered an angel/fire; he then hears the voice of God speaking from the mysterious shrub, revealing something of utmost importance. The elements of the story (angels, holy ground, the command to "take off your sandals") prepare us for an encounter with the holy God.

What do we learn about God in this reading? What is God's concern? "I have witnessed the affliction of my people." "I have heard their cry." "I know what they are suffering." "I will come down to rescue them." We should hear these words deeply today! How many living under the heavy hand of oppressive regimes cry with no one, it would seem, to hear? But God does hear! Today, the goodness of aid workers, the generous response of countries who welcome refugees, the voice of those who never forget the poor, these nameless voices *are* the voice of God who hears.

How often people say, "I don't like to read the Old Testament, because God is harsh and heavy-handed in his dealing with his people." *Not so!* Throughout the Bible God is shown to be a God of mercy and compassion, fidelity and kindness. We are separated from our biblical ancestors by thousands of years. Ideas and thinking have changed and evolved. The belief in a God who is gracious and merciful is embedded in the biblical tradition and prepares us to encounter the God of Jesus Christ.

A bit of study can help us gain perspective into how they thought and how they expressed their belief. Without that we might keep asking

the question “How did this happen?” and never get to the important question “What does it mean?”

In the gospel for this weekend, Luke refers to two news reports: 18 killed when the tower of Siloam fell and Pilate’s mingling of the blood of some Galileans with their sacrifice. In the thinking of that time, the question would have been, “What did these unfortunate souls do to deserve their fate?” Jesus uses the report to advance their thinking: “How can you avoid perishing and insure eternal life?” “Repent.” A new focus is given: suffering does not mean one is being punished for sin. Suffering is part of life and can be indiscriminate.

A more significant focus for our reflection during this time of Lent is on what Jesus repeats twice: “If you do not repent, you will all perish.” The word *repent* implies a conversion, a change of heart; a letting go of ideas, of all that defines us and restricts us, so we might be open to God; shifting the center of our life to God; a dawning awareness that we have a vocation to seek holiness of life.

The entire journey of a Christian is a journey of conversion. It is never complete but takes a lifetime. Openness to the transformative process of grace is something that comes with a willingness to dig deeper into ourselves and make the changes that put God at the center of our life. This brings us to eternal life.

“As a parent has compassion on their children, the Lord’s compassion is on those who fear him. For he knows of what we are made; he remembers that we are dust” (Ps 103:13-14).

March 25, 2019 Annunciation of the Lord

Isaiah 7:10-14, 8:10; Psalm 40:7-8a, 8b-9, 10, 11; Hebrews 10:4-10; Luke 1:26-38

As we celebrate the mystery of the annunciation today, the readings help us to see this profound mystery that, in many ways, surpasses the feast of Christmas which celebrates the fulfillment of the wondrous promise that has its beginning with the event we commemorate.

We tend to want to loosen the Isaian reading from its historical context, but we would really miss the point if we did that. Isaiah is addressing the people during a time of great threat from their enemies. We read of this in the verses (1-6) just before today's passage. The word of God, spoken through Isaiah, says that the enemies who threaten Judah will be eliminated but it will take a few years. In the meantime, the people must hold on to faith and trust; by waiting and calm they will realize their salvation. The promise made is the same one God repeats over and over even though the script of history: "I am with you. I have always been with you. Believe this. My name is Emmanuel!"

As the passage from Isaiah is presented in the context of this feast, we bring to our reflection on these words of the prophet a richer and deeper insight dependent on the thoughts of Isaiah, but made new by our belief that Christ has overcome all that could threaten us. He has brought to us God's presence in ways as yet unknown and unimagined. And we have nothing to fear. Christ is our peace, the one in whom we place our trust and faith. We see how this word of God is truly a living word that continually brings light and hope to God's people, whichever "enemy" threatens.

If you have ever visited the Basilica of the Annunciation in Nazareth, you will remember that at the center and deepest part is the cave of the annunciation. In excavating this area, very old graffiti was found that revealed Christian symbols carved by early pilgrims who visited this place. Whatever the historical connection may be, what strikes the visitor is the age-old faith of believers and seekers of truth. It drives home that the stories we revere in Scripture did take place. The Son of God took on human flesh and entered into human history.

Caves were significant places in early Christianity. Often referred to as "caves of enlightenment," one enters into the darkness of the cave as if into the mystery of faith recalled and seeks to understand the truths hidden there. Such caves are found at Nazareth, at Bethlehem, at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, and at the Pater Noster Church on the Mount of Olives where, according to the Lukan tradition, Jesus taught The Lord's Prayer to his disciples. As we ponder the mystery of the annunciation today, we enter into the cave of our own heart in complete openness to the will of God for us, as Jesus took on himself the will of his Father and Mary embraced the word of God spoken through the angel Gabriel.

"Then I said, 'As is written of me in the scroll, behold I come to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10:7).

"I delight to do your will, O my God; your instruction lies deep within me" (Ps 40:9).

March 31, 2019 Fourth Sunday of Lent

Joshua 5:9a, 10-12; Psalm 34:2-3, 4-5, 6-7; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

On this Fourth Sunday of Lent (Laetare Sunday), the theme of rejoicing subtly makes its way through the readings. It is rejoicing that comes at a price, however, which perhaps makes it all the more worthy to be considered praise that is given back to God. The portrait of God that emerged last week — one who hears the cries of his own, knows what they are suffering, and comes to rescue them — takes on even sharper focus this week as now we see God who restores dignity and status, removing the reproach of the Israelites, of the lost son, and of the tax collectors and sinners who listen attentively to Jesus.

The reproach of Egypt that hung around the neck of the Israelites could be the memory of their enslavement. For 40 years of wandering, when things went wrong, the Israelites fell into grumbling about how good life was in Egypt! They remembered they had melons, leeks, and other delicacies to eat. Their newfound freedom was unfamiliar to them. The oppression of Egypt was more familiar and left its mark. It had been a long trek for the people and Moses. They had a difficult time learning to trust the God who led them to freedom. Establishing their identity as the people of this God made for many challenges. Letting go of the past and leaving it behind took the passing of the old generation and the formation of the next.

Crossing into the land and celebrating the first Passover marks the full cycle of the exodus journey. They even arrived at their destination at the same time of year, Passover. Mention of the manna ceasing recaps the entire story of those years. The reliability of the manna reminds us of the faithfulness of God who gave it every day. This fragile daily bread of the desert was no longer needed. Now the abundance from the land would provide a rich variety of food. God gives us what we need, but

when the need ceases, so, too, the provision. Now it is a new time! They stand erect and eat the produce of their own land and labor.

There are so many ways that the younger son in the parable offends his father. Asking for his inheritance is saying that his father is as good as dead. He overlooks the rights of the older brother, leaves his home, gets involved with the wrong crowd, and hits rock bottom, but he has sense enough to go home and seek forgiveness, expecting nothing more. To his great surprise, his reproach is removed and he is welcomed home with open arms and reinstated.

Two groups are cited as being present to listen to Jesus' parable: tax collectors and sinners, scribes and Pharisees. Note how each group is portrayed: we have those who hear and those who complain! The first group (tax collectors and sinners) certainly bore the reproach of society in those days. And chief among their censurers would have been the other group, scribes and Pharisees. But as Jesus tells the parable, each finds themselves in the story, and so Jesus lifts the reproach from the tax collector and sinners in speaking of the loving embrace of God.

People can have trouble handling the greatness of God's mercy! In the reading from 2 Corinthians, we are reminded of this: "God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ." One wonders who could be excluded. In Christ, we are a new creation and the reproach is taken away.

"Look towards the LORD and be radiant; let your faces not be abashed. When the lowly call out, the LORD hears and rescues them from all their distress" (Ps 34:6-7).

April 7, 2019 Fifth Sunday of Lent

Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126:1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6; Philippians 3:8-14; John 8:1-11

Israel understood the Babylonian exile as God's response to repeated infidelity. Her prophets impress this weighty message on the people. This punishment was perceived as the failure of the nation and not

individual responsibility. There was no other way to explain such a severe sanction. The enormity of the disaster that brought about the loss of their land, temple, and divinely-appointed king caused Israel to imagine that God had abandoned them to their guilt.

There was enough finger-pointing to go around about who was responsible: the king, the ancestors, the leaders, even God! The text from Isaiah that we hear today finds Israel on the far side of the exile, the remnant having survived intact for nearly 50 years and looking toward an uncertain future.

It is part of the human condition to experience “exile.” We can think of “exile” as a metaphor for the times we experience the loss of what relates to our identity. We do not need to be sent away from our homeland to experience such emptiness. We can also experience exile when we know our frailty and sinfulness, realizing we cannot lift ourselves up without a strength that comes from outside ourselves.

We know what it is like to confront our fragility and sinfulness — as individuals, as members of a Church that has fallen short of the mark, and as citizens of a nation that seems to have lost its soul. The scene of the lone figure of the woman caught in adultery standing before Jesus reflects this awareness of our need for God’s acceptance of us as we are and God’s desire to lift us from our frailty and sin. Exile or death cannot be the last word! What else do we hear?

Isaiah, writing near the end of the exile in Babylon, proclaims God’s intention in words that need to be heard by each of us down to our very core: “*See I am doing something new! Now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?*” (Is 43:19). Isaiah’s language in today’s reading resounds with reminders of Israel’s glorious past, of God’s saving deliverance during the exodus out of Egypt.

Oftentimes, the best direction to look if we would understand God’s ways in our life is backwards. There we can see God’s footprint in the signs of his presence and there we can learn to trust that as God has responded in the past, so will God continue to do. God says something more here: “*See, I am doing something new!*” Is God saying, “*Do not be hemmed in or limited by remembrances of the past. I am going to do something beyond your imagining!*” This new time of life after exile, disillusionment, failure, sin requires a new response from God. The future will be more amazing than the past when it was new!

The Bible very often portrays the tension between mercy and justice. God will always weigh in on the side of mercy, as we see in the scene of Jesus and the woman. Sin is not overlooked, but mercy prevails. What a “new thing” this must have been for the forgiven woman, who is each of us! Saint Augustine says in commenting on this text: “There remains together in this scene great misery and great mercy.”

“Bring back our exiles, O LORD, as streams in the Negeb. Those who are sowing in tears will sing when they reap” (Ps 126:4-5).

April 14, 2019 Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord

Luke 19:28-40 (Procession); Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22:8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24; Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 22:14-23:56

Let us consider the significance of the words from the Letter to the Philippians as they relate to the other readings we hear this Palm Sunday: “Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be grasped, rather he emptied himself . . .” (2:7). The mystery of the incarnation is the heart and center of our belief and a key to being able to unlock the mystery of God’s enormous love for us.

Prayerful reflection invites us to consider what this “emptying” demanded. In so many ways, it is inconceivable. Here, the human heart struggles to grasp divine things. How do we imagine what the Son relinquished in taking on our human nature? Yes, he laid aside a divine nature, but what do these words mean? How might we more deeply reflect on their significance?

The Scriptures are our sourcebook for information about God. What do we learn there? When we think about God, we recall his mighty works as Creator, as Savior, as the one who guides and protects, who is a constant, overshadowing presence yet his dwelling is above the heavens. God is portrayed as the source of all holiness. His holiness is awesome, and he calls his people to be holy as he is holy. In the writings of Israel’s wisdom tradition, we read: “As the shining sun is clear to all, so his glory fills all his works” (Sir 42:36). God has left his mark and imprint on all created things.

We describe God in terms that resonate with our human understanding. What becomes of these godly attributes when, as Paul tells us in Philippians, God empties himself of all godliness, taking on human form, the form of a slave? As we enter these sacred days of Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum, our thoughts might dwell on this exchange and find a way of perceiving the depth of God's love and his desire that we find life for ourselves in that knowledge. Such thoughts provide a context for us and help us hear anew the narrative of the passion of the Lord Jesus.

In a conversation with Moses, God says that he has "heard the cries of his people, is aware of their suffering, and is coming to rescue them" (Ex 3:7-8). In this selection from Isaiah, the third of the Servant Songs, the servant is described as a disciple (a learner), one who attunes his own ear to hear like a disciple and to respond in obedience to the task assigned to him. That task is to once again come to the rescue of God's people through faithfulness to his mission.

The servant becomes like those to whom he is sent: one weary and familiar with human suffering, so that he can know from his own experience how to speak to the weary words that will comfort and give them hope, words that he first hears deeply within himself.

We are called to listen to these words as they speak of Jesus, but the beginning of the passage from Philippians says, "Have also among you the same mind as Christ." Perhaps once we begin to understand the love God has for us, it becomes easier for us to have this same mind and love for God and others after the pattern of Christ. If we keep our focus on the God who dwells among us and who loves us, it will be easier for us to allow this same mind to be formed within us. Can we allow ourselves to let go of all that separates us from a wholehearted response to God? Living the paschal mystery, sharing in the life, the death, and the rising of Christ is a pattern of life for all who are baptized into Christ.

"I will tell of your name to my kin and praise you in the midst of the assembly" (Ps 22:23).

April 21, 2019
Easter Sunday of the Resurrection of the Lord
The Mass of Easter Day

**Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 16-17, 22-23; Colossians 3:1-4
(or 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8); Luke 24:1-12**

One of the high points of a pilgrimage to Jerusalem is a visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. The domes of the church are prominent in the part of the Old City referred to as the Christian Quarter. The largest of the domes is directly over the site revered as the place of Christ's burial and resurrection. A small structure under that rotunda, the aedicule, marks this place which, in earliest times, was known to be a burial place. Not far from here is the rock of Golgotha, where tradition holds, Christ was crucified.

These two sacred places are within the walls and beneath the domes of this sprawling crusader structure that has a long and interesting history. A third area takes us down a long stairway to the Chapel of Saint Helena where again, according to tradition, Helena, the mother of Constantine, discovered the cross of Christ in what was in those days a garbage dump. Since the first century to the present, fragile traditions have considered these revered sites and places of pilgrimage.

It is a powerful experience to stand in the place where Jesus died and where he was buried, and where the women came to anoint his body and, finding the stone rolled away, heard the angelic proclamation: "He is not here; he has been raised!" This is especially true if you happen to visit the church when it is quiet! A silent, prayerful atmosphere is sorely lacking in this place.

Jerome Murphy O'Connor, a Dominican priest who taught at the École Biblique, Jerusalem, once said of this church: "The frailty of humankind is nowhere more apparent than here; one looks for numinous light, but it is dark and cramped. One hopes for peace, but the ear is assailed by a cacophony; one desires holiness only to encounter a jealous possessiveness. It epitomizes the human condition. The empty who come to be filled will leave desolate; those who permit this church to question them may begin to understand why hundreds of thousands thought it worth the risk of death or slavery to pray here."

“Why do you seek the living one among the dead?” Do we need to stand in the place where the events played out in human history in order to appreciate their significance? As a visitor to this church, it is easy to get caught up in the emotional response of many pilgrims and tourists. Admittedly, it is powerful to be so close to where these central mysteries of the faith took place.

It is fortunate if you can visit at a time when you can pray without distraction (usually very early or later in the day). If the place is going to question us, it must touch us on a deeper level than mere emotion. We have to be about the search for the Living One! This must take us outside the walls of this place into the mysterious truth remembered here. We must discover this truth within ourselves and let it live in us and permeate our being.

On this Easter Sunday, we are reminded that our faith is placed in one like us, one of the earth, whose godliness was hidden in God. We are called to seek the things that are above, to reorient our thinking. This does not happen because we step back in time to visit sacred sites. That powerful response can be short-lived! If the Church of the Holy Sepulcher is to question us, it has to challenge our understanding of the difference these events make in our own life, in the life of all people, and indeed in all creation!

“The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone” (Ps 118:22).

April 28, 2019
Second Sunday of Easter
Sunday of Divine Mercy

Acts 5:12-16; Psalm 118:2-4, 13-15, 22-24; Revelation 1:9-11a, 12-13, 17-19; John 20:19-31

The writings of the New Testament reveal the unfolding mystery of the church as it continues the ministry of Jesus. It is productive for us to investigate, ponder, and observe this development.

If we are careful readers, we can conclude this from the diverse readings we have before us today. What must have been the struggle

encountered by the disciples? Locked doors and fearful, many no doubt, disbelieving as Thomas. These first believers did not have the benefit of hundreds of years of reflection, debate, and arriving at definition and clarity. They carried with them the vivid recollection of crucifixion and death and the loss of hope in ways we can only imagine.

Christ is the cornerstone of belief. We who are the inheritors of a 2,000-year tradition are confident about that, but what about the early followers of Jesus of Nazareth? When did they know and how did they learn the beliefs that came to be recorded in the New Testament? And how did such accounts become belief that ignited faith? Does this attest to the presence of the Spirit who inspired these words that articulated faith in the risen Lord? Something has changed dramatically!

A freedom, a power has been released into the world, but it rested on faith in the One whom God raised up. Someone once said that every book of the New Testament, in one way or other, speaks of the meaning of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, whether a gospel or a letter, Acts of the Apostles or the Book of Revelation. If we read with this perspective, we may have our eyes opened to the questions posed in the Spirit-filled days of the early church.

“Many were the signs and wonders done among the people” (Acts 5:12). “Jesus did many other signs. . . . These are written that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and through this belief, have life in his name” (Jn 20:30-31).

Signs and wonders are intended to be a form of divine communication. The concept is found frequently in the Old Testament and points to God’s presence in events. The early church would likely have been able to make this association more readily than we today. These signs were intended to guide the people to believe and profess Christ, not dead, but truly alive in their midst.

The passage from Acts relates how the sick and the possessed were healed when the shadow of Peter fell on them. In the gospel accounts, when Jesus healed, it was accomplished through a human touch. Here, the mere shadow of Peter brings healing. Jesus’ ministry of compassion continues through the church!

The accounts of such miracles are intended to say more than the words might imply. In ancient thinking, human suffering was associated with the presence of evil in the world. The message in the gospels and in the passage from Acts is that Jesus holds power over the forces of evil. He demonstrated this in his earthly life, and this power continues in the church. The advent of Christ among us ushered in a new time and the end of the power of evil to control God's creation.

As we continue to bask in the Alleluias of Easter, let us rejoice in the One who lives!

"There are shouts of joy and salvation in the tents of the righteous. The LORD's right hand has done mighty deeds; the LORD's right hand is exalted. I shall not die, but live and recount the deeds of the LORD" (Ps 118:15-17).





EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Often, the more we know about something, the greater we can appreciate it. This seems to be the case especially with the arts. A jazz musician can listen to a recording by jazz saxophone great John Coltrane and appreciate Coltrane's performance on a much deeper level than a casual music lover. An architect can find inspiration in and appreciation of the construction and design of the Chartres cathedral on a much deeper level than the average churchgoer.

This in no way takes away from the joy non-experts take in the arts. Art is, after all, for everyone. Instead, this acknowledges the riches of every field and the great ingenuity of humanity. Those who have dedicated their lives to music, architecture, painting, or any other field of expression will certainly find greater appreciation for masterpieces in their field more than novices, without taking anything away from the joy others find. Learning more about a work of art is often the door to greater appreciation.

With this in mind, we turn our gaze to Rembrandt's etchings. Without question a viewer can gaze upon Rembrandt's *Three Crosses* (cover image) and instantly appreciate its sublime wonder. The subtle light breaking upon the crucified Christ that dissipates as it moves through the gathered crowd; the confusion, pathos, horror, and indifference that Rembrandt portrays in the faces of the people; the central mystery of Christ's passion and death. All of this impacts the viewer almost at an unconscious level; so masterful is Rembrandt's treatment of the subject.

Artists and printers adept at the skill of etching appreciate Rembrandt's etching on another level. Rembrandt's line has such a variety of expression, from gentle, almost lyrical, to bold and emphatic. This sensitivity an artist would appreciate in a drawing, this ability to elicit form and feeling from pencil or chalk on paper. However, this is an etching. The process is at once more arduous and uncertain.

Art Review



THREE CROSSES
(1653)



CHRIST
PRESENTED TO
THE PEOPLE
(1655)
Rembrandt van Rijn

John Christman,
SSS

Rembrandt worked mostly on copper plates. These would be covered in a resin that would protect the metal. He would then use an etcher's needle to scrape lines into the surface. The plate would then be dipped in an acid bath, which would eat into the cut areas leaving the resin covered areas protected. The depth of the line would vary depending upon how long the plate was left in the acid bath. After the plate was removed from the bath, cleaned, and the resin removed, it was inked and run through a press. What is seen on the paper, then, is the reverse image of what is seen on the plate. This intensive process would be repeated again and again until Rembrandt achieved the effect he was seeking.

Now look again at Rembrandt's *Three Crosses*. The delicate gradations of grey and black; the manner in which he guides the viewer's eyes with the gentle light he creates through the accumulation of etched lines; the internal narratives he creates amongst the perfectly articulated figures; even the foliage is rendered painstakingly, leaf by leaf. It is masterfully done.

What does all of this have to do with the liturgical seasons of Lent and Easter that we now embark upon? Certainly, a reminder of Jesus' great sacrifice and the gift of our salvation is primary, and Rembrandt renders this message as few other artists have. But there is more to it than this. These liturgical seasons are marked by God's grace and mercy. This can never be appreciated enough, as Pope Francis has emphasized time and again.

However, Rembrandt's laborious process of creating this masterpiece line by line offers us another insight to consider. The Lenten work of reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace-building is often a slow, laborious, and challenging process. We may get discouraged when our efforts seem to yield modest results.

But, like Rembrandt's etching, each thoughtfully placed line contributes in its own way to the final breathtaking image. Our work to help build the kingdom of God may seem modest, yet God will ultimately create the masterpiece. It is one of God's many gifts to us that we are given the chance to contribute to this amazing work of art. The end result will be more beautiful than anything we can possibly imagine. And God, the great artist, will appreciate on a much deeper level all we have contributed this masterpiece.

Poetry

The Rich Man

" . . . it is easier for a camel
to pass through the eye of a needle
than for a rich man to enter
the kingdom of God." (Lk 18:25)

He can't mean that! Seriously.

Literally everyone we admire
is in some way wealthy.
Otherwise, why

would we admire them?
They have something we want.

Not just money;
far from it!

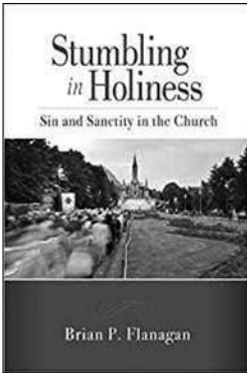
Health, wit, talent. A noble
character. Knowledge.
Experience. Patience
in adversity. The judicious
exercise of power.
A cheerful disposition.

— What we would call
"true" wealth.

So the disciples wondered,
(and we wonder):
"In that case . . . who can be saved?"

Jared Barkan

Book Reviews



**STUMBLING IN
HOLINESS:
SIN AND
SANCTITY IN THE
CHURCH**
Brian P. Flanagan
Collegeville,
Minnesota: Liturgical
Press, 2018
194 pp., \$24.95

As the Roman Catholic Church continues to struggle with issues of sexual misconduct of clerics; criminally negligent handling of the same by some bishops; and is accompanied by widespread complicity in structures of racism, sexism, and heterosexism, the arrival of Brian P. Flanagan's *Stumbling in Holiness: Sin and Sanctity in the Church* is timely and welcome.

The central conviction of the author, an associate professor of theology at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia, is that "we are called to hold together at the same time two truths about the Christian Church. First, that the church is holy, God's chosen instrument for the salvation of the world. . . . Second, that the church is sinful, in that as it walks its pilgrimage toward its fulfillment in the reign of God, it stumbles, sometimes spectacularly so" (3-4).

This issue is not new, but one with which the church has struggled with from its beginning. Flanagan offers a review of the past and more recent attempts to understand the paradox.

Inspired by Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, OP, among others, the author begins his treatment of the issue as it appears in the Church's liturgy, rather than employing a historical-systematic approach. As the privileged expression of the Church's faith, the liturgy expresses the Church's relation to the Holy One, along with the admission of its sinfulness and need of forgiveness. Reviewing the major prayers of the Mass, Flanagan shows how "the assembly repeatedly moves toward participation in the holiness of God, all the while being reminded of its unworthiness before God, due to creaturely limitation and to sin, while yet beginning to really participate in that holiness in its pilgrim journey" (26).

Chapter Two clarifies the meaning of "sanctity," "sin," and "church." Refinement of these points is essential to understanding the paradox of sanctity and sin in the Church. Especially helpful is Flanagan's insistence that the Church is at once "universal" and "local." Someone searching for a contemporary exposition of these points would find this chapter a gold mine.

Building on previous material, Chapter Three answers "how" we believe the Church is holy and "how" we can say, at the same time, that the Church is sinful. Readers will find a review of the "indefectibility of the Church" and its "infallibility" key considerations.

“Have Mercy on Us, Lord, for We Have Sinned.” Chapter Four emphasizes the need for explicit and truthful admission of ecclesial sinfulness. Flanagan discusses sins of members of the Church; those committed by its leaders; the possibility of sin as a collective ecclesial action; and how, either in particular acts or in forms of “structural sin,” the Church as a community can be described as “sinful.” This last point receives extensive treatment, understandably so.

Chapter Five’s title, “Avoiding the Paradox of the Holy and Sinful Church,” takes issue with the position of those who explain holiness and sinfulness in the Church as “The Church being holy, but sinful in its members.” Based on his study of Karl Rahner, SJ, Yves Congar, OP, and others, Flanagan names this position as an ecclesiological mistake. He states that such a distinction posits “an idealized, ahistorical entity called the Church, distinct from the gathered assemblies of the faithful moving through history” (151). This conviction identifies his discomfort with such images as “Holy Mother Church” embracing “her sinful children.”

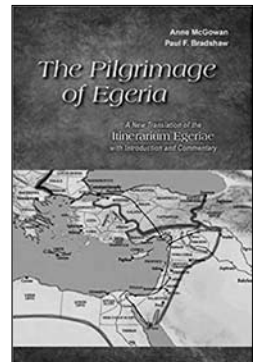
The final chapter, “Naming the Holy and Sinful Church,” offers a surprise ending which is left to its readers. It also provides five guidelines for discussion of ecclesial sin and sanctity. Guideline 5 (“The church is on pilgrimage towards its full holiness”) summarizes the content of the book. Recommended for readers having some college-level theological training.

Allan Laubenthal, STD
Rector Emeritus, Saint Mary Seminary
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Fans of liturgical study and the great pilgrim Egeria will rejoice in a new translation, commentary, and historical edition. Two excellent authors of liturgical studies, Anne McGowan and Paul Bradshaw, combine their talents to give us this fresh new edition from the academic arm of Liturgical Press.

Egeria took copious notes on her travels, describing in exhaustive detail her visits to religious institutions throughout Western Europe and the holy sites of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. Key discussions of this volume explore Egeria’s backstory, including her place of origin, status in the Church (namely, consecrated religious or lay woman), the years her “diary” was written, and her education.

Half of the book is devoted to the historical analysis of Egeria, the other half to the updated translation. Egeria’s translation into English is at

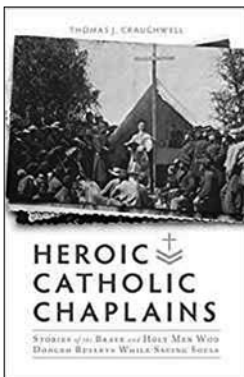


**THE PILGRIMAGE
OF EGERIA:
A TRANSLATION
OF THE
ITINERARIUM
EGERIAE
WITH
INTRODUCTION
AND
COMMENTARY**
Anne McGowan and
Paul F. Bradshaw
Collegetville,
Minnesota: Liturgical
Press Academic,
2018
248 pp., \$29.95

the top of the page with commentary at the bottom of the page.

This is a scholarly edition, filled with impressive details from the authors that provide for a great reliving of Egeria's liturgical adventures. Anyone wishing to learn the history of our Western rite must study Egeria's rich journals. *The Pilgrimage of Egeria: A Translation of the Itinerarium Egeriae with Introduction and Commentary* is an exceptional guide — a true map of the spiritual pilgrimage of this light from the fourth century.

John Thomas Lane, SSS
Pastor, Saint Paschal Baylon Church
Highland Heights, Ohio



**HEROIC
CATHOLIC
CHAPLAINS:
STORIES OF THE
BRAVE AND HOLY
MEN
WHO DODGED
BULLETS WHILE
SAVING SOULS**

Thomas J.
Craughwell
Charlotte, North
Carolina: Tan Books,
2018
216 pp., \$24.95

Thomas Craughwell pulls together much information from a variety of sources to provide the reader with stories of Catholic chaplains who served heroically in every war from the Revolutionary War through the war in Iraq.

Some of these chaplains have earlier been memorialized in statuary, plaques, and movies. For instance, Father Francis Duffy, who was a professor at Dunwoodie Seminary in New York and later served as a chaplain in the famous Irish 69th New York Brigade in World War I. His heroism was featured in the 1940 film *The Fighting 69th* and a bronze statue of him stands in Times Square.

In World War II, Father James O'Neill was asked by General George Patton to compose a prayer to ask God to clear the fog and rain so that he could push on to beat the German advance in Belgium. O'Neill wrote the prayer and Patton had it copied and distributed to his soldiers. They prayed it, and the skies cleared and the army pushed back the German advance. This prayer was memorialized in the movie *Patton*. Another priest figures in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*.

On the flip side, there is a priest whose actions did not stand up to Catholic practice. He was immediately recalled by his diocesan bishop when he "baptized" a cannon during the Civil War!

The bulk of the book relates the stories of still more chaplains who were truly heroic in encouraging and counseling the soldiers and sailors under their care. Many, like Father Duffy, lost their lives on the battlefield as they sought to drag the wounded out of harm's way or knelt to give absolution or the last rites to the dying or deceased soldiers. They also spent incalculable hours in field hospitals, comforting, encouraging, and praying with the wounded.

The author does not specifically articulate the reasons why many Catholic chaplains disobeyed their commanding officers who wanted them to stay behind the lines in order to keep them safe. It was the very nature of Catholic sacraments which prevented the chaplains from remaining out of harm's way when their men were being wounded or killed. The sacraments of confession and anointing of the sick (last rites) require the priest to be physically near, present. They needed to touch the wounded and the dying as they anointed them and be near them as they absolved them of their sins. They needed to be in the "thick of the battle" as those they served with were being wounded or killed by bullets, grenades, or shellfire. That set Catholic chaplains apart from other chaplains as they were compelled by faith and devotion to do seemingly heroic deeds.

Two Catholic chaplains have recently had their causes for canonization introduced. Father Emil Kapaun served in the Korean War and was captured. His heroism in the camp, in encouraging the prisoners to stay hopeful and getting them extra food — even sharing his own meager rations — became well known after the war. He died in the camp.

Father Vincent Capodanno, even after being seriously wounded in a battle in Vietnam, continued to drag the wounded to safety. His death, according to the soldiers who were with him, was not unexpected as he continuously placed himself in danger to rescue others and to provide them with the sacraments.

There is one section of the book that does not seem to fit: "The War Scientist" (pages 102-106). Craughwell raises the horrific effects of mustard gas in the First World War and introduces Fritz Haber, who invented the Haber-Bosch process critical to the creation of deadly chemical weapons. In these four pages, he uses a form of the word "Jew" eleven times. He then goes on to relate Haber's post-war achievements and, finally, lists by country the number of soldiers who were injured or killed by this gas. This really had no place in this book.

Craughwell's short book does a great service in propagating the heroic deeds of Catholic priests who have served as chaplains in our military services. He pulls together and summarizes in this volume information gathered from 45 books and articles written about the individuals highlighted.



Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor
Emmanuel



EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

Father Choy Ramos, SSS

Cleveland, Ohio

The Food That Satisfies

In our journey through life, we constantly need to be fed. We are nourished by the food we eat. We foster and sustain ourselves by our hopes, dreams, desires, and plans. We complement these experiences with the use of modern technologies to make our life easier and more manageable, but these cannot satisfy or enthrall us or fulfill our deep need for meaning.

On one occasion, I, together with a group of people from the Community of Blessed Couples Mission in the Philippines, went to Subic, Zambales, for a “Mission, Feeding, and Gift-Giving” to the Aeta or Agta community, from a remote part of Luzon. At lunchtime, I noticed that one of the children who participated in the feeding program ate only a portion of her meal. I asked her why. Her response was, *“I will share it with my mother who is at home ill.”*

The Aeta or Agta might not have the opportunity to celebrate the Eucharist regularly, but the value of sharing is implanted in their hearts and lives. That simple response from the indigenous girl left a big impression on me as a priest. At such a young age, she already knew how to share what she has with others. Isn’t that Eucharistic? She understood that her mother was hungry and needed to be fed physically and spiritually. Her mother’s hunger was satisfied when she shared her meal with her.

In the Eucharist, we experience the same encounter. The Eucharist is simple food. Nonetheless, it is the only food that truly satisfies us. In the Eucharist, we encounter Jesus who shares his life with us and in the process experience his love, his mercy, and his compassion. The Eucharist moves us beyond words to action. As we are immersed in the mystery of God’s love, we realize that we can and must act as Jesus did, and give of ourselves to others. In this way, we are in communion with him and manifest his presence.

“My flesh is real food, and my blood is real drink. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood, lives in me and I in him.”¹ What an astounding opportunity we have each time we participate in the Eucharist!

The experience I had with the Aeta or Agta that day taught me that witnessing to Jesus in the Eucharist is testifying by my life! I am integrated into Christ, united to his sacrifice. I become one with him, and he with me. My life, too, is meant to be given away, shared with others as freely and generously as Jesus did, as freely and generously as that little girl did!



403 ... Paris 17 Dec 61

“The soul who is resurrected with Our Lord is wise and intelligent, she understands and fathoms the things of God, she has intuition and that gives her freedom and she is not attached to anything.”

Mon Pere
Arrive au nom de Dieu
Sous la protection de la Vierge

Eymard
S. J. S.

voici le moment
de vous

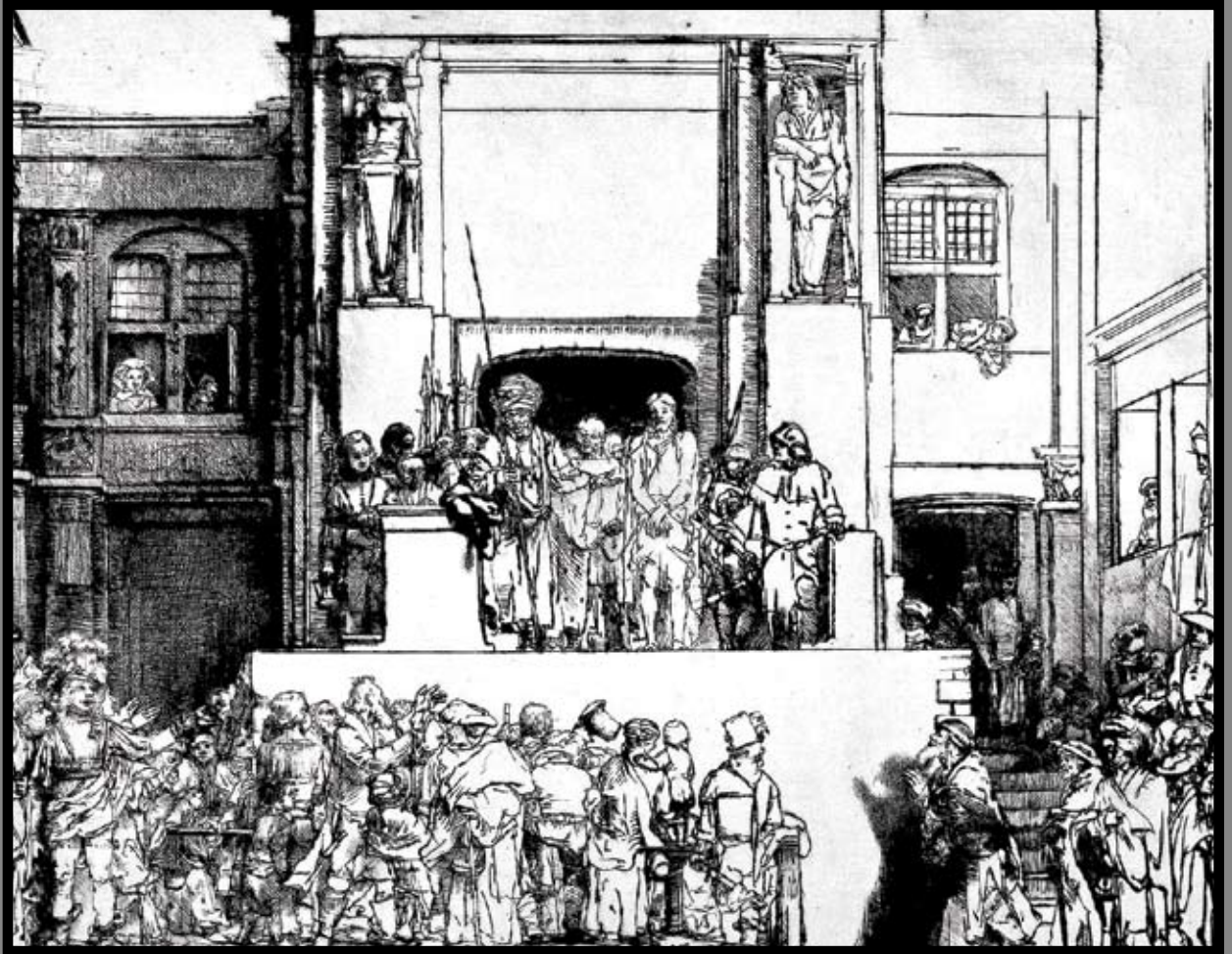
les seconds
bien - surtout les

piers
de tout mon coeur
de moi

Eymard

Saint Peter Julian Eymard





“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”

Luke 23:46