

Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality

May/June 2019



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EMMANUEL MAGAZINE (ISSN 0013-6719) is published bimonthly with 6 issues a year, by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. Phone (440) 449-2103. E-mail: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, Ohio and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS (print subscription includes access to digital edition): individual (U.S.) \$35.00 one year/ \$65.00 two years; Canadian and foreign \$40.00 one year/ \$75.00 two years, U.S. currency; single issues \$8.00 plus postage. EDITOR: 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland OH 44143. POSTMASTER: send address change to Emmanuel Magazine, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. ©2019

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EMMANUEL MAGAZINE is a member of the Catholic Press Association. Indexed by The Catholic Periodical and Literature Index.



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Emmanuel Magazine is published by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament is a Roman Catholic religious group of men whose mission is to assist the church in its efforts to form Christian communities whose center of life is the Eucharist. "Our ideal," as it is stated in our Rule of Life, "is to live the mystery of the Eucharist fully and to make known its meaning, so that Christ's reign may come and the glory of God be revealed to the world."



Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 125 Number 3



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FROM THE EDITOR

In early February, I was privileged to be one of the speakers at the Norwalk Catholic Club's 122nd Annual Lincoln Dinner memorializing the nation's 16th President. I was asked to offer a reflection on the Church.

It was a distinct honor to share the podium with Bishop Frank Caggiano of the Diocese of Bridgeport, who spoke passionately of three challenges for the local Church arising from last fall's Synod of Bishops on the Family, in which he participated, and with the noted historian and Lincoln scholar Harold Holzer, winner of The 2015 Gilder-Lehrman Lincoln Prize and other awards for his book *Lincoln and the Power of the Press*.

Hal Holzer is a prolific author and one of the country's leading authorities on Abraham Lincoln and the political culture of the Civil War era, but his theme for the evening was "Lincoln and Faith." Let me summarize some of his informative and uplifting remarks.

Lincoln never professed membership in any religious denomination, was not a regular churchgoer, and was largely silent on the matter of personal faith. In his early years especially, he was a religious skeptic, and his "creed" could be characterized as secular and philosophical in nature.

Toward the end of his life, however, a noticeable shift occurred. Lincoln increasingly spoke and wrote in religious terms and acknowledged the existence of a higher power. The deaths of two young sons (Edward in 1850, and Willie in 1862, while Lincoln was in office) devastated him and his wife Mary. He more frequently articulated a dependence on God. Willie's death, in particular, caused Lincoln to look to religion for answers and for solace. He suffered bouts of "melancholy" (depression), which intensified the anguish he felt as commander-in-chief in having

to send so many enlisted men to their deaths as the war dragged on.

Lincoln was versed in the Bible and included scriptural references in his speeches and writings. In his second inaugural address, revered for its call to national reconciliation and to caring for those who had borne the burden of war, he also referred to the length and the severity of the war as God's judgment on the nation, North and South alike, for its original sin of slavery.


"I have been driven many times upon my knees," he wrote, "by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day."

All of us, pastors, parents, teachers, caregivers to God's people in varied ways, can identify with these sentiments. We, too, are driven to our knees in prayer, carrying those we love and serve to God and to our gentle Savior in the nearness and intimacy of the Eucharist, for healing, for grace, and for mercy.

Prayer is vitally important for all of us. A loving relationship with God is the foundation of all we do and are as servants of the Gospel.

In This Issue

As we bring the "pastoral year" to a close . . . in the fullness of Easter joy, in the celebration of great solemnities and feasts, in seasonal rites of first sacraments, graduations, and weddings, and in the transition to summer Ordinary Time, may the Eucharist be your nourishment and strength!

Thank you for being loyal subscribers to *Emmanuel*, and please, if you are so moved, consider giving subscriptions to the Magazine of Eucharistic Spirituality to others. Like so many Catholic periodicals today, we face the crunch of declining print subscriptions and rising production costs. We appreciate you very much. 

Anthony Schueller, SSS
Editor



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Eucharist as a Reconciling Event

by Anthony Schueller, SSS

At the center of our life as Christians is the mystery of a boundless love that heals and restores our fallen humanity. It is this redeeming mystery that we proclaim at every Eucharist.

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WE HAVE JUST CELEBRATED THE SACRED TRIDUUM, THE FOCAL POINT OF THE liturgical year. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* says: "Holy Mother Church believes that she should celebrate the saving work of her divine Spouse in a sacred commemoration on certain days throughout the course of the year. Once each week, on the day which she has called the Lord's Day, she keeps the memory of the Lord's resurrection. She also celebrates it once every year, together with his blessed passion, at Easter, that most solemn of all feasts.

"In the course of the year, moreover, she unfolds the whole mystery of Christ. . . . Thus, recalling the mysteries of the redemption, she opens up to the faithful the riches of her Lord's powers and merits, so that these are in some way made present in every age; the faithful lay hold of them and are filled with saving grace" (1163).

The underlying spirituality of the Triduum is beautifully expressed in number 1168: "Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance. Gradually, on either side of this source, the year is transfigured by the liturgy. It really is a 'year of the Lord's favor.' The economy of salvation is at work within the framework of time, but since its fulfillment in the Passover of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the culmination of history is anticipated 'as a foretaste,' and the kingdom of God enters into our time."

Throughout its history, the Catholic Church has embraced a remarkably rich understanding of reconciliation, not limited to a single sacrament. In the waters of baptism, sin is remitted, washed

away, and the individual is restored to loving intimacy with God. Sin is forgiven in the sacrament of reconciliation where the penitent encounters the overwhelming mercy and goodness of God. Sick and suffering members of the body of Christ experience forgiveness, too, in the anointing of the sick. God, who is rich in mercy, channels mercy into our lives in countless ways. Can we speak of the Eucharist as a reconciling event?

The Eucharist and Reconciliation

There is a modern, quietly elegant chapel on the grounds of Bethany Center in Lutz, Florida, the retreat house of the Diocese of Saint Petersburg. The central focus of the chapel is the altar, around which retreatants and guests gather for prayer and for the celebration of the Eucharist. The space is warm, sunlight, open to the surrounding acreage and a nearby lake.

As you look past the altar to a bank of windows along the far wall, you see through the clear glass a freestanding Calvary outside, with life-size bronze statues of Mary and the apostle John surrounding the figure of a dying Christ on the cross. It is a graphic reminder of the link between the Eucharist and the redemptive act it memorializes until the Lord's return one day.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explores the connection between the Eucharist and reconciliation. In number 1393, we read: ". . . The body of Christ we receive in Holy Communion is 'given up for us' and the blood we drink 'shed for the many for the forgiveness of sins.' For this reason, the Eucharist cannot unite us to Christ without at the same time cleansing us from past sins and preserving us from future sins." The Eucharist strengthens us to live good and holy lives in the power of Christ's saving death.

Beyond the Catechism, frequent references to reconciliation and the forgiveness of sin are found in the Church's great prayer, the Eucharist. We ask forgiveness at various points in the liturgy: the Penitential Act, the Gloria, The Lord's Prayer, the Lamb of God, etc. At the very heart of the Mass, the Eucharistic Prayer, the priest recalls the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "This is my body, which will be given up for you. . . . This is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins."

There are two Eucharistic Prayers for Reconciliation in the Roman



Missal as well as a Mass for the Forgiveness of Sins. The Prayer after Communion reads: "Grant us, merciful God, that, receiving in this gift the forgiveness of sins, we may be able by your grace to avoid sinning from now on and to serve you in sincerity of heart." And, of course, the prayers of the Lenten season echo with themes of forgiveness and reconciliation.

An Enduring Reality

These passages and others touch an ancient vein in the Church, dating back to New Testament times. The late biblical scholar Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS, wrote in *The Eucharist in the New Testament and the Early Church*: "For Matthew, 'the forgiveness of sins' was a primary purpose of the Eucharist" (96).

The connection between the Eucharist and reconciliation also features prominently in writings and sermons of the patristic period, including those of the bishop-theologian Augustine of Hippo. In an article published online, "The Eucharist as Reconciliation," the Oblate priest and author Ronald Rolheiser reflects on this:

"Few persons have understood the Eucharist as deeply as Saint Augustine. His homilies on it are precious, particularly those he delivered to newly baptized adults who were receiving the Eucharist for the first time. In one of these, he tells them that their sins are forgiven at the Eucharist:

"Next [at the Eucharist] The Lord's Prayer is said. . . . Why is it said before receiving the body and blood of Christ? Because perhaps on account of our human fragility our minds have imagined something which is not becoming, our eyes have seen something which is not decent, or our ears heard something which was not fitting. If perhaps such things have been kept in because of temptation and the fragility of human life, they are washed away by The Lord's Prayer at the moment we say, 'Forgive us our trespasses' so that we can safely approach the Eucharist.'

"According to Augustine, when we stand around the altar at the Eucharist as a community and sincerely pray The Lord's Prayer, any sins we have committed are forgiven. The Eucharist . . . is the ancient water of cleansing, now turned into the new wine of reconciliation that purifies us so that we can enter the house and celebrate."

In *Sermon 227*, preached on Easter to the newly initiated, Augustine states: "That bread which you see on the altar, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the body of Christ. That chalice, or rather, what is in that chalice, having been sanctified by the word of God, is the blood of Christ. Through that bread and wine, the Lord Christ willed to commend his body and blood, which he poured out for us unto the forgiveness of sins."

The saving reality that the Eucharist proclaims is the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Christ has achieved the forgiveness of our sins; he is our peace and our reconciliation with God and one another, as the apostle Paul testifies: "Jesus was handed over for our transgressions and was raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25).

God, who is rich in mercy, channels mercy into our lives in countless ways.

Amid the religious upheaval of the Sixteenth Century that saw Western Christianity torn along sectarian lines, the Council of Trent made the following declaration: ". . . The holy council teaches that [the Mass] is truly propitiatory and has this effect, that if we, contrite and penitent, with sincere heart and upright faith, with fear and reverence, draw nigh to God, 'we obtain mercy and find grace in seasonable aid' (Heb 4:16). For, appeased by this sacrifice, the Lord grants the grace and gift of penitence and pardons even the gravest crimes and sins. For the victim is one and the same, the same now offering by the ministry of priests who then offered himself on the cross . . ." (Session XXII [September 1562], Chapter II).

Remembering and Re-presenting

The reconciling power of the Eucharist comes from the mystery at its center. In the Eucharist, we *remember* God's great work of redemption on behalf of all: the dying and rising of Jesus Christ.

Ancient Jews believed that a past saving deed of God could be *re-presented* through narrative, ritual, and gesture. This belief is central to Jewish feasts like Passover, observed through the ages in remembrance of the Hebrew slaves' deliverance from Egypt and their journey to the Promised Land.



This sense of “sacred memory” (*anamnēsis* in Greek) makes the past event live again in the present moment, in the minds and hearts and faith of the participants. Thus, they can appropriate its power and move forward in confident hope, knowing that the same God who acted so decisively in the past continues to lead them through present challenges into the future.

In his ground-breaking work *The Shape of the Liturgy*, the English Benedictine Dom Gregory Dix reminds us that Jesus, at table with his disciples in the Upper Room on the night of his betrayal and arrest, told them to “do,” to reenact, the ancient ritual of the Passover no longer in memory of Moses, but henceforth with a new meaning, “for the *anamnēsis* (remembering) of him.” By commanding them to “do this in memory of me,” Jesus gave the rite a new meaning and a new reality.

“For Matthew, ‘the forgiveness of sins’ was a primary purpose of the Eucharist.”

Dix asks in the conclusion to the book, “Was ever another command so obeyed?” This is his answer:

“For century after century, spreading slowly to every continent and country and among every race on earth, this action has been done, in every conceivable human circumstance, for every conceivable human need from infancy and before it to extreme old age and after it, from the pinnacle of earthly greatness to the refuge of fugitives in the caves and dens of the earth. Men have found no better thing than this to do. . . . And best of all, week by week and month by month, on a hundred thousand successive Sundays, faithfully, unfailingly, across all the parishes of Christendom, the pastors have done this just to make the *plebs sancta Dei* — the holy common people of God.

“The sheer stupendous quantity of the love of God which this ever-repeated action has drawn from the obscure Christian multitudes through the centuries is in itself an overwhelming thought. . . . It is because it became embedded deep down in the life of the Christian peoples, coloring all the *via vitae* of the ordinary man and woman, marking its personal turning-points, marriage, sickness, death, and the rest, running through it year by year with the feasts and fasts and

the rhythm of Sundays . . ." (744-745).

Conclusion

During the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy (2016), Pope Francis stated often that in the Eucharist we experience both the forgiveness of God *and* the call to forgive. This has been a consistent theme of his papacy. In a homily on February 12, 2014, he said: "We celebrate the Eucharist not because we are worthy, but because we recognize our need for God's mercy, incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . . We renew the gift of the body and blood of Christ for the remission of sins, and our hearts are enlarged to receive and show mercy."

"The Eucharist . . . is the ancient water of cleansing, now turned into the new wine of reconciliation."

I frequently tell people, especially when I am teaching or preaching, that the Eucharist is *my* prayer too. Presiding at the Eucharist is more than just a function of my being a priest in the Church and therefore a leader of public prayer. Especially when I kneel at the altar after the breaking of the bread and acknowledge my sinfulness to God quietly, and then take the Eucharistic bread and the cup in my hands and show them to the assembly, I say with my brothers and sisters, emphatically and humbly, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed."

The love of God in Christ makes us worthy! In welcoming us to communion in his body and blood, the Lord Jesus bestows gifts of healing and reconciliation on us. He says, "My grace is sufficient. Take and eat!" He also sends us to the world around us as emissaries of reconciliation. It is overwhelming to be so loved.

I close with a few verses of the magnificent seventh-century hymn "At the Lamb's High Feast We Sing":

At the Lamb's high feast we sing
praise to our victorious King,
who has washed us in the tide
flowing from his wounded side.



Praise we Christ, whose love divine
gives his sacred blood for wine,
gives his body for the feast,
Christ the victim, Christ the priest.

Where the paschal blood is poured
death's dread angel sheathes the sword;
Israel's hosts triumphant go
through the wave that drowns the foe.

Praise we Christ, whose blood was shed,
paschal victim, paschal bread;
with sincerity and love
eat we manna from above.



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 J, K, L, and M are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during May and June.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Robert Hugh Benson on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

Robert Hugh Benson's conversion to Catholicism made him a leading figure in the Catholic literary movement of his day. His writings emphasized Christ's friendship with us and his humility, both of which are wondrously revealed in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

ROBERT HUGH BENSON (1871-1914) WAS ONE OF THE BRIGHT LIGHTS OF the Catholic literary revival in Great Britain in the early part of the twentieth century. The son of E. W. Benson (d. 1896), the Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury, he was educated at Eton College, studied classics and theology at Trinity College, Cambridge, and was ordained an Anglican priest at the age of 25. His conversion to Catholicism in 1903 caused an uproar in the Anglican circles of the day and became the subject of much controversy. He went to Rome to study for the Catholic priesthood, was ordained in 1904, ministered as a university chaplain at Cambridge in 1908, and named a Monsignor in 1911.

The author of many novels, plays, poetry, and spiritual works, his better known works include *Lord of the World* (1907), *The Paradoxes of Catholicism* (1913), and *Confessions of a Convert* (1913). The first of these is widely considered the world's first dystopian novel; the second demonstrates the breadth of his theological knowledge and his popularity as a preacher; the third numbers among the great classics in the literature of conversion.

His teaching on the Eucharist unfolds in the context of our relationship with Christ and is clearly evident in his devotional classic *The Friendship of Christ* (1912).¹

Benson's Theological Outlook

Friendship lies at the very heart of Benson's theological outlook: "If there is anything clear in the Gospels it is this — that Jesus Christ

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



first and foremost desires our friendship."² Such friendship is similar to what happens between two human beings, but goes far beyond it: "Certainly it is a friendship between his soul and ours; but that soul of his is united to divinity. A single *individualistic* friendship with him, therefore, does not exhaust his capacities. He is man, but he is not merely a man. . . . He is the eternal Word by whom all things were made and are sustained."³

For Benson, the friendship of Christ touches us both interiorly and exteriorly. Interiorly, Christ wishes to be admitted "not merely to the throne of the heart or to the tribunal of conscience, but to that inner secret chamber of the soul where a man is most himself, and therefore most utterly alone."⁴ There, in that inner spiritual sanctum, "we pass from a knowledge about him to a knowledge of him."⁵

We begin to see that eternal life impresses upon us in the present moment and consists of a personal encounter with Jesus and, through him, an intimate knowledge of God, the Father. This interior friendship of Christ with the soul is possible not only for Catholics, but for all Christians, and potentially for the entire human family: "For our Lord is the 'light that enlightens every man,' it is his voice that speaks through conscience, however faulty that instrument may be; it is he, since he is the only absolute, who is the dim ideal figure discerned standing in the gloom of all hearts who desire him; it is he whom Marcus Aurelius and Gautama and Confucius and Mahomet, with all their sincere disciples, so far as they were true to themselves desired, even though they never heard his historical name of Jesus, or, having heard it, rejected him, so far as that rejection was without their own fault."⁶

Benson tells the story of an old Hindu who, upon hearing one sermon about Christ, requested baptism at once. When asked how he could ask for it after hearing just one homily, he replied: "But I have known him and have been seeking him all my life long."⁷

In addition to knowing him interiorly, Benson maintains that we must also encounter Christ in the myriad ways in which he comes to us in the external world: "He must be known (if his relation with us is to be that which he desires) in all those activities and manifestations in which he displays himself. One who knows him therefore solely as an interior companion and guide, however dear and adorable, but does not know him in the Blessed Sacrament — one whose heart burns as he walks with Jesus on the way, but whose eyes are held that he knows

him not in the breaking of the bread, knows but one perfection out of ten thousand. And again, he who calls him friend in Communion, but whose devotion is so narrow and restricted that he does not recognize him in that mystical body in which he dwells and speaks on earth — one, in fact, who is a *dévot*, an individualist, and does not therefore understand that corporate religion which is the very essence of Catholicism; or, again, who knows him in all these ways, yet does not know him in his vicar, or in his priest, or in his mother — or again, who knows him in all these ways — (who is, in popular language, an “admirable Catholic”) — but who does not recognize the right of the sinner to ask for mercy, or the beggar for alms, in his name: or again, who recognizes him under sensational circumstances, but does not under dreary ones — who gives lavishly to the first beggar who pleads in Christ’s name in the street, but fails to find him in the unappealing dullard — those, in short, who recognize Christ in one or two or three aspects, but not in all — (not, at least, in all those of which Christ himself has explicitly spoken) — can never rise to that height of intimacy and knowledge of that ideal friend which he himself desires, and has declared to be within our power to attain.”⁸

Through friendship with Christ, eternal life impresses upon us in the present moment and consists of a personal encounter with Jesus and, through him, an intimate knowledge of the Father.

Benson understands that Christ calls us to encounter him both interiorly and exteriorly, both “within us” and “in our midst.” The kingdom of God is like a two-edged sword that cuts through the sinews of the soul and enables it to sense his palpable presence in the ordinary events of the day. Christ desires to be at the heart of all our human relationships. He gave us the Eucharist to unite us in a personal bond with him and with one another.

Benson’s Teaching on the Eucharist

For Benson, the Eucharist is one of the primary ways by which we come to encounter Christ in our midst: “It is not enough to know Christ in one manner only: we are bound, if we desire to know him on his own terms and not on ours, to recognize him under every form which he chooses to use. It is not enough to say, ‘Interiorly he is my friend,



therefore I need nothing else.' It is not loyal friendship to repudiate, for example, the Church or the sacraments as unnecessary, without first inquiring whether or not he has instituted these things as ways through which he designs to approach us. And, particularly, we must remember, in the Blessed Sacrament he actually conveys to us gifts which we cannot otherwise claim. He brings near to us, and unites to us, not only his divinity, but that same dear and adorable human nature which he assumed on earth for this very purpose."⁹

According to Benson, "Jesus Christ . . . dwells in our tabernacles today as surely as he dwelt in Nazareth, and in the very same human nature; and he dwells there, largely, for this very purpose — that he may make himself accessible to all who know him interiorly and desire to know him more perfectly."¹⁰

This is an expression of Jesus' humility: "Could there be anything more characteristic of the Christ who dwells in the heart than that he who is so simple interiorly, who lies patiently within the chamber of the soul, should lie also in the realm without, desiring us to acknowledge him not only in ourselves, but outside ourselves; not only in interior consciousness, but also, in a sense, in that very realm of space and time which so often leads to obscure his presence in the world?"¹¹

Christ's humility represents the seal of his friendship: "It is in this manner, then, that he fulfills that essential of true friendship, which we call humility. He places himself at the mercy of the world that he desires to win for himself. He offers himself there in a poorer disguise even than 'in the days of his flesh,' yet, by faith and teachings of his Church, by the ceremonies with which she greets his presence, and by the recognition by his friends, he indicates to those who long to recognize him and who love him, and (though they may not know it), that it is he himself who is there, the desire of all nations and the lover of every soul."¹²

For Benson, Christ's humility, manifested in his presence in the tabernacle, was made possible by the deeper humility of his becoming present on the altar in the form of a victim: "In the sacrifice of the Mass, he presents himself before the world, as well as before the eyes of the eternal Father, in the same significance as that in which he hung upon the cross, performing the same act which he did once for all, the same act by which he displayed that passion of friendship in whose name he claims our hearts, the climax of that greatest love of all by which he

'laid down his life for his friends.'"13

Benson points out, moreover, that the Eucharist embodies one last humiliation of Christ: "The tabernacle . . . presents Christ to us as friend; the altar presents him performing before our eyes that eternal act by which he wins in his humanity the right to demand our friendship. . . . And yet there is one last step of humiliation, even deeper down, by which he comes to us — that step by which our victim and friend descends to be our food. For, so great is his love to us that it is not enough for him to remain as an object of our adoration, not enough for him to lie there as our sin-bearer — not enough, above all, for him to dwell within our souls in an interior friendship in a mode apprehensible only to illuminated eyes. But, in Communion, he hurries down that very stairway of sense up which we so often seek to climb in vain. While we are 'yet a great way off' he runs to meet us; and there, flinging aside those poor signs of royalty with which we strive to honor him, leaving there the embroidery and the flowers and the lights, he not merely unites himself to us, soul to soul, in the intimacy of prayer, but body to body in the sensible form of his sacramental life."¹⁴

Christ gave us the Eucharist to unite us in a personal bond with him and with one another. Like him, we need to be present to others, give ourselves to them, and become nourishment for them.

Jesus' humility reveals him as our "supreme friend."¹⁵ He has humbled himself by being present to us in the tabernacle. He has taken our sins upon himself in the sacrifice of the Mass. He has united us to himself, in both body and soul, by giving us his own flesh and blood to eat and drink.

Benson presents the Eucharist as the sacrament of Christ's friendship, and it is marked, he says, by these three humble expressions of his love. Through his hidden presence in the tabernacle, Christ makes himself available to all people throughout history. In his sacrifice on the altar, he offers himself up for the sins of all humanity. In nourishing his followers with his body and blood, he unites them with his divinity and glorified humanity and enables them to enter the presence of the Father.

We should learn something from Christ's sacramental humility. Like him, we, too, need to be present to others, give ourselves to them, and



become nourishment for them. To bear the name Christian means that we seek to walk humbly with Jesus along the way of discipleship.

Some Further Insights

While the purpose of the above description was to paint in broad strokes a picture of Benson's views on the Eucharist against the background of his overall spiritual outlook, the following remarks develop these insights in more detail to provide a better sense of the place of the sacrament in his life and thought.

1. To begin with, Benson treats the Eucharist from the perspective of Christ's presence in the external order. In doing so, he underscores Christ's rootedness in the real world and evades any temptation to limit him only to the subjective word of the believer. Although an interior knowledge of Christ is important, an authentic friendship must seek him in all the avenues that he has opened up to the believer.

To ignore such in presence in the Church, in the sacraments, and especially in the Eucharist does not do justice to his universal Lordship. Limiting him merely to the interior realm can make the believer overly introspective and detach him or her from engaging the external world in constructive and meaningful ways.

2. Benson presents the Eucharist as the sacrament of Christ's friendship. It is the place where the internal and external orders meet and the means by which Christ draws the believer into a deeply personal and intimate relationship. Friendship with Christ, in other words, involves a mutual relationship with a Divine Person, characterized by a mutual indwelling of heart, mind, and soul.

This friendship is centered on the love of the Father and results in our participation in the divine nature by means of our sharing in Christ's glorified humanity. In the Eucharist, Christ becomes our food so our humanity might mingle with his humanity and share in his divinity.

3. The Eucharist embodies Christ's humility, which Benson identifies as an essential mark of true friendship. In this sacrament, Christ empties himself and meets us where we are. He enters time and space and becomes present to us. He does so, in order to enter into communion with us and give us a share in the intimate love of the Trinity.

This divine self-emptying reveals something of the very nature of God. "The Good is self-diffusive," we are told.¹⁶ God does not desire to lord his divinity over us, but rather seeks to share it with as many people as possible. The Eucharist is the way he chose to be present to us through time by giving himself up for us and becoming for us our nourishment and source of hope.

4. Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament is a perfect example of Christ's divine humility. His presence in the tabernacle is just as real as when he lived in Nazareth and walked the roads of Galilee. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (Jn 1:14).¹⁷ Jesus' hidden life in Nazareth is a foreshadowing of his hidden presence in the Blessed Sacrament.

The God who humbled himself to dwell among men continues to humble himself to this day. His presence in the tabernacle points to his yearning to dwell in the tabernacle of our hearts. Because of his love for us, however, he will enter only when he is invited to enter there and rest his head.

The Eucharist is the seal of Christ's friendship and the sign of his humility.

5. Christ's divine humility is also present in the sacrifice of the altar. At the Eucharist, the one sacrifice of Calvary becomes present in a real, powerful (albeit unbloody) way. As Jesus himself reminds us, "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (Jn 15:13). Jesus does not look upon us as his slaves or servants, but as his friends.

At every Mass, the same Jesus who took our sins upon himself and offered himself on Golgotha in our stead some two thousand years ago, immerses us in that one timeless, redeeming event. At every Mass, Jesus comes to us as both priest and victim. He takes our sins upon himself, offers himself on our behalf, and washes us clean in his sacrificial blood.

6. At the Eucharist, Christ's humility is also manifest in his becoming food and nourishment for us. He emptied himself not only by becoming human in the mystery of the incarnation, but continues to pour himself into bread and wine in the mystery of the Eucharist,



transforming them into his glorified body and blood, so that he could enter not only into our souls, but also into our bodily existence.

He does so out of his desire to enter into friendship with the entire person — body, soul, and spirit — and elevate us beyond our nature so that we might share in his divinity: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him” (Jn 6:54-56).

7. Finally, Jesus is not content with befriending us only in our interior lives, but wishes to enter into loving intimacy with us on every level of our human makeup. The Eucharist is the primary means he uses to bridge the inner subjective world of believers with the external world that he created and over which he reigns as Lord.

In this sacrament, he humbles himself by making himself present to us in the tabernacle, by laying his life down for us at the altar, and by giving us his own body and blood as food to eat at his table. These humble actions are not isolated, but related parts of a single divine plan to win our friendship.

If humility is an essential sign of true friendship, then the Eucharist is the sacrament par excellence of divine/human friendship. As friends of Jesus, we are called to follow in his footsteps by being present to others, by giving ourselves to others, and by becoming food and nourishment for them.

Conclusion

It has been more than a hundred years since Robert Hugh Benson died at the young age of 42, while preaching a mission in Salford, Greater Manchester. Although he was an important figure in the Catholic literary revival of his day, his memory has largely faded from today’s Catholic consciousness, and his works do not attract as wide a readership as their quality deserve.

A convert to Catholicism, he stands with men like John Henry Newman, Evelyn Waugh, and Ronald Knox for the depth of his learning and the passion with which he embraced his newfound faith.

A talented author with a wide range of literary interests, Benson was

able to probe the teachings of the Catholic faith and help his readers discover things they had never seen before. The friendship of Christ is a case in point. He used the metaphor of friendship as a way of tying together both the subjective and objective world of his readers and did so in a way that enabled these horizons to blend and exist in harmony. Friendship, he believed, was all that Christ wanted from us. It was the very secret of the saints, who in the early Church and the days of late antiquity were known as the “friends of God.”¹⁸

The Eucharist, for Benson, is the seal of Christ’s friendship. In it, Jesus undergoes a threefold humiliation by making himself present to us in the tabernacle, by laying down his life for us at the altar, and by offering his own body and blood for nourishment at the table. Since humility lies at the heart of authentic friendship, the sacrament becomes, for him, the sacrament of Christ’s friendship. Those who receive it are called to follow Christ by allowing him to become himself in them — and vice versa. They are called to listen to his words — and to do likewise.



Notes

¹ For biographical profiles of Robert Hugh Benson, see Joseph Pearce, “R. H. Benson: *Unsung Genius*,” *Catholic Authors*, <http://www.catholicauthors.com/benson.html>; Michael Keating, “Robert Hugh Benson (1871-1914),” *Crisis* (September 10, 2013), <https://www.crisismagazine.com/2013/robert-hugh-benson-1871-1914>.

² Robert Hugh Benson, *The Friendship of Christ* (Chicago, IL: The Thomas More Press, 1984), 21.

³ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹² *Ibid.*, 55-56.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁶ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names*, chap. 4.

¹⁷ All quotations from Scripture come from *The Catholic Study Bible*, Second Edition. *The New American Bible, Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁸ See Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 54-80.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Love, and Believe What You Will

by Peter Schineller, SJ

Love is at the center of the mystery of God and Christ's incarnation. What does love mean and what is its relationship to faith?

Following assignments in Africa and Jordan, Father Peter Schineller currently serves on the staff of the Jogues Retreat Center in Cornwall, New York.

DOES WHAT WE BELIEVE IN REALLY MATTER? THE TITLE OF THIS REFLECTION SEEMS to say that it does not. It implies that love is at the center, the most important part of our life. True or false? Do our beliefs matter, make any difference?

An excerpt from a book published in 1960 provides the basis for this reflection. The book is *The Discovery of God* by theologian and later Cardinal Henri de Lubac. The excerpt has three points which we will reflect upon in turn. He writes:

"'Love, and do what you will,' Saint Augustine said, if you love enough to act, in every circumstance, according to the dictates of love."

"One might also say, 'Love, and believe what you will,' if you know how to extract all the light from love, whose source is not in you."

"But do not rush to the conclusion that you know what love is" (*The Discovery of God*, 159-60).

Love, and Do What You Will

We start with the first sentence: "'Love, and do what you will,' Saint Augustine said, if you love enough to act, in every circumstance, according to the dictates of love."

No doubt we have often heard these words of Augustine, with various interpretations and responses. They have withstood the test of time. If you truly love, truly are a person of love, then whatever you do will be good, will be in accord with the law of God.

The quote is originally found in Augustine's *Sermon on 1 John 4:4-12*:

What I insist upon: human actions can only be understood by their root in love. All kinds of actions might appear good without proceeding from the root of love. Remember, thorns also have flowers: some actions seem truly savage, but are done for the sake of discipline motivated by love. Once and for all, I give you this one short command: love, and do what you will. If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good. . . .

Love, and Believe What You Will

Then de Lubac moves from Saint Augustine to an interesting variation or exemplification, a phrase I do not ever recall seeing or hearing. He writes: "Love, and believe what you will." Yet this is a phrase that I feel very much at home with. What does it mean, what follows from it?

As with Augustine, it starts and presumes you are a loving person, that love is strong and at the center of your life. Then it continues in a different direction. Instead of looking, as Augustine does, at one's deeds, one's actions ("Do what you will"), it turns to the mind, to our way of thinking and believing, and says, "Believe what you will." It relativizes what one thinks or believes. It says in effect that one's creed, one's belief system is secondary — secondary to love!

To put it bluntly, de Lubac suggests that one may not believe in God or in the Church or in Jesus Christ or in the Bible. But if one loves, that person is right in God's eyes, right in the long run. We might say that he echoes 1 Peter 4:8: "Above all, hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." De Lubac affirms that love covers a multitude of sins, including a multitude of theological errors, heresies, mistakes, misbeliefs, including atheism!

Might we not say that this becomes a new way to look at our fellow humans, our brothers and sisters — and ourselves — as Christians? It puts the emphasis where it should be: on the centrality of love. De Lubac probably intends to include under love, both love of God and love of neighbor. But I believe we can also say that love of neighbor alone is sufficient. We can say this by reflecting on the importance of "love of neighbor" in the Scriptures.



In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 25, we have the description of the last judgment. Note that the criterion of judgment is not belief in God, not membership in the Church, not baptism, but whether one reaches out to help the poor, the person in need. "I was hungry, thirsty, in prison, etc., and you visited me." Love of neighbor is *the* criterion. The person in need is where we not only touch and meet Jesus. It is the place where salvation is gained or lost.

The Gospel of John and the First Letter of John likewise affirm this centrality, and indeed the priority, of love of neighbor. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another" (13:34) and "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (15:12).

John does not deny the importance of love of God, but the emphasis here is strongly on love of neighbor. The Letter of John is even stronger: "The message from the beginning is that we should love one another" (1 Jn 3:14). He adds that "those who say 'I love God' and hate their brothers and sisters are liars, for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen" (1 Jn 4:20).

Paul, too, emphasizes love of neighbor. "The commandments . . . are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbor as yourself'" (Rom 13:9). Addressing the Corinthians, Paul emphasizes that faith must also lead to love: "If I have faith but do not have love, I am nothing" (1 Cor 13:2).

If you truly love, truly are a person of love, then whatever you do will be good.

The Letter of James puts love at the center when it states that "religion pure and undefiled is to care for the widow" (Jas 1:26). He continues that "faith without works is dead" (Jas 2:26). Dare we say that in reality there are not two great commandments, but one, namely, to love the neighbor and that in loving the neighbor we are loving God!

Do Not Rush to the Conclusion That You Know What Love Is

Now we turn to the third sentence of de Lubac. He wants to remind us that true love of neighbor is a sacrificial, selfless love. We hear in the words of Dorothy Day: "Love in action is harsh and dreadful when

compared to love in dreams." Love involves sacrificing oneself, one's self-interest. It involves dying to self and living for others. It involves reaching out, sharing, and caring for others.

Does this emphasis on love lead us to say or think that what one believes is not important, not significant? Not exactly, but it does relativize our creedal systems, our beliefs. In effect it is saying, I believe, that "outside of love of neighbor, no salvation." What you believe may be correct or incorrect. It may be very important for one, but it is always secondary to love.

One may in fact deny the existence of God, deny the existence of heaven and hell; one may not believe in Jesus Christ or a Church. But if that person loves the neighbor, then he or she can be with God, and we believe that God is with them.

There is a priority of love over faith.

Indeed, there is a priority of love over faith. Love is more revealing, more evident, more difficult and more grace-filled and grace-supported. "Love, and believe what you will" means that God looks to the heart over the head. Belief in the Creed remains. It is important. It gives us a worldview, and in that worldview, we see, know, are challenged to love, to show love, to be love. In fact, the Christian Creed teaches us that love is important, that love is at the center, and that God is love.

We dare to say that at the heart of religion is love, and that all creeds, all beliefs must lead to love.


Concluding Comments

The words of de Lubac, "Love, and believe what you will," lead us back to the center — to ask basic questions such as: What is Christianity all about? Where do we meet God? How do we serve God? What does Jesus Christ reveal and call us to? What are we here on earth for? What is the purpose of our lives?" The answer to these questions must always include a reference to love, for God is love.

With a sense of humor, but with deep insight, I recall hearing someone say that "to be a good Jew, you do not have to believe in God, just do what God wants you to do." For the Christian, indeed for everyone, that



means to love the neighbor. In other words, to be a good Christian or Catholic, or a good human person, what really counts is love.

We show love to God by loving our neighbor. This is what Christ teaches, and what the Church teaches. At bottom and in the end, it will all come down to this — did we love our neighbor? 

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EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Eucharist and the Extraordinary Power of Ordinary Time

by Mark C. McCann

There is much more to Ordinary Time than we can first imagine and believe.

THROUGHOUT OUR LIVES, WE ARE ALL DRIVEN TO FIND RECOGNITION AND PURPOSE as we seek to fill the emptiness in our hearts. So many of us spend our days looking to accomplish extraordinary deeds, often missing the message that the mundane, day-to-day activities of life reveal to us. We are so determined to leave our mark on the world that we forget that in every moment, God is leaving his mark on us.

I must confess, as a man in ministry I have for too long striven for personal excellence, and not always for the right reasons. I confess, too, that I have sometimes been so caught up with the “more excellent” liturgical seasons of the Church year that I have failed to listen to the still small voice of God speaking to me in the simple beauty and profound depth of Ordinary Time.

Lately, however, I have been reminded through trial and triumph, just how wonderful and blessed these “ordinary” days really are. In them, I have discovered a deeper appreciation for the Eucharist and the extraordinary power it has to settle my soul in a place of perfect satisfaction.

Come Away and Rest a While

I absolutely love incarnational theology. It is why Advent and Christmas resonate so powerfully in my soul, and why Lent and Easter often drive me to a period of deep inner contemplation and physical discipline. It is also why the Eucharist and the sacraments in general cause my heart to beat with anticipation and joy each time I receive them. But recent struggles in my life during the closing of the old year and the subsequent changes that followed in the new caused me to step back and view my life and God’s incarnational influence in a new way.

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The simple pleasures of life began to please me more. The personal goals that had been shaping my writing and ministry began to take their proper place as the ordinary days of the church year resumed. Those times I was able to get to daily Mass and receive the Eucharist brought me incredible contentment that washed over me, not like a crashing wave upon the shore, but like a gentle summer shower to cool my burning ambitions and my restless, scorched soul.

Not So Ordinary Time

Ordinary Time allows us to walk the roads of ancient Palestine with Jesus, witnessing his miracles and hearing his teachings as he calls the world to repent and believe the good news. We experience the emotions of everyday people calling out for healing. We see the wonder and confusion in the disciples' eyes as the Master turns their worlds upside down. We hear the anger and hatred in the words of the teachers of the law as they attempt to trap the Lord in speech and take his life. The 5,000 are fed from five loaves and a few fish. The parables move the hearts of the people and challenge them to take a stand in the kingdom of God. Every moment is an opportunity to see more than our eyes and ears reveal.

As we strive to leave our mark on the world, we can forget that in every moment, God is leaving his mark on us.

The messages I hear during Ordinary Time focus on the call of the Gospel to walk the narrow road to heaven one faithful step at a time. When I receive the Eucharist during Advent and Lent, there is always a solemn excitement and a reverent anticipation for the days of joy to come during Christmas and Easter. But as I receive the body and blood of the Lord during Ordinary Time, I hear the Savior calling me to come and rest my weary soul, to be fed and satisfied, to calm the storms of life and see them from a place high above the waves. I sense stillness in the midst of my daily struggles, stability even when I feel there is no place to stand. Here my worries and vain strivings give way to tranquil days in pastures of rest.

I Could've Been Somebody

I have always been a restless soul, looking around the next corner

for the bigger, better deal, searching for ways to satisfy my heavenly Father and please the world around me. It has driven me to places where I almost lost myself, my family, and my faith. My desire to “be somebody” would have been my downfall were it not for the love of the Savior who allowed the fire of trials to reshape my soul and sharpen my perspective on life.

In those times when our family was apart from one another because of work and school and a thousand other daily tasks, I learned to hold my wife and children all the more closely in my heart. I saw in the ordinary circumstances of family life a beauty that, like the greatest virtue, remained eternal and true. I was blessed, and now I truly know it; and I could bask in that great truth as I waited for the sweet fellowship we would share at the next extraordinary celebration to come.

In receiving the Eucharist, I found myself yielding to the grace of God and the subtle transformation God is achieving in the ordinary.

In receiving the Eucharist, I found that yielding to the grace of God, rather than destroying my goals and desires, actually refined them more and more. The pettiness of my search for fleeting recognition or achievement gave way to a profound understanding that in Christ, I am somebody fearfully and wonderfully made, an ordinary man who accomplishes extraordinary acts of love as a husband, a father, a writer, and a man of words. I stopped worrying about becoming a self-made man, and became content to experience the inner transformation I had received through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

Just Another Day to Be Grateful

Each day we experience is truly an extraordinary endowment of grace that carries us from the cradle to the grave, from baptism to beatific vision.

The phrase “Ordinary Time” comes from the Latin word *ordinalis*, referring to ordered numbers in a series. It is a comfort to know that our days are truly numbered, counted out and set in order by the ruler of the universe, the One who sent his Son to set us free from our sins. Each day is a gift to be cherished and held as precious precisely because it has been determined from eternity and purposed for our lives.

Emmanuel



And the Eucharist, that “ordinary” thing that happens at every Mass, is the perfectly planned supreme act of love set in motion from eternity and acted out in such a wonderfully orderly way upon the humanity’s stage. It is there at the cross that ordinary men and women can experience the extraordinary power of salvation day by ordinary day.

I am looking forward to the days to come, as I see my marriage entering new times of discovery and joy, as I watch my children finding their way in the world, and as I witness my writing taking shape and leaving a legacy for the kingdom of God.

But I am also becoming more and more content to allow the ordinary days of my life and the lessons of Ordinary Time to present themselves to me as opportunities for growth and renewal, rest and refreshment. Each new experience of the Eucharist, whether in Ordinary Time or the major liturgical seasons of the church year, will continue to challenge my soul and lead me along the narrow way on my extraordinarily ordinary journey to God.





EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant

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.

AS THE FINAL PARABLE IN CHAPTER 18 OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, THE PARABLE of the Unmerciful Servant (Mt 18:21-35) is also the evangelist's first major dramatic parable. The narrative is introduced by a saying on forgiveness, in which Peter asks Jesus, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" to which Jesus responds, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times" (18:21-22).

We note that our parable, while following upon Peter's question, goes beyond the question "How often?" and deals with the precondition of forgiveness rather than the number of times forgiveness must be extended.

The Narrative of the Parable

The parable can be seen as a drama that unfolds in several acts:

1. A servant-debtor, owing a huge amount, is summoned to his master, a king; the king, moved with compassion at the servant's pleading, forgives him his entire debt since he is unable to pay it;
2. This same servant-debtor meets up with a fellow servant and demands payment of a debt owed to him; the servant, unable to pay his debt, is dealt with unmercifully;
3. The king learns of what has transpired, summons again the servant-debtor, rebukes him, and deals with him severely.

The drama is capped with an epilogue in which Jesus teaches that the heavenly Father's generous forgiveness will, at the final judgment,

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be extended only to those who imitate his forgiveness by their own words and actions.

The power of this parable emerges gradually as the story engages us with its characters. At first, our sympathies are drawn to the servant-debtor. Something of an ominous note is struck with the description of this servant as one who is “brought” before the king who wished “to settle accounts” with his servants.

The disquiet of the scene is further heightened when we learn that the servant owed a huge amount which he had no way of paying back, causing the king to issue a most severe punishment. The real enormity of the servant’s debt, literally “ten thousand talents,” is revealed when we realize that the annual income of Herod the Great was about nine hundred talents and that the taxes for Galilee and Perea were two hundred talents a year. A debt of ten thousand talents would have evoked a great gasp from Jesus’ listeners, for it was simply an unpayable debt.

The king is depicted as someone capable of great compassion and pity, even to the point of forgiving the debt in whole.

Our image of the heartless master, the king, begins to change when the servant pleads for patience and promises to pay back his debt in full — an obviously empty promise, given the size of the debt. The king is now depicted as someone capable of great compassion and pity, even to the point of forgiving the debt in whole.

The sympathy we felt for the servant-debtor now alters as we see him chance upon a fellow servant who owed him “a much smaller amount,” literally, a hundred denarii. The debt, in itself, is not to be seen as inconsequential when we appreciate that one denarius was the equivalent of a day’s wage and that 15 years of daily wages amounted to one talent. Nevertheless, the contrast between the two debts is immense.

A gruff demand for payment is made of the second servant who likewise falls on his knees, pleads for patience, and promises to pay the debt, a debt that could actually be repaid. But the first servant refuses any show of pity and has his debtor thrown into prison. The sympathy

we initially felt for the first servant has changed to revulsion.

The servants who witnessed this deeply disturbing scene report the whole incident to the king in the hope of redressing the matter. The king calls in the first servant, reminds him of the great forgiveness extended to him, and reasons that he should have shown a like forgiveness to his fellow servant. The parable ends on a note of tragic irony in as much as the first servant now has what he originally requested, time to pay his debt, only now his time will be spent in prison and at the hands of torturers. Since the debt is unpayable, the implication is that his punishment will be endless.

The Meaning of the Parable

What we see unfold in this parable in the interaction of its characters is an interplay of justice, mercy, and forgiveness — a mercy and forgiveness, however, that go far beyond expectation. The recipient of the king's mercy and forgiveness takes these great gifts for granted; he is unchanged by them, as his subsequent behavior toward a fellow servant reveals.

The good shepherd was Jesus' favorite image of God and of God's love for all humans.

However, his strict "justice" toward a fellow servant must be accounted for; the king rebukes him for not seeing that the mercy that was "right" in his case was also owed to his fellow servant. Behind the image of the "king" or "master" in the parable is the God proclaimed by Jesus, one who requires people to be merciful and forgiving because they themselves have been granted mercy and forgiveness.

The concluding words of Jesus (18:35) emphasize that our forgiveness of others must be "from the heart," a warning that the Gospel must truly transform our innermost dispositions; otherwise we shall act in much the same fashion as the first servant and suffer the same fate.





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Ground Your Life in the Love of Our Lord

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 5, 1866, Father Eymard wrote to the Countess D'Andigne, comparing her life to that of Martha and Mary at Bethany, as narrated in Luke 10:38-42. He counsels her to center herself solely on God, as Mary did, to believe in his love and to be all his.

"So, God wants you in his hermitage at L'Isle. You are his respectful, devout servant, Mary at his feet, sometimes on his heart, always in his love.

"He wants you alone, no longer to be your own, but to be more his. He wants to be the means, the bond, the direction of your life toward him. That is why everything you would like to have as a means of edification, instruction, and help is lacking. Small loss: since you go directly to Jesus and your efforts are more integrated because they are all directed toward his divine service, in his love and his divine will. . . . Consider as very small what you suffer, what you give him.

"[Pray this often.] 'God loves me; that is a truth. In all things God only wants what is good for me. I am all his and I want him alone. My weakness is my claim, my poverty is my treasure. My imperfections are my need for his grace.'

"This is what must ever be put into practice, and you will find the kingdom of God in you!"





PASTORAL LITURGY

Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, Part III

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

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

WE CONTINUE A REVIEW OF *HOLY COMMUNION AND WORSHIP OF THE EUCHARIST Outside Mass* (HCWEOM). Liturgical Press offers, in a stand-alone publication, the ritual for administration of Communion to people who are ill or homebound. However, the original text of this ritual is found in Chapter 2 of HCWEOM, and so is appropriate to review here.

Deacons, religious, or laypersons distributing Communion to people who are ill is common in the Church today, just as Communion Services themselves have become the norm in many nursing homes when it comes to fulfilling Jesus' command to break bread in memory of him. When the instructions for this ritual were published in 1973, HCWEOM envisioned clerics as the primary ministers, but with the proliferation of lay Communion ministers, especially parishioners serving the Church in their retirement, this is less often the case. Lay people consider it a privilege to minister to their fellow parishioners, with whom they share a bond of place. The ritual uses the generic term "minister," not distinguishing between the ordained and none. Only at the end of the rite, as we will see, is there a specific way a layperson is to do the ritual.

The ritual takes its shape from the Eucharistic Liturgy, as we see in the text. The "ordinary rite" is used when the sick person(s) can gather with the minister for a period of prayer and reception of Holy Communion. HCWEOM, 56 says that the minister is to be "present in a friendly manner." We hope that all who serve the Church in ministry make an effort to do so in a friendly manner! After the greeting, the ritual continues with a Penitential Rite. During Easter Time, as at Mass, a blessing with holy water, especially recently renewed and blessed from the baptismal font, would be very appropriate.

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane is the pastor of his home parish, Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio. He has degrees in education, music, theology, and liturgy, and speaks and writes on liturgical theology and ministry. He is the author of *Daily Prayer 2019* and *Guide to Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* (2015), both published by LTP. Contact him at jtlaness@gmail.com.

The Penitential Rite suggests the Confiteor or the litany form, like Form C of the Mass (i.e., “You brought us salvation. . . . Lord, have mercy,” etc.). At the national meeting of liturgists in Atlanta in October 2018, mention was made that this ritual will be updated with clearer elements for when a layperson conducts the ritual and that only a cleric would conclude this part of the Penitential Rite with same words as at Mass: “May almighty God have mercy on us. . . .” Similar to the end of the liturgy of the hours, where a lay presider uses “us” language and not clerical language, I would maintain that this is not a clerical role but a statement of prayer and belief that we trust that God forgives us when we ask for forgiveness.

As with most liturgical rites, this ritual includes a reading from the word of God. HCWEOM offers suggested readings in paragraph 58 and includes several resources from different publishers, (i.e., *Give Us This Day* by Liturgical Press and *Daily Prayer* by LTP). An easier option is to use the readings of the day when caring for the sick. Some Communion ministers quote the homilies given at church to those who are homebound and infirm, by way of keeping them connected to the parish celebrations. It is also helpful when the pastor or the parochial vicar writes a column in the parish bulletin using the Sunday Scriptures and a reflection.

The third part of the ritual is Holy Communion, beginning with The Lord’s Prayer. Next is the invitation to Communion, which has been updated in the third edition of the *Roman Missal* but has yet to be republished in HCWEOM or other resources. The updated words are “Behold, the Lamb of God, . . . Lord, I am not worthy. . . .” Then the minister shows the sacrament to the sick person and makes the proclamation of faith, “The body of Christ.

It is important to note that the Church, with special permission, makes allowances for sharing the precious blood. However, this is not the usual practice, out of concern for spillage. Those present may also be invited to receive Holy Communion (HCWEOM, 61). I encourage our ministers of Communion to bring enough hosts for those who are present from the family (Catholics), not just for the person who is sick. Secondly, if there are not enough hosts, we need to encourage our lay ministers to break the bread and give it to them. Also note, canon law allows for those who are Christian, who have not access to their own minister, to also receive in special circumstances.

After reception of Communion and a period of silence, I recommend, though not expressly found in HCWEOM, the singing of an appropriate song of thanksgiving, if possible. Certainly, at a nursing home where this ritual is being celebrated, this moment, as well as others in the ritual, offer the opportunity for some common songs that will echo in the hearts of those participating. The sacredness of song elevates the sick person and helps faith be nurtured and increased with the rhythm and sound of music resonating in those gathered.

The Concluding Prayer follows Holy Communion, as detailed in paragraph 62. If one of the other resources mentioned above is used, perhaps the Collect of the day would be best. HCWEOM also suggests special prayers for Easter Time. The ritual concludes with the blessing provided in the liturgy of the hours.

Some parishes follow the practice of inviting lay ministers to come forward at the conclusion of Communion to receive the sacrament they will be taking to those who are sick or homebound. This connects the Communion of those receiving in the Eucharistic assembly with that of those who are absent; all partake of the one Bread of Life!

This is different than having individuals place a pyx on the altar or come up in the Communion line to retrieve hosts without the value and witness of service being demonstrated. Ministers are seen as an active, engaged ministry, part of the mission of the community, and blessed to go forth to care for those who are unable to be present. For a further specific ritual to do in your parish, contact your diocese or me for options.

HCWEOM, Chapter 2 offers shorter rituals and viaticum. These are envisioned for emergency situations, or in the case of Part Three, viaticum, when the person is dying and able to receive Holy Communion. Dying persons are often unable to swallow; they are blessed with holy oil instead. The longer version of viaticum (Part Three) envisions a renewal of faith, with a profession to be made as the person goes on the final journey to heaven. I have found this most challenging in the moment of dying, but it is offered for those who are conscious and able to participate more fully. Again, if possible, though not present in the ritual texts, it would be advisable for the dying person to have the use of holy water.

In our next column, we will continue our ongoing examination of

HCWEOM, Chapter 3.


Reminders for May and June

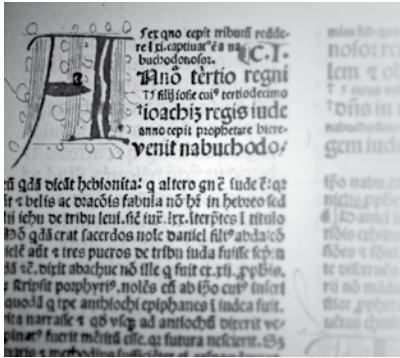
This section gives attention to the fiftieth anniversary of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* (GNLY). GNLY uses the original names of the seasons for the third edition of the *Roman Missal* (2011), and Saint Pope John Paul II updated the calendar with additional saints and feasts. For instance, the Fourth Sunday of Easter has become Good Shepherd Sunday, with a permanent focusing of this Sunday as World Day of Vocations. This year, it is May 12, Mother's Day in the United States and in other countries.

Some other important dates now in our calendar:

- **Friday, May 10 — Saint Damien de Veuster.**
- **Monday, May 13 — Our Lady of Fatima** (also the older memorial of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament.) Contact me for a special Taizé Eucharistic hour to highlight Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Mary of the Cenacle.
- **Tuesday, May 21 — Saint Christopher Magallanes.**
- **Wednesday, May 22 — Saint Rita.**
- **Wednesday, May 29 — Saint Paul VI.**

Also note the following liturgical solemnities in June:

- **Sunday, June 2 — The Ascension of the Lord**, for most of the world and the United States.
- **Sunday, June 9 — Pentecost.**
- **Sunday, June 16 — The Most Holy Trinity.**
- **Sunday, June 23 — The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ**, in most of the world. Look to resources such as HCWEOM or the *Order for the Solemn Exposition of the Eucharist* (Liturgical Press) for guidance with holy hours and processions for this day honoring the great mystery of the Eucharist. 



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Frederick D. Leising

May 5, 2019
Third Sunday of Easter

Acts 5:27-32, 40-41; Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-2, 13; Revelation 5:11-14; John 21:1-19

Imagine being before a federal or state tribunal espousing a philosophy of life that those in authority consider subversive and/or dangerous to their traditional worldview. Experiences such as this are daily occurrences in countries dominated by ruthless dictators and ideologically-driven leaders. People who have had these experiences, and who are fortunate to escape such contexts, subsequently arriving at more just shores, can be understandably shy in making friendships. Resilient fears linger, albeit they are in a new circumstance.

In today's first reading, we find Peter and the apostles being questioned by the Jewish Sanhedrin for their allegiance and preaching about Jesus, the Christ. These formerly skeptical, even timid and doubting disciples, now evidence a courage and fearless enthusiasm for Jesus' good news. They actually rejoice in their witnessing to Jesus. Imagine the depth of communion with someone that would need to be real for you to identify with them to the point of suffering, perhaps even dying.

For the first Christian disciples, everything was complicated by the fact that they were observant Jews. Jesus' reformation of Judaism demanded a conversion that proved divisive on many fronts — familial, cultural, religious, and political. On these beginners' shoulders we stand. They were fishers of any and all open hearts to a radical good news meant to integrate their lives and the lives of all who chose to be one with them. Over centuries their message would develop, grow, and reach unimagined peoples. Their pilgrimage is now ours as that radical good news goes out to all creation.

Monsignor Frederick D. Leising is a retired priest of the Diocese of Buffalo, New York. His most recent assignments were at the Church of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Clarence, and Christ the King Seminary in East Aurora.

At its core, the Gospel asks its adherents to feed and tend its communities of disciples, excluding no one. In doing this, all the baptized respond to the command, "Follow me." Normally, Jesus' apostles would not be fishing at night. I suspect they were still fearful of retribution from the authorities. However, they still needed to feed their families.

That they would respond to the directions of an onshore stranger seems unlikely. Perhaps they recognized that they had nothing to lose in one more attempt. They are finally successful. In that moment, they recognize Jesus. They share his meal. They are called anew by a risen Jesus to forego their fears, to be in love, and to not hide but to joyously enter the wide world with their vision of a creative, redeeming, inspiring God. Fidelity to recognizing everyone, no matter their differences, as one human family, would inspire the remainder of their days.

You and I are called/invited to join their story/Jesus' story. With all that makes us different, we must seek to be one with a Trinity — God and one another. With mercy and reconciling love, we must patiently form and reform our lives, all lives, the very creation tainted by our sinfulness. Jesus' vocation is our vocation.

What is your response to his request to cast your net into this evolving sea? Who are you called to tend with his compassion? How inclusive can you be? Who awaits your feeding them with life and love? There are billions of us now on Mother Earth. We need to go fishing for one another's hearts and souls. This is our call, as individuals and as communities.

With Easter's revelation that our lives are inexhaustible, be attentive now. It is the time of salvation. Shine in Easter's extremely good news. Do not be afraid!

May 12, 2019
Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 13:14, 43-52; Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5; Revelation 7:9, 14-17; John 10:27-30

Today's Scriptures stress the importance of listening. They invite us to consider clearly and deeply the voice of the Lord. However, the scriptural authors are not naive. Even in their age, there were many competing voices for one's attention and allegiance.

In our times, competing voices are legion. Being attentive to voices in communion with the truth, the good, and the unity that depends on our mutual respect for one another is sorely stressed. Discernment is needed. That requires intelligence, reality-checking, and making appropriate distinctions relative to contexts and intentions. That is a great deal to ask of everyone.

In today's first reading, Paul proclaims Jesus in the synagogues of his visited Greek cities. But, despite some success, he experiences persecution from Jewish leaders. Paul finds delight in Gentile converts. Paul's mission is inclusive.

Scripture scholars refer to "the scandal of particularity," that is, the concept of a particular chosen people that excludes non-members. Belonging to a particular religious tradition can narrow our attention to God's voice in ways that disparage others. Today our Roman Catholic tradition shows itself open to dialogue and learning from all religious traditions attempting to genuinely listen to God's voice. We are an ecumenical faith. We are open to the truth wherever it can be found.

Today's second and third readings remind us that Jesus is both the Lamb of God as well as the good shepherd. Christ is both, and so are we. We need to be led, and we need to lead. In both cases, listening to God's voice is critical. We are called to attention by our virtues, particularly humility. A radical self-honesty opens us to mystery. And mystery is not the unknown, but the always more knowable.

When I was a teenager, growing up on a dairy farm, over time my voice became familiar to the cows. Thus, when I called them from the pasture to the barn for milking, they came. They would not come with the call of just anyone's voice.

Relationships are important. They are at the center of our listening choices. Pastors know that their voice, their guidance, their preaching, their counsel, their spiritual direction, are all to be listened to if they listen to God's voice in prayer, in contemplation, in study, in relationships of love and integrity. So, too, *is* this the case for parents,

teachers, physicians, lawyers, politicians, etc.

It is not easy to be both Lamb of God and good shepherd. You will discern that you are doing well on your pilgrimage if you become both of these. The cacophony of today's technologically-streamed voices can bring chaos and rigid ideologies. These confuse and confine.

A relationship of fidelity and love with Christ, as mediated by voices of holiness, justice, and non-violence within our Church, as well as beyond it, can guide us well to the Holy Spirit's voice.

The Eucharist we celebrate graces our communion in and with God's real presence, God's guiding voice. Say "Amen" to that and all will be well. Press on to give what you have received, namely, a voice to reflect Jesus' compassion and mercy.

May 19, 2019 Fifth Sunday of Easter

**Acts 14:21-27; Psalm 145:8-9, 10-11, 12-13; Revelation 21:1-5;
John 13:31-33, 34-35**

During this time in the liturgical year, we hear a great deal from the Book of Revelation. Its author is writing to a persecuted church. He desires to buttress their fidelity to God despite their current travails. He wants to bring hope amidst contemporary chaos. The gift of time does not halt its progress.

Although in our present moment, we might lament our lot, one can be certain that it will not last. It could get worse. It could get better. But it will not be static. Time itself is a transforming agent. How often have you recognized that time is a gracious companion in your quest to transcend grieving for intimate losses? What we need on our temporal pilgrimage is a timeless center, that is, a relationship, albeit challenged by change, still whole, reliable, and trustworthy.

In the Church's burial rite, one hears that our reliance before the death of our loved ones is founded upon "assurances of faith." How are those acquired, maintained, and secured?

The Johannine Scripture this weekend, still attentive to the Easter mystery, invites us to love one another as a sure path to redemption and life in the Spirit. And the Johannine pericope ever responds to our question of how this loving can be realized. The way to being loving is to love as we have been loved by Jesus.

Knowing Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. The new commandment of Christ is not to love one another as we love ourselves. In truth, our self-love may be quite selfish and narrow. But to love faithfully as Jesus loved is to be self-possessed, sacrificial, centered in God's will, pursuant of justice and charity.

I think compassion is the key that unlocks genuine love of self and of others. True compassion is willing to suffer with the beloved as a most intimate, reliable communion.

In the Eucharist, we echo Scripture's words of the Gentile military commander, namely, "Lord, I am not worthy. Speak but the word and my soul will be healed." Jesus is that Word. He has been and continues to be spoken. Receive him. Allow your life to be integrated with his presence. So, you are worthy.

If you should ever doubt your worthiness for such a communion, remember this true story. May it bring you hope in dark times, as well as peace. An elderly pastor is seemingly alone in the parish church in mid-afternoon. He is walking from station to station, praying the Stations of the Cross. Near the end of this devotion, he is joined by a Fourth Grade child from the parish school. As he prayerfully considers the station of Jesus' crucifixion, the pastor notices the child. He points at the crucifixion and asks the child if she thinks she is worthy of that sacrifice. The girl responds, "He thought so."

Those few, simple words capture the paschal mystery. Love one another. Love everyone, with no exceptions, is worth it. It transforms the sinner. It hallows the saint. All become one in Christ.

May 26, 2019
Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 15:1-2, 22-29; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Revelation 21:10-14, 22-23; John 14:23-29

Today's Scriptures attend to a vision and to a paradox meant to bring hope. I will consider both especially in our contemporary moment.

There are many symbolic biblical images in the Book of Revelation, all addressed to persecuted Christians near the end of the first century. Many components here resemble Ezekiel's vision of Jerusalem. But there is one striking difference. The Jerusalem of the Hebrew Scripture has a temple. The Jerusalem of Revelation has no temple. Herein lies a radical shift in understanding God's dwelling place.

If you inquire today where God is to be found, you'd likely get multiple, conflicting responses. As a child, I was told God is everywhere. At Notre Dame University, I heard that Father Theodore Hesburgh was like God in that he was everywhere, except at Notre Dame. This referred to a busy public and fund-raising agenda of Notre Dame's beloved president. As an adult, "everywhere" takes on cosmic dimensions of seemingly infinite dimensions.

Ezekiel, the Jewish prophet, believed the Jerusalem temple contained the divine presence, a fixed, reliable abode. But Revelation's author sees God as the very presence in which we are invited to dwell. We are God's dwelling place, now and forever.

Be aware of this reality and relate to one another accordingly, love dwelling in love. Here lies our hope, our constant light, our source of peace, even amidst tragedy and all sorts of suffering. Consider this revelation in relationship to John's Gospel. Jesus communicated this to his disciples at the Last Supper. He will leave them, but he will remain with them.

Our nearest example for appreciating this assurance is in our memories. We are mobile people. We move on a great deal, both geographically and spiritually. But we are empowered to remember where we have come from, retaining all the years and changes that have defined us. Death does not end such things. It completes them. And all along we

are never alone.

The Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier are with us. We are not abandoned. Rather, a divine-human intimacy identifies us. I know you. You know me. We are family in God's presence. We are temples of God's creating. With each other, we form an unimaginable temple in which all seeming leaving only hastens the speed of the One remaining.

As we near the conclusion of our Easter liturgical season, our leaving will find us remaining even more intimately in the mystery of what always remains. God is all in all. Please consider what this revelation asks of you here and now. Focus on this centering mystery. How can you keep growing while leaving and remaining? How can you leave temples and yet remain a temple? Harmony may not be now, but its seeds for completion are within you. Even in chaotic times, you can be at peace.

Consider the servant-power of your God. Let it flower in you. Know yourself. Know who dynamically abides with you. Saint Paul traveled through his time and places knowing who abided with him. Thus, former Jewish markers, like circumcision, could be transcended.

The reality of the truth that God and all of us are in communion can and should be celebrated by markers/signs. They confirm this wisdom, they do not make it. Love one another. Seek unity in truth. Rejoice in your wonderful making and Maker.

May 30 or June 2, 2019 The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-3, 6-7, 8-9; Ephesians 1:17-23; Luke 24:46-53

Have you ever been a witness in a courtroom trial? If it is for the prosecution or for the defense, it can be a harrowing experience. It takes place under a solemn oath to be truthful. Such an oath transcends specific loyalties. One is expected to be objective and not prejudicial. In Luke's conclusion to his Gospel, the ascension of Jesus becomes the segway to Luke's Acts of the Apostles, continuing the story of a nascent church.

In this beginning, the primary call of discipleship is witnessing to the life and paschal mystery of Jesus, the Christ. That vocation now belongs to us. While those we influence may be easily countable in number, the horizon remains unlimited. And while aging may focus the audience, the responsibility is persistent.

How and to whom can we witness Jesus? Are we continually about developing an intimacy with Jesus that will authenticate our witness? We cannot witness to someone we do not know. Knowing anyone, let alone Jesus, is unrestricted before its mystery. We can be more successful in this knowing of Jesus if we pursue it as a community of faith, versus as an individual believer.

We tend to sanitize the first Christian witnesses or martyrs. None of that was easy. Much had to be sacrificed. Today that remains the case in this sin-soaked world. Connecting the dots of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection/ascension compliments our mission of sharing and becoming Jesus' witnesses. For the beginners, preaching-teaching and healing in Jesus' name, especially in the face of persecution, proclaimed the *Way*.

Today's Church can appear to be quite fractious in its many diverse communities. Additionally, generations in families may be similarly divided. So, our call to be a witness to the Christ requires us not simply to be baptismal promise-makers, but also to be promise-keepers. Words and deeds must be integrated. To quote a saint, "Pray always, and if necessary, use words."

The solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord is about depth, not about distance. There is to be nothing superficial about having faith in Jesus. The life of Jesus does not end his story; rather we are invited to continue it with our diverse stories in communion with his.

I know that our chaotic world can seem to belie and frustrate the Jesus journey that is ours. This should only incentivize our call to responsible discipleship. We have a gift meant to be given.

Pursuing ecclesial cleansing and renewal, as well as chasing after social justice, the common good, and global solidarity, are not options but duties. Be attentive to opportunities to contribute to a better world. When our present is remembered in the future, how will we be judged?

In the conclusion of the movie *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*, the final verse sung by Petula Clark asks the right question: "Was I brave, and strong, and true? Did I fill the world with love my whole life through?" After all, an ascension awaits us, everyone"

June 2, 2019 Seventh Sunday of Easter

**Acts 7:55-60; Psalm 97:1-2, 6-7, 9; Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20;
John 17:20-26**

Our faith has many levels of commitment. Most of them are integral to our celebration of Eucharist. We acknowledge our sinfulness, while being assured of God's mercy. We praise God. We profess our creedal beliefs. We enter as listeners to Sacred Scripture. We reflect with homiletic guidance on their meaning for us now, their challenges and their promises. Our lives must preach their relevance and their truth. We prepare the table. We consecrate the gifts. We commune with an "Amen" of belief. We go into the wide world assured that our lives can proclaim good news. Our Eucharistic liturgy guides, strengthens, and forms us to be transforming agents of what we have received.

In our first reading today, Stephen witnesses to his fidelity to the person of Jesus. It is bloody and real. It is Calvary again. Its consequence transcends suffering and death. Resurrection happens. Life in Christ can embrace everything. All endings are new beginnings, none so more than a sacrificial death.

The Johannine prayer of Jesus is that we all be one. We are not the same surely. This invitation to a Trinitarian unity is no superficial expectation. This prayer goes to the heart of the matter. This is not an invite into a casual intimacy, a now-and-again friendship. We are to be one in the dynamic, mysterious relationship of our God.

This is not earned. This is a gift, a grace. Receive it today in word and sacrament. Become what you receive. Relate each moment out of this identity. Your person belongs in and to this mystery. In truth, what we see Jesus being for our world and for all of creation — a reconciling, unifying, loving person — that is our vocation. Attend to it in all relationships, with all persons, with all of creation.

Recall Scripture's final words. God will be all in all. I, and you, are not Pollyanna utopians. We confront every moment the chaos that results from human sinfulness. So much innocent human suffering seems to mock God's agenda. Thus, questions and wonder surely arise. These are good for they invite us to a sacrificial faith called to integrate our human, historical experiences in Jesus' revelation of God's identity and plan. We are limited in our horizons here. Be attentive, there are clues to God everywhere. Miracles abound.

Faith is a way of knowing that gets to essential realities. So much needs to be integrated from faith's perspective. Take nothing for granted. We are the people of God. We are empowered to change the face of the earth. We have only begun. We are not alone. Next week we will meditate on the Spirit's presence.

Nothing is complete in our here-and-now. Live your communion with God in billions of places, events, and persons. All will ultimately be well. Seek to be one with your neighbor. We need that divine spark in each other to be good, one, and true. Easter is not an end. It is a beginning. To be one as Jesus prayed takes time and eternity.

June 9, 2019 Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34; 1 Corinthians 12:3-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

Did you know that in Central Europe people used to drop pieces of burning wick or straw from holes in church ceilings to represent flaming tongues? How is that for biblical literalism in celebrating Pentecost! In medieval France, real pigeons were released in cathedrals while "Come, Holy Spirit" was sung. Their droppings discontinued the practice!

Our Scriptures, always attentive to the Old Testament, see the pre-historical story of the tower of Babel in Genesis as a template for revealing the Pentecost effect. In Genesis, human arrogance and pride result in human confusion. Many languages create opportunities for misunderstanding, leading to chaos and violence. At Pentecost, the preaching of Jesus' disciples is understood, and unifying to the diaspora Jews in Jerusalem for Passover festivities. Different languages

do not inhibit understanding. Rather, they promote it to the ends of the earth.

The Holy Spirit is a gift-person, persistently in dialogue with all as an advocate for universal truths meant to be incarnate. Communion between humanity and God is to be the apogee of this graced renewal of our nature. The Holy Spirit is a radical freedom for dialogue, whose goal is to form the kingdom of God through our ongoing conversions to its vision of our becoming one-in-Christ.

It is nearly impossible to receive this Holy Spirit if we have become closed, insulated persons from one another. Fears and anxieties stymie receiving the Spirit. Then, the consequence is alienation, marginalizing, and devaluing of one another as gifts!

Time itself is a gift for dialogue. The Holy Spirit challenges us to be bridge-builders, not wall constructionists. Faith is not a gift for obstructing communion, but for realizing it. The disciples awaited the hoped-for Spirit in fear. But that wall collapsed beneath the Spirit's presence. The Spirit's gifts are for the common good.

The Church's social teaching has fertile soil in these graces. Stop and think about current events. You should immediately detect the need for the Holy Spirit's transforming power. We are its mediators. Or are we? Do you relate to current events through the lens of every person's inalienable rights? Is each person's human dignity acknowledged by your assessment of them?

Pentecost is a beginning, the birth of a new people of God. Such people echo the words on our Statue of Liberty. All seeking to be received here ought to be valued in their human dignity. This is not a gift of laws. Their mission is to affirm that dignity and its inherent rights. This is how more perfect unions result. Anything less insults the Creator.

Pentecost calls for new, graced ways of relating. It transcends all differences. In and through the Holy Spirit, we are called to be family, all of us brothers and sisters. Our blood may be of different types, but all have blood. The Spirit has many gifts, but is one Spirit. You cannot say or witness to Christ without his Spirit. This world needs that witness.

You and I do not dwell alone. We must become gracious dwellings for each other. The Father's house, it is revealed, has many dwelling places. Go there! Do this not solely through death. Go there, here-and-now. Be a dwelling place for all seeking to be one in Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

June 16, 2019 The Most Holy Trinity

Proverbs 8:22-31; Psalm 8:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

I love this solemnity because it is at the center of our faith. It took the Church centuries to grapple with it. In truth, the Church should never stop wrestling with it. So, join me in a quick tussle with the Trinity.

A mystery deserves such attention, especially when it's at the heart of all reality. Can you imagine the consternation caused by claiming God is one and God is many? Shouldn't this be an either/or proposition? How can it be both/and? More importantly, *why must it be both/and?* Are not Christians considered monotheists? Why is Trinity not considered polytheistic? It's a lot to unravel in a homily.

Of course, all our theological language about God is analogical, not literal. Why must this be so? What does this mean? It means we are not God and God is not us. I think the second commandment is not a Miss Manners commandment! If I am right, we could certainly shorten most confessions. Not taking God's name in vain is really telling us not to talk about God as if we know completely what we are talking about. As if Trinity needed any help in being *the Mystery*, it does not frustrate us in contemplating its always more knowable meaning and importance.

This is no Sherlockian mystery. It is not to be solved. It is to be entered. It affects everything. Excuse the brevity of what follows. For your sake, keep pondering it. It deserves our wonder.

Succinctly, the doctrine of the Trinity reveals that God is community. It is in Scripture, but it took some centuries for the Church to tease it out. If this is so, namely, that God is community, yet essentially one, what is this teaching's relevance for us?

Well, since we are created in the divine image, we cannot be true to our design in isolation from each other, nor from all that is good. I cannot be me without you. You cannot be you without me. We are made to be communal creatures. We are destined to be one with a divine community. Faithful to seeking unity and community in this finite life, we anticipate and incompletely realize the kingdom of God. Wow! Now that is something.

Of course, most of us are far from realizing this reality. We suffer from an ancient alienation that sunders our being one though many. However, the good news of our conclusions to prayer is that God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) or God (Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier) is not finished with us. We are still in the making.

We did not arrive here as blank slates. We came with an identity that is dynamic, one that persists lifelong and beyond in its attraction. We are brothers and sisters of a divine parent who is community.

Recent ecological studies only confirm this wisdom. All of creation is interconnected. Contemporary physics supports this claim. Pay attention to the most minute forms of life. There is nothing without connections. Community seeks unity. Nothing is created to be alone, least of all us.

Today Proverbs presents wisdom as belonging to God from the beginning. We are wisdom's children. The Letter to the Romans reveals that we are immersed in grace, God's gift. So, we are hopeful; and this hope will not disappoint. The Gospel assures us that we are given a Spirit to guide us to all truth.

Every Eucharist begins with the Sign of the Cross as we profess that God is Trinity. This mystery beckons us. This mystery dwells in our communions. This mystery assures us that we are not alone. Praise the Holy Trinity from whom all blessings flow! Everything is, was, and will be dynamic community and completely One.

June 23, 2019
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

**Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:1, 2, 3, 4; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26;
Luke 9:11-17**

Our Scriptures today begin with a mysterious encounter between a Hebrew patriarch, Abram, and a priest-king, Melchizedek. Abram has just been victorious over kings who worship many gods. Melchizedek blesses Abram in thanksgiving. Abram shares with him a tithe-offering, about one-tenth of the acquired booty. The ritual that includes the blessing is one of an offering of bread and wine, that is a simple meal. This Genesis incident is seen to hold prophetic impact by Christians as they contemplate Jesus' offering at Passover time.

Paul's letter to the Corinthians recounts Jesus' Last Supper offering in order to counter divisive behavior that has crept into celebrating the Eucharist in some Corinthian liturgies.

Luke's Gospel describes a crowd's sharing of loaves and fishes that seems to be miraculous. Some exegetes see the crowd's sharing of personal resources as the miracle. In any case, Jesus' compassion triggers this covenant moment, signing a bond between himself and the attentive crowd. The teaching within this event for his disciples is found in a challenging command in response to apostolic skepticism, "Give them food yourselves." Give them what you have.

Is this our response to the hungry of our time? Do we have the resources to do it? Can we who consume Jesus' body and blood in the Eucharist in turn give what we have received? Are we truly becoming Jesus' body and blood? Who is welcome/invited to our table? Can we extend its reach to suffering people without the resources we so often take for granted?

For Roman Catholics, our outreach must seek justice, lobbying for the needy, responding with community resources. Also, we are called to tithe in charity as our blessing toward a world without hunger. Our "Amen" as we receive the bread and cup is the consumption of a Real Presence of Christ. Informed with this presence, we are challenged to gift others with it. There are a multitude of human hungers that invite our communion-in-Christ to be passed on.

Our meals have always been meant for sharing presences. They should be intimate moments, not Fast Food gulps. We participate at the Eucharist in multiple forms of God's presence — in word, in sacrament, in community. Together they are Eucharist. We are gifted to be givers.

Presence is precious. It is dynamic, transforming, not a thing or item. You are sent at the end of Mass to carry Jesus' presence to the world. How are you going to be about that? The beatitudes guide you. These attitudes-toward-being need to persistently accompany your earthly pilgrimage.

It is one thing to pray for the hungry and marginalized downtrodden of our world. It is another thing to put food on their table. The first act signals awareness. The second act quantifies that awareness. Together they should define us as a Eucharistic people.

Jesus' apostles are learning in today's gospel. They will live its lesson in their ministry. How about you? Do you get the lesson? Are you living it? "Amen" says you are. There should be no deception in this sacred space at this sacred table. Be watchful.

This world needs a Real Presence. Continue to make the Eucharist happen. We are to be Christ's body and blood. Let's make that happen. That is the realism our world needs, and our God expects. The Lord is with you!

June 30, 2019 Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:16, 19-21; Psalm 16:1-2, 5, 7-8, 9-10 11; Galatians 5:1, 13-18; Luke 9:51-62

Today's Scriptures focus on the passing on of prophetic ministry, appreciating genuine freedom, and grasping the demands of discipleship. I have chosen to meditate on Galatians and Paul's proclamation concerning true freedom in Christ.

We live in a nation of "freedoms." But does that mean we are free? What is the freedom we claim? How is it understood in relationship to

Jesus' gospel freedom?

Paul sees the converts of Galatia as being subject to two forms of slavery. First, they are yoked to a strict and literal observance of the Torah. What was a guide had become an idol. Second, as Jewish Christians, they had discriminated against Gentile Christians. The divisiveness left them fractured and without the freedom of being God's children.

Freedom is not license. It has a price. There are restraints. At freedom's core is the benefit accrued to your human dignity as well as the common good of your neighbor. Our decisions form us. We need to be in perpetual conversation to be assured our formation is in communion with our nature as God's mutual servants of what is good and true. A process of discernment is critically important.

The values and norms we reasonably recognize need to guide us. We are fallible beings, and so we can enslave ourselves with bad, albeit well-intentioned, decisions. The more we consider others' welfare, the less likely we will do harm. A parent should compassionately discipline a child so he or she can be free. A teacher should do the same to enhance learning and educate the student in appropriate behaviors and boundaries for relating with others.

Today's headlines about a variety of sexual misconduct claims provides us with the evidence that our sexuality is not being integrated properly because we may think disciplining it inhibits sexual liberation. In fact, we will only be free when we are in charge of it; and it is not in charge of us. Respecting the other and oneself results when we are not compulsive and libertine. Attending to the consequences of our behavior, both short-term and long-term, can be most revelatory in assessing our being truly free versus enslaved. Freedom is most authentic when it is cultivated by contemplation.

This week we will be celebrating our nation's independence. Not everyone in our American story enjoyed the truth enshrined in our founding documents, asserting our radical freedoms. Only propertied Caucasian men were included in the free exercise of what were considered fundamental rights and responsibilities.

Wrestling with the restraints on freedom has always been part of the Christian tradition. Who decides these restraints has not always been

consensual and democratic? As long as sinfulness is chosen, we will not be radically free.

A counterfeit grasp of freedom is dangerous and enslaving. Saint Paul says that we were called in Christ to be free. Genuine freedom is not self-indulgent. Such behaviors enslave us. Loving service is the foundation for true freedom. Dying to self frees us. Addictions enslave us. Some are as old as our creation. Others are new with technological advances. Enslaving others or oneself is no path to freedom.

The cost of freedom is the same as the cost of discipleship. Jesus and Paul invite us to know the authentic freedom of being in God, of being in Christ. Responsibilities ensue. In Jesus' sacrificial love, freedom embraces us. Now let us grow into that embrace and become free persons in God.

When Paul was in prison, he was most free. Witnessing to the good and the true liberates one's spirit.





EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Music Review

As Catholics it is often pounded into our heads that whatever gifts we have received in life, whether talents, graces, or fortunate circumstances, we are to share with others. If this is a standard of success, then musician, singer/songwriter, and activist Brandi Carlile has certainly achieved it.



Carlile gained notoriety early in her career with an emotionally packed, hard-hitting Americana songwriting style that could swing from vulnerable ballad to defiant anthem at the drop of a hat. Her breakthrough 2007 album entitled *The Story* attested to this ability while also gaining her wide critical and popular acclamation.

Brandi Carlile
BY THE WAY, I
FORGIVE YOU
Electra, 2018

In 2017 musicians as varied as Dolly Parton, Kris Kristofferson, Pearl Jam, and Adele contributed to a song by song tribute to Carlile's album entitled *Cover Stories: Brandi Carlile Celebrates 10 Years of the Story — An Album to Benefit War Child*, with President Barack Obama contributing an introductory endorsement. The album was made to benefit children around the world displaced by war and conflict. It is a powerful testament to Carlile's attunement to the lives of others, especially those whose lives are filled with suffering.

John Christman,
SSS

This sensitivity bears rewards in her latest album entitled *by the way, I forgive you*. This album won the Grammy Award for Best Americana Album, and was nominated for other Grammy awards including Song of the Year. The Song of the Year nomination was for a song entitled "The Joke," an uplifting power-ballad encouraging the downtrodden and marginalized not to give up.

But where Carlile's latest album gains its lasting appeal is through her ability to look as deeply at herself as upon others, *and* all with a country twang! With her John Denver-esque phrasing and Lucinda Williams like grit, Carlile sings of the joys and sorrows of humanity

filtered through her own experience. In her beautiful, clear-eyed song “The Mother,” Carlile sings not just a love song to her daughter but to motherhood itself.

Alternately, in her song “Sugartooth,” she explores the struggles of addiction through the tragedy of an old friend’s death. Faith, temptation, and forgiveness are woven throughout these songs, like theological touchstones. Answers may not come easily, but she’s thoughtfully marked out the territory she’s grappling with.

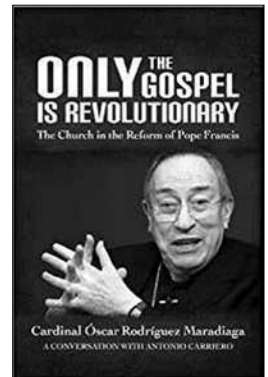
One might think these heavy subjects would make for solemn listening, but Carlile and her band know how to keep these songs from getting weighed down. A change of tempo, a well-timed crescendo, and some creative percussion all help in this regard. But in the end, it’s Carlile’s voice and lyrics that carry this album. Those are the gifts she builds everything upon, and we are all the better for her sharing them.

Book Reviews

When this book arrived, I was drawn to it. I knew that Cardinal Maradiaga was a close associate of Pope Francis and was one of the first prelates named to the C-9, and its coordinator, as this select international group of cardinals worked with the Holy Father to reform the Curia. But more recently I have read that he has come under the dark blanket of sexual abuse and its cover-up by clergy in an accusation that he has protected his auxiliary bishop who has been accused by at least two of the diocese’s seminarians of sexual abuse. That bishop has submitted his resignation from his episcopal office.

These two realities caused me to want to learn more about this man, and so I took up this book. Its format is a question and answer conversation between the cardinal and a Salesian priest, Antonio Carriero.

The book lays out Maradiaga’s early life, his education by the Salesians, his attraction to that religious congregation which he entered after high school. Because of his intelligence and creativity, he easily made his way to ordination. He is lavish in his praise of the community and the



ONLY THE
GOSPEL IS
REVOLUTIONARY:
THE CHURCH IN
THE REFORM OF
POPE FRANCIS
Óscar Rodríguez
Maradiaga
(A Conversation with
Antonio Carriero)
Collegeville,
Minnesota: Liturgical
Press, 2018
96 pp., \$16.95

work of the Salesians in which he had been given greater and greater authority and responsibility in the Central American Province.

Maradiaga was asked by Pope Paul VI to accept the episcopal office and, due to the responsibilities he had at the time and his desire to remain in the Salesian community, he requested that he be given some months to consider the request. At the death of Paul VI, the request became null, but it was again renewed by Pope John Paul I who also died before Maradiaga responded. In 1978, Pope John Paul II returned with the request and Maradiaga accepted to become the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Tegucigalpa in Honduras. In 1994, he became the archbishop of the archdiocese and in 2001 was created a cardinal by Pope John Paul II.

As an auxiliary bishop, Maradiaga became active in CELAM, the Episcopal Conference of Latin America, where he rose through various positions and held the role of general secretary from 1995-1999. In his work with the conference, he came into rather regular contact with Jorge Bergoglio, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, and he worked very closely with Bergoglio in drafting the official document from the Fifth General Conference of CELAM, held in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2009.

Throughout the book Maradiaga strongly supports the reform of the Church by Pope Francis. As stated earlier, he was the original coordinator of the C-9 who were charged by Pope Francis to assist him in the reform of the Curia. Some of his statements in this book about the pope's critics are quite biting. Maradiaga also aligns himself with the pope on migrants and immigrants, on the new evangelization, the concept of the Church as a "field hospital," and his belief that priests and bishops should "smell like their sheep." He concurs with the pope that one of the greatest problems in the Church is clericalism and careerism.

There is very little, if anything I noticed in the book about sexual abuse of young people by clergy or the cover up of such abuse by those in authority. I suspect that this was intentional. Maradiaga's critics, and there are many, might find this book somewhat self-serving in that you have two Salesians in conversation about the life and many years of service of Maradiaga in so many areas of the Church well beyond his religious congregation and his archdiocese, in CELAM, in CARITAS, and in the C-9.

But, regardless, it does provide an introduction to how this powerful cardinal of the Church looks back on his life and the Church today. He is now 76, past the required age of submitting his resignation as a bishop, and he might be able to quietly retire in the light of his failures to protect minors from the abuse of his auxiliary bishop. That would not change all the good he has done.

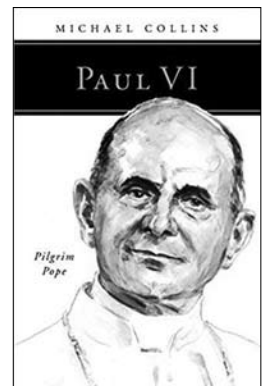
Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor

While preparing to write this review, I asked ten people from my generation what they remember about Pope Paul VI. The first answer from all of them was that he wrote the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, which held to the Church's traditional condemnation of artificial contraception. The tone of most of these responses was negative.

Well, Pope Paul did write that encyclical in 1968, against the advice of the very commission he had established to study the issue. He was widely and, almost universally, criticized, even by some bishops. In point of fact, the great majority of Catholics in this country and beyond do not adhere to this teaching. It is somewhat sad that most people's recollection about this pope have to do with this one act.

Collins' book does a very good job of fleshing out the many contributions Paul made to the Church in his lifetime. For many years he served the Church in the Roman Curia, later becoming the much loved and effective archbishop of Milan. He served as pope from 1963-1978. He chose to continue and bring to conclusion the Second Vatican Council which Pope John XXIII opened in 1962. He led the last three sessions of the council and at various points he came under severe criticism by the more traditional council fathers, and also suffered at other times the attacks of the more liberal groups.

It was to him that fell the difficult and onerous process of implementing the decrees of the council, particularly those that had to do with the liturgy and ecumenism. He was the first modern pope to travel outside Italy, with nine major pastoral visits to 20 countries. He met in Jerusalem with Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople, and the two leaders of Christianity revoked the mutual excommunications of the Great



**PAUL VI: PILGRIM
POPE**

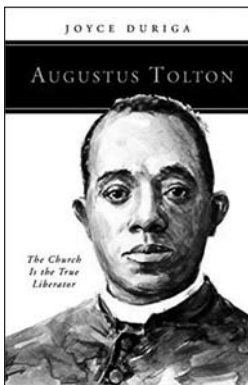
Michael Collins
Collegeville,
Minnesota: Liturgical
Press, 2018
148 pp., \$16.49

Schism of 1054. He also traveled to Africa, South America, the Far East, Europe, and the United States, where he made his famous address to the United Nations. He was very active in ecumenism. He created the structure for the synod of bishops, set retirement ages for bishops, and removed the right to vote in papal conclaves from cardinals over the age of 80. These are just a few of the accomplishments of the man who sat in the Chair of Peter for 15 of the most tumultuous years for the Catholic Church as it sought to renew its sense of self and its mission.

In view of his canonization in October of last year, Collins does the Church a great service in reintroducing Pope Paul to new generations of Catholics.

I would like to add to this review a note of thanks to Liturgical Press for its series *People of God: Remarkable Lives, Heroes of Faith*. So far, they have published 20-plus titles in this series of books of around one hundred pages, which are solidly researched and well-written. Liturgical Press has done the Church a great service.

Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor



**AUGUSTUS
TOLTON:
THE CHURCH
IS THE TRUE
LIBERATOR**
Joyce Duriga
Collegeville,
Minnesota: Liturgical
Press, 2018
128 pp., \$14.95

Augustus Tolton (1854-1897) holds the distinction of being the first self-identified African American to be ordained a priest in the United States. As a young child, he fled the plantation along with his mother and three siblings when they learned that they were going to be sold off to pay the plantation's debts. His father ran off to fight in the Civil War and died in battle. The family fled into Illinois, which was a free state, to the city of Quincy where they hoped to escape vigilantes who sought to capture runaway slaves.

Augustus worked from a very young age in the tobacco industry, from the lowest position making a pittance and advancing into higher positions in the company. When the tobacco season was over, he tried to go to school but was ridiculed because he could neither read nor write and was black. He was sent home from every school, public and parochial, when the white parents complained of his presence.

The great break came into his life when his family became parishioners of Saint Boniface Parish where a kindly Irish priest, Peter McGirr, took a great interest in Tolton. For four years Father McGirr tutored and taught Augustus. The young man served Masses, taught catechism, and helped around the parish. The Irish priest detected the possibility of a priestly vocation in young Augustus and taught him Latin. Augustus did feel a calling to the priesthood and he and his pastor sought to get him accepted into a seminary, but he was rejected by the 18 seminaries in the country at the time, and by all religious orders. With some help Father McGirr got him accepted into The College of the Propaganda of the Faith, the seminary in Rome that trained priests from mission countries and trained priests to become missionaries.

Before continuing on Tolton's biography, it must be noted that the author does an excellent job placing him in his historical context. She describes Cardinal Simeoni's pressure on the American hierarchy to get behind the evangelization and conversion of the freed slaves, and the American bishops' dragging their feet in this regard.

She relates the stories of his contemporaries, the Healy brothers, children of a white, wealthy slave owner and a black woman, who were not dark-complected and who, through the efforts of their father, secured fine educations and, after being ordained priests, rose to elevated positions in the Catholic clergy. Throughout their lives, they refused to relate to anything which would connect them to their African American roots.

She tells of Tolton's relationship with the newspaper man Daniel Rudd, who led several national Catholic black congresses in which Tolton played major roles. He also developed a relationship with Katharine Drexel, who directed the work of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament toward the education of black and Native American children.

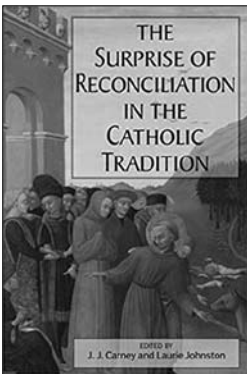
Tolton graduated from the Urban College and hoped to be sent as a missionary to Africa, but Cardinal Simeoni sent him back to Quincy in his strong belief that America needed missionaries to the black community. He received a very positive reception in Quincy and was very successful in catechizing African Americans and he drew many white Catholics to his Masses. A local German pastor, who felt that Tolton was "stealing" his parishioners, caused him great harm. Tolton requested several times that he be transferred to Chicago and was finally granted his request.

He worked very hard in creating the Parish of Saint Monica in Chicago and took on a number of speaking engagements to raise money for the construction of his church. He wore himself out and died at the age of 43.

The singular focus of his work with African Americans was his very strong belief that the Catholic Church was the one institution which could truly liberate them. It was the basis of his lectures and his evangelizing.

Tolton's cause for canonization took a formal step in 2011 under Chicago Cardinal Francis George, who submitted the necessary documentation to Rome. One year later, in 2012, Augustus Tolton was declared Servant of God by Pope Benedict XVI. His cause continues.

Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor



**THE SURPRISE OF
RECONCILIATION
IN THE CATHOLIC
TRADITION**
Mahwah, New
Jersey: Paulist Press,
2018
360 pp., \$34.95

Given the present destructive divisions between and within nations and in the Church, *The Surprise of Reconciliation in the Catholic Tradition* is very timely as it provides a gold mine of ingredients for achieving reconciliation.

The book is the result of a creative process wherein the 13 contributors and two editors participated in a weekend retreat around the theme of Johann-Baptiste Metz's "dangerous memory." "More than anything else, this retreat helped this volume's contributors become a community of Christian scholars pursuing a common theological project rather than a disparate group of academics contributing to a collection of edited writings" (x).

The writers offer both theological wisdom and practical insights by drawing upon experiences of Christians, past and present, who have wrestled with reconciliation. They offer fresh insights in terms of response to violence in different contexts. Employing the methodology of *ressourcement* ("returning to the sources"), the authors propose particular and largely unknown awareness into various dimensions of social reconciliation including "forgiveness, truth-telling, limiting violence, the healing of memories, and the pursuit of justice" (xvii).

They have fulfilled this intention very successfully.

Contributions extend from the biblical and patristic period through medieval and early modern eras, and into the modern period. While even a partial summary is not possible, a few examples might suffice.

Based on Saint Paul, Thomas Stegman, SJ, initiates the first offering and reminds readers that crucial to any “Christian” approach to reconciliation is to identify it as beginning with God’s initiative, namely, through the saving person, work, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Followers of Jesus are called to be ministers of reconciliation who take the initiative to love and forgive others even as they await the unfolding of God’s ‘new creation’” (xviii).

Chapters that follow illustrate this central conviction in different historical periods, e.g., in the writings and efforts of Irenaeus of Lyons, authored by John O’Keefe; those of Cyprian of Carthage, written by Scott Moringiello. Jay Carney offers insights taken from the Peace of God movements in tenth and eleventh-century France, Laurie Johnston examines an issue with striking resonance for the twenty-first century — the relationships between Muslims and Christians in Iberia and beyond during the medieval period.

Into the modern period, Steven Judd, MM, explores how person-to-person contact helped “heal the breaches” that threatened to tear apart southern Peru during the violent Shining Path insurgency of the 1980s and early ‘90s, while Emmanuel Katongole employs Metz’s notion of “dangerous memory” to frame lessons learned from the efforts of the Catholic activist Maggy Barankitse in Burundi and Rwanda.

Basing his presentation on the practice of forgiveness in postwar Uganda, Daniel Philpott points out the emergence of political forgiveness as a key dimension of postwar social reconciliation. Political forgiveness, he posits, offers an alternative to the dominant international consensus predicated on human rights and a generally retributive vision of justice.

Every chapter contains excellent footnotes. In the concluding chapter, Robert Schreiter, CPPS, an expert on the modern Catholic theology of social reconciliation, weaves the insights of the authors into a comprehensive understanding of the key dimensions of a “spirituality

of social reconciliation.” With sincere gratitude for the scholarship of the cohort of authors, this final chapter alone is worth the price of the book.

The intent of the text is to inspire Church historians, theologians, and social ethicists to explore further dimensions of its subject. That being said, *The Surprise of Reconciliation in the Catholic Tradition* is valuable reading for all those engaged in the pursuit of reconciliation, especially those who serve in ministry.

Allan R. Laubenthal, STD
Rector Emeritus
Saint Mary Seminary
Cleveland, Ohio

Poetry

Life Rolls on like Thunder after Easter

Thunder rolls, but it fades,
And then only its echoes remain —
For a while.

People change, like charades,
And some leave us with heartaches and pain —
Or a smile.

Blossoms bloom, then they die,
While we wait for the fruit that will come:
But not yet.

Easter hopes raised us high.
But life's burdens can make us so numb
We forget

That our lives blaze a trail:
Our own pathway of valleys and peaks.
That matures.

And though dreams sometimes fail,
Still Christ's love walks beside us and seeks
What endures.

So, may God touch your life
To uplift all your busy concerns
And amaze . . .

You, through troubles or strife,
How his grace helps your twisting and turns
Run your race . . .

. . . and find his face.



Patrick Dolan



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

Father Ravi Earnest Sebastin, SSS

Houston, Texas

In 2009, I was appointed pastor of a church in a small village in my home country of India. The parish was on an island called Rameswaram in Tamilnadu, the Southern part of India. It is a small fishing hamlet inhabited by 300 families. It was a new parish, and I was the first pastor; hence, I had to establish everything from nothing.

It was great challenge for me in all aspects of church life: setting up the Mass schedule, fixing days and times for sacraments and sacramentals, accommodating myself to live in the village Community Hall. I moved into a shed made of tin sheets covering the sides and a roof made of cement. During the night, one could hear the “music” of the rats running, and outside the shed the visits of unwelcomed guests — deadly, poisoned snakes. Daily morning Mass was at 5:00. The regular Sunday collection was less than twelve dollars.

I was antagonized by the administrative system of the village, and under constant stress over the parish, my own and the people’s living conditions, the financial situation of the parish, and different cultural customs. In spite of many difficulties, I continued my mission with the parish community and administering the school.

This was made possible through daily prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. I would pray very early in the morning, before celebrating Mass. And I shared prayer with the people gathered in the presence of Blessed Sacrament as well after the Eucharist.

Through the help of the Province and my own friends, I was able to meet the basic needs of the parish, the education of the poor children, medical aid and rehabilitation work for the men and women of the parish, the founding of different pious groups, Finance Council, Parish Council, and a new youth ministry.

It was while I was the pastor of this parish that I had a profound experience of the Eucharist. One day, two families came to the church. Each had a small bowl of rice, the staple food of the area. I was asked to bless the rice. Then they exchanged food with each other and began to eat together. This gesture of blessing and sharing food was an act of reconciliation with each other and the start of a new life of communion. Even to this day, the people of the village continue to do this. I often think of this experience of Eucharistic sharing touching ordinary people and life.



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Paris 17 gbe 61

"I had the special privilege of carrying the Blessed Sacrament at St. Paul's, and my soul derived great benefit from it. It was penetrated by faith and love of Jesus in his divine Sacrament. Those two hours seemed but a moment to me.... How I wished at that moment to have all hearts in my heart!"

Saint Peter Julian Eymard
Corpus Christi procession,
St Paul Church, Lyon, 1845



* NO ONE LEAVES *

SCS
PETRUS

JULIANAS
EYMARD



BY SHARING HIS BREAD HE

A FRIEND WITHOUT A FAREWELL *

* GAVE HIS LIFE • MEAL *