

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

July/August 2020



Breaking Bread on the Journey

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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. ©2020

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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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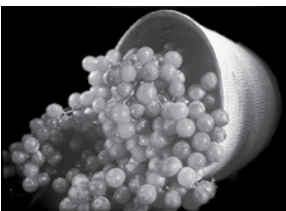
Emmanuel Magazine is published by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament is a Roman Catholic religious group of men whose mission is to assist the church in its efforts to form Christian communities whose center of life is the Eucharist. "Our ideal," as it 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 126 Number 4



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Experiencing Eucharist by Sharing with
Migrants on the Margins

by Robert Stark, SSS

212

EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

The Unity That Only Eucharist Can Achieve?

by Carmen Nanko-Fernández

217

EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

Advice to Pastors on Preserving a
Legacy of Artistic Expression

by Michael DeSanctis

222

A Refugee Family

by George Smiga

229

EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Triangularity: The Shape of Eucharistic
Hospitality

by Darrren Maslen, SSS

231

Praying the “Our Father” in its
Scriptural Context

by John Zupez, SJ

237

Pondering the Parables

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

241

Eymard Along the Journey

by Jim Brown

244

EUCCHARIST & CULTURE

Art, Music, Film, Poetry, and Books

267

COLUMNS

From the Editor

210

Pastoral Liturgy

246

Breaking the Word

250

Eucharistic Witness

276



FROM THE EDITOR

One of the most recognizable icons ever created is Andrei Rublev's masterpiece *The Trinity*. Also called *The Hospitality of Abraham*, it depicts the three angels (messengers) who visited Abraham at the oak of Mamre, seated in communion around a table. This story, recounted in Genesis 18:1-8, is a window into ancient Semitic life, especially the practice of hospitality.

Life in the nomadic and agrarian cultures of the time was challenging, to put it mildly. (All who have suffered the insecurity and upheaval caused by the coronavirus pandemic can now more easily grasp the fragility of all things.) The ancients knew the difficulty of obtaining food in an inhospitable environment where water and arable land were scarce, and the survival of flocks and herds depended on nature's whims. Sharing food, therefore, with anyone, much less with passing strangers, was an act of genuine graciousness, a godly thing, because it represented a sharing in what was most precious and bestowed by the author of life.

I once read this powerful insight into hospitality as a religious act: "*The one who practices hospitality frequently entertains God!*" The disciples of Emmaus experienced this as they journeyed in the presence of an unknown Stranger on the road, who later revealed himself to them in the breaking of bread.

In an age, and a moment in the political life of our nation and other countries, when those who seek access are vilified, even demonized, Pope Francis has consistently spoken of the plight of immigrants and refugees. On September 29, 2019, before a crowd of 40,000 in Saint Peter's Square, he said, "As Christians, we cannot be indifferent to the tragedy of old and new forms of poverty, to the bleak isolation, contempt, and discrimination experienced by those who do not belong to 'our group.' We cannot remain insensitive, our hearts

deadened, before the misery of so many innocent people.”

The Holy Father often frames this in terms of “eucharistic hospitality.” Christ’s whole life was one of self-emptying service, and he continues to share his life with us in signs of bread and wine, his Body and Blood. As Pope Francis has said, “Jesus speaks in the silence of the mystery of the Eucharist and reminds us each time that following him means going out of ourselves and making our lives not something we ‘possess,’ but a gift to him and to others.”

The hospitality of Abraham and Sarah was rewarded. In Genesis 18:9-15, one of the heavenly messengers announces that Sarah will soon bear the son she and Abraham petitioned God to grant them. Will we have the heart and the faith to be similarly hospitable, and merit a blessing?



Anthony Schueller, SSS
Senior Editor

In This Issue

“Breaking bread on the journey” is the theme of this issue of Emmanuel. This theme touches upon the complex interrelated realities of migration, Eucharist and justice. Robert Stark, SSS sets the tone with his article of stories of encounter along the US-Mexico border. Theologian Carmen Nanko-Fernández offers a thoughtful inquiry into some of our theological assumptions in her article, *The Unity That Only Eucharist Can Achieve?* Scripture scholar George Smiga provides a homily on the Holy Family as refugees. As August 2nd is the feast of Saint Peter Julian Eymard his eucharistic spirituality is featured in an article by Darren Maslen, SSS entitled, *Triangularity: The Shape of Eucharistic Hospitality*. Indeed, Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s eucharistic spirituality informs the mission of Emmanuel, “to see all reality in the light of the Eucharist.”



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Experiencing Eucharist by Sharing with Migrants on the Margins: Transforming Vulnerability Through Hospitality

by Robert Stark, SSS

With whom do you break bread and share life's journey?

Father Robert Stark, SSS is the director of the Office for Social Ministry of the Diocese of Honolulu, Hawaii and a regional coordinator for the Vatican's Section on Migrants and Refugees. He also serves as the provincial treasurer of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the United States.

DURING A RECENT TRIP TO THE TOWN OF TAPACHULA ON MEXICO'S SOUTHERN border, I was blessed to break bread and share stories with migrant families, on the move amid life-threatening challenges. As we huddled in an outdoor chapel through a heavy thunderstorm, we were inspired by the homily of local bishop Jaime Calderon, who spoke about our faith in a God who loves unconditionally, and Christ who calls us to do the same. Bishop Calderon refers to himself as a "migrant servant." His congregation that stormy evening was made up mostly of migrants seeking refugee status. The chapel was a seminary structure transformed into a shelter for homeless migrants, mostly women and children fleeing violence and poverty in Central America. The bishop wore a simple wooden cross around his neck, a sign of his humble commitment to service. Since coming to Tapachula, he has spoken about migration and service in his weekly local newspaper columns and homilies.

After one homily, a migrant mother nursing her newborn while holding her 2-year-old toddler in tow, slipped into the offertory procession behind the humble bearers of local bread and wine. As she cuddled her baby in one arm, she also carefully clutched a dirty handkerchief with something apparently very valuable inside. As Bishop Calderon bent down to bless her baby and toddler, the migrant mother motioned to her hand, indicating she wanted him to take her handkerchief. He did so and inside was a "pollito" — a live newborn chick. The bishop accepted the tiny offering and blessed the woman with a gentle kiss on her forehead with tears in his eyes. This "pollito," gift of hope in new life, was all this migrant mother had, yet she gave it freely with all her heart.

This is just one of the many memories imprinted on my heart from

the Encuentro of Bishops and Pastoral Ministers from the “Northern Triangle” of Central America and Mexico to discuss how the Church can best accompany migrants. The Tapachula Diocese stretches nearly 250 miles, across coastal plains and mountains on the Guatemalan border in Chiapas, the poorest state in Mexico. Recently the Chiapas border has become increasingly militarized by the Mexico National Guard yielding to U.S. government pressure to block points of entry from people migrating north. Media has reported the results of efforts to stop legal and illegal immigration. These “results” include children being separated from their parents and forced into overcrowded detention centers. Thousands, young and old, are being deported to dangerous border areas. Even some who entered the U.S. legally with medical disabilities or serious illnesses received deportation letters saying they have 33 days to leave.

Each migrant is a eucharistic invitation to share the word of their story and break bread with them for the journey.

There are many real human stories behind the media images. For example, at the Tapachula shelter I heard the story of a young man from Honduras named Miguel. He left his job, home, loving wife, and four children to flee gang violence and seek asylum in the north. Months before, his brother had also fled gang violence in Honduras, but he was deported from the U.S. after seeking refugee status. Three days later, back in Honduras, the same gang threatening Miguel and his family murdered his brother. Miguel now hopes to receive permission to migrate his family to Mexico for a life of safety and security, plus continue serving in parish family ministry as they had done in Honduras. Equally memorable are the inspiring responses of Tapachula residents opening their homes, hands, and hearts to accompany migrants seeking a more peaceful, hopeful future; young Mexico doctors, lawyers, psychologists offering free services to refugees; parishioners gathering before dawn and working until after dusk to cook and serve meals as part of their mission to encounter God in accompanying the vulnerable. These are also examples of migrant servants.

Eucharist and the Kino Border Initiative

In celebration of the Vatican’s 2019 World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Pope Francis called all to “encounter God at the margins.”



In response, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops organized a weeklong pastoral visit, “Encuentro Con Migrantes,” along the U.S.-Mexico border. Encuentro participants visited a migrant center in Juarez, Mexico, already overwhelmed with refugees fleeing violence from Central America and Mexico. The U.S. and Mexican bishops blessed migrant families as we watched many of them fearfully grasping their only possessions (water bottles, stuffed toys) before boarding buses for the grueling trip back to the southern Mexico-Guatemala border. With tears in his eyes, Bishop Mark Seitz of El Paso, Texas, asked the refugees pardon for the current U.S. migration policy. Just weeks before, Bishop Seitz held the hand of a 9-year old girl as he protested U.S. policy by accompanying her across the border bridge with her parents and seriously ill 2-year old sister who were fleeing violence in Honduras. Bishop Seitz, like Bishop Calderon, also converted diocesan facilities into welcome centers for migrants, providing hundreds of parish volunteers the opportunity to encounter God in sharing migrants’ vulnerability and transforming it into the strength of hospitality.

Transforming vulnerability through hospitality is a eucharistic experience in many of the border migrant centers. The Kino Border Initiative in Nogales was founded and is served by volunteer Catholic laity, nuns, and priests from both sides of the Mexico-U.S. Arizona border. Every day, volunteers arrive before dawn at the Kino “Comedor” right on the Mexico border to prepare meals for those facing the journey back to their countries and the horrors of violence, famine, and poverty. They set the tables and welcome hungry, weary, downtrodden deportees with hot food, new clothes, and free medical and legal aid. This eucharistic “encuentro” begins with “los voluntarios laicos, las Hermanas de la Eucaristia and los Jesuitas” greet all with a heartfelt “bienvenidos.” All are asked to share their stories as they break bread together.

A young man from Honduras spoke of losing a cousin to murder by gangs and then losing both his legs below the knees when he tried to jump on a train to escape the violence in his hometown. Now with the help and nourishment of Kino volunteers, he is hopeful to achieve refugee status, gain employment, and perhaps one-day walk again with the use of prosthetics. Three indigenous women being deported back to their Guatemalan villages shared stories of finding security in each other during their time at El Comedor where they decided to

travel home together rather than risk rape and death by themselves. A homeless Mexican man arrived late with flies all over his wet rotting rags. He was bathed by hand and clothed by Kino volunteers. Then he was sent to the hospital for care and counseling. The volunteers share the migrants' vulnerability to the daily dangers from human traffickers. Together they struggle to live the Eucharist by sharing and transforming vulnerability with migrants suffering on the margins.

Particularly inspiring are the responses of Tapachula residents opening their homes, hands and hearts to accompany migrants seeking a more peaceful, hopeful future; young Mexico doctors, lawyers, psychologists offering free services to refugees; parishioners gathering before dawn and working until after dusk to cook and serve meals as part of their mission to encounter God in accompanying the vulnerable.

Breaking Bread and Sharing the Journey

Pope Francis has spoken of shared vulnerability when he met with migrants during his historic visit to Morocco. "Dear migrant friends, the Church is aware of the sufferings that accompany your journey and she suffers with you. In reaching out to you in your very different situations, she is concerned to remind you that God wants us all to live our lives to the full. The Church wants to be at your side to help you achieve the very best for your life. For every human being has the right to life, every person has the right to dream and to find his or her rightful place in our 'common home'! Every person has a right to the future."¹ And as Pope Francis has stated elsewhere, "for Christians, it is not just about migrants..." because, "...it is Christ himself who knocks on our doors."²

There are almost one billion people on the move in the world today, including persons internally displaced within countries, international migrants, and millions of refugees. Vulnerable persons on the move make up a major portion of the world's population. How is the Church walking with them on their journeys? How can we not only make them feel at home but feel at home with them when they reach our borders or our seashores? Each migrant is a eucharistic invitation



to share the word of their story and break bread with them for the journey. The very existence of the vulnerable on the move is both a gift and a challenge. Pope Francis says we need to be a Church on the move; we must go to places on the margins, to accompany the vulnerable where they are and where we are most needed and need to be. We also need to be a Church “without borders” which welcomes strangers, embracing arriving migrants and those in transit. Each migrant we welcome represents an opportunity to experience God by sharing and transforming our vulnerabilities together through hospitality; becoming bread broken and wine poured out with each other, a eucharistic encounter with God at the margins. Gracias a Dios.



This article contains material previously published in the Hawaii Catholic Herald.

Notes

¹ Pope Francis, Meeting with Migrants, March 30, 2019 http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/march/documents/papa-francesco_20190330_migranti-marocco.html

² Pope Francis, World Day of Migrants and Refugees 2019, September 29, 2019 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/messages/migration/documents/papa-francesco_20190527_world-migrants-day-2019.html and Pope Francis, Homily, February 15, 2019 http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/fr/homilies/2019/documents/papa-francesco_20190215_omelia-sacrofano.html

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 N, O, P, and Q are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during July and August.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

The Unity That Only Eucharist Can Achieve?

by Carmen Nanko-Fernández

When it comes to migration, does the Eucharist unite or divide us?

ONE OF MY FAVORITE LESSONS WITH MY THEOLOGY AND MINISTRY GRADUATE students is to have them look out an assigned window, in clusters of at least three, for approximately five minutes, and record individually what each sees. Inevitably they learn about the limitations of field of vision in relation to their position in front of the window. One sees the lake, another cannot, and a third reports the smudge on the pane distorting the view. They also come to realize the impact of social location on the content and quality of their “seeing.” What one sees depends on the strength of their eyesight, their interests, the multitude of influences that consciously and subconsciously determine what they will see and how. One reports in detail about the colors or architecture, yet another in the same group counts the people that pass by, still another notes the weather. Eventually they come to understand how their positioning and social location influence profoundly their interpretation. The rain, visible to all, is interpreted as gloomy by one, a relief by another, an omen or a sign from God for the third. Looking out the window is never a neutral act, neither is looking at Eucharist, especially in terms of migration.

My former teacher, sacramental theologian David Power, urged his students to recognize the necessary connections between the Eucharist and concrete daily lived realities of struggle and suffering, *las luchas en lo cotidiano*. From this perspective, “The Eucharist presupposes a community engaged in action for justice, a praxis of liberation from violence and injustice.”¹ Looking at Eucharist, through a sometimes-clouded window, from varied and complex experiences of migrations, invites theological consideration of three foci, namely Eucharist as a project of solidarity, as a shared table, and as a practice of exclusion.

Carmen Nanko-Fernández is Professor of Hispanic Theology and Ministry at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, and Director of the Hispanic Theology and Ministry Program. A Latin@ Catholic theologian, among her publications are: *Theologizing en Español: Context, Community and Ministry* (Orbis); “Performative Theologies, (Ritualizing the Daily Latinamente),” in *The Wiley Blackwell Reader in Practical Theology* (2019); and columns in “Theology en la Plaza” at the *National Catholic Reporter*.



Project of Solidarity

In his 2004 apostolic letter *Mane nobiscum Domine*, John Paul II described Eucharist as “not merely an expression of communion in the Church’s life; it is also a *project of solidarity* for all of humanity” (MND, 27). Enumerating signs of our then troubled times, the pope envisioned Eucharist as “*a great school of peace*” (MND, 27) with the capacity to form Christians in ways that effect “*a practical commitment to building a more just and fraternal society*” (MND, 28). Among the examples he cites for parishes and dioceses to commit themselves to in particular ways are “the struggles of immigrants” (MND, 28). Addressing these concerns and needs, especially of those made most vulnerable, “will be the criterion by which the authenticity of our eucharistic celebrations is judged” (MND, 28).

What actions do our celebrations of Eucharist lead to in an age where immigration is treated in terms of warfare and migrants are re-imagined as invaders, usurpers of public services, criminals hidden in our midst?

The notion of judgment harkens to an eschatological dimension of Eucharist, one that Power reminds us roots “its proclamation of the death of Christ and the expectation of his coming, places communities and human enterprises under judgment, or alerts them to what is now commonly called the apocalyptic sting of the gospel proclamation, the submission of all human reality in its corporate and historical totality to a judgment that puts it face to face with Christ.”² In this light, what actions do our celebrations of Eucharist lead to in an age where immigration is treated in terms of warfare and migrants are re-imagined as invaders, usurpers of public services, criminals hidden in our midst? How do our celebrations prepare congregations of local and federal government employees to be discomforted and disquieted by the prospects of their daily orders to roundup, detain and deport immigrants, separate families, and incarcerate children? Is the Word of God proclaimed each Sunday sufficient to equip the saints to address the barrage of demeaning language and rhetoric that fuels dehumanizing practices and policies on a grand scale and attitudes and behaviors within our domestic circles of influence? Does Eucharist, as celebrated within our communities of accountability, form people of faith to take on practical commitments, strategies,

and counter narratives that build *more just* societies grounded in an understanding of our mutual kinship?

It is no surprise that John Paul II understands Eucharist in terms of solidarity. What the preferential option of the poor is to Pope Francis, solidarity was to Pope John Paul II. This principle of Catholic social teaching is key to understanding the vision of community that he develops across his social encyclicals, most especially in *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (1987). He articulates a vision whereby each is truly responsible for all, a way of being en conjunto that cannot be reduced simply to “compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far” (Srs, 38). If Eucharist is truly a *project of solidarity* than it requires, in the case of migration, to see people on the move not as strangers or objects of pity or problems to be resolved. Celebrating Eucharist as an expression of solidarity

... helps us to see the ‘other’-whether a person, people or nation-not just as some kind of instrument, with a work capacity and physical strength to be exploited at low cost and then discarded when no longer useful, but as our ‘neighbor,’ a ‘helper’ (cf. Gen 2:18-20), to be made a sharer, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life to which all are equally invited by God (Srs, 39).

Migratory and documented status do not make one a stranger or a guest at the table of one’s own religious tradition.

Neither Strangers nor Guests at Our Own Table

Solidarity presumes the parity of those gathered to break open the Word and break bread. Too often, when it comes to immigration, we default to metaphors of hospitality and language of welcome in conceptualizing Eucharist. Lost in these well-intentioned yet limited approaches is that those among us who are immigrant Catholics are not strangers but instead are indeed the Church. The body of Christ includes citizens as well as permanent residents, alternately documented immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants. Migratory and documented status do not make one a stranger or a guest at the table of one’s own religious tradition. Dependence on language of “welcoming the stranger,” with its roots in injunctions from




biblical texts regarding the treatment of sojourners in an established community, has paradoxically kept immigrants imagined as eternal aliens even within our own Church. It reinforces a subtle power dynamic at play in the “us-them” language found, as well, in the best of our Church’s teachings and pastoral responses. Such a focus obscures the agency of those made vulnerable, especially by hostile migration policies, relegating some to the margins of their own table. Stranger language can also distract attention from the disappearances of our neighbors from our daily local lives. With eyes pinned to the atrocities at the southern USA border, it can become easy for too many of us to miss the disappearances on our blocks, in our back yards, and from our pews.

Practice of Exclusion

Depending on one’s position, Eucharist can be experienced as a practice of exclusion for any number of reasons. In terms of migrations, the reality that even Catholic spaces could be alienating for immigrants is evident in well over a century of papal teachings and initiatives addressing ministry with people on the move. As early as 1912, Pope Pius X established the *Officium de spirituali migratorum cura* to coordinate the Church’s efforts to improve conditions and pastoral care for migrants. At the very least, across the body of Vatican teachings, was the expectation that immigrants were to have access to care and expressions of their faith that were linguistically and culturally attentive (Nanko-Fernández).³ On one hand, the development of national parishes and of religious communities with particular charisms to accompany migrating peoples but on the other hand, of countless narratives of discrimination and relegation to church basements are all stark reminders of a non-innocent history when celebrations of Eucharist were, and possibly still are, experienced as exclusion.

Eucharist should signify unity “Because the loaf of bread is one, we, though many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf” (1 Corinthians 10:17). This concept of being made one, across differences, through participation in a shared action of faith makes Eucharist an attractive means of traditioning solidarity. Masses celebrated along the border walls that scar the southwestern USA provide a visual and lived experience of the power of Eucharist to transcend obstacles, figuratively and literally. Bishop Ricardo Ramirez describes one such Mass:

Two tables are aligned on each side of the fence; although we cannot be exactly together, we can at least see each other and at the sign of peace, we are able to place our palms against the fence and touch. We may be barred from physical unity, but another kind of unity is celebrated, that unity that only Eucharist can achieve.⁴

Ramirez finds hope in the oneness this Eucharist provides, a unity in empathy as those on both sides of the border “feel each other’s agony, each other’s pain, each other’s anguish, each other’s sorrow and grief.”⁵ In this case, it is the wall, a visible manifestation of national policies and attitudes, which excludes, while the Eucharist, as a project of solidarity, resists and even defies divisive practices. 

Notes

¹ David N. Power, O.M.I., “Eucharistic Justice,” *Theological Studies*, 67 (2006), 879.

² Power, “Eucharistic Justice,” 859.

³ Carmen Nanko-Fernández, “A ‘Documented’ Response: Papal Teaching and People on the Move,” in *Immigrant Neighbors Among Us*, M. Daniel Carroll Rodas and Leopoldo A. Sánchez, editors, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 1-21.

⁴ Bishop Ricardo Ramírez, C.S.B., “Eucharist without Borders: The Church’s Vision for Immigration Reform,” Presentation delivered at the Celebration Conference on Effective Liturgy, (January 12-14, 2011), San Antonio, Texas, https://celebrationpublications.org/sites/default/files/conference_presentations/Bishop%20Ramirez_Eucharist%20without%20Borders.pdf.

⁵ Ibid.



EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

Advice to Pastors on Preserving a Legacy of Artistic Expression

by Michael DeSanctis

How do pastors convey the rich meanings of Catholic sacred art to a congregation naïve of religious visual language?

Michael E. DeSanctis, Ph.D., is a retired professor of fine arts and theology at Gannon University, Erie, Pennsylvania. He writes widely on the subject of sacred architecture and is the author of *Building from Belief: Advance, Retreat and Compromise in the Remaking of Catholic Church Architecture* (The Liturgical Press, 2002) and *Renewing the City of God: The Reform of Catholic Church Architecture in the United States* (Liturgy Training Publications, 1993).

Our Secularized Scene

NOT LONG AGO, WHILE WENDING MY WAY THROUGH THE COLLECTION OF PAINTINGS from medieval Europe at a major metropolitan museum, I came upon a conversation between a boy and his parents that struck me as reflecting the sad state of religio-cultural literacy in this country. The boy, who'd dutifully studied the figures depicted in a dozen or so crucifixion scenes, adorations, and images of Christ in majesty began first to pester his mother as she struggled with his younger sister's baby stroller. "How come all the people have circles on their heads?" he asked, loudly enough to be heard throughout the gallery in which we found ourselves nearly alone. Overhearing the question, I stopped in my tracks and waited for his mother to respond with a simple explanation of what haloes signify in Western art. Just decades ago, after all, one could assume that the boy's perfectly innocent query might have elicited at least a basic explanation of why religious pictures in the West look the way they do. Studies suggest that neither the little boy *nor* his mother, even if they should identify themselves as Christian, are likely today to share extensive knowledge of the history of their faith tradition, let alone the history of Christian art. It became clear to me that this was indeed the case when, dumbfounded, the mother responded to her son with an, "I dunno, ask your dad!" She seemed to await an answer herself as to why the subjects who populate Christian paintings appeared always to be walking the streets of ancient Jerusalem or floating weightlessly above some heavenly plane with gold-plated Frisbees attached to the backs of their heads. Unfortunately, the woman's husband was no better prepared to solve the "halo conundrum" and with a somewhat dismissive "No clue!" simply ushered his little family into an adjacent

Renaissance Room, where the Frisbee-wearing was reduced by half.

I wasn't at all surprised by the conversation to which I'd just been privy. Having taught university-level courses in both art history and theology for nearly thirty-five years, I'd witnessed a gradual decline in young people's knowledge of both the form and the content of Western Christianity. Toward the latter half of my career, for example, no classroom examination of a masterpiece like Michelangelo's *David* could begin without me first apprising students of the fact that the sculpture's subject was drawn from an Old Testament story — one, apparently, to which few had been introduced at any time previously in their education. Though bound together for centuries by that part of the Western imagination intent on drawing wisdom from the past, both David and his famous adversary, Goliath, were as absent from their historical consciousness as, say, Plato and Aristotle, Lewis and Clark or the Wright brothers. So lacking was students' knowledge of what scripture scholar Raymond Brown (1928-98) liked to call "inspired history," in fact, that the same could be said of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, — even Mary and Joseph — though most could place the latter in some vague way at the center of the Christmas narrative.

An Unanticipated Challenge

The decline in the culture's familiarity with longstanding religious themes and practices is not limited to the academic classroom, of course. Indeed, one of the largely unanticipated results of the nation's drift toward greater secularization is that the popular audience for symphonic and choral music, for theater, literature, dance — as well as the visual arts — is nowadays less able than its predecessors to appreciate in the fullest sense the masterworks in each genre that comprise the long record of Judeo-Christian artistic achievement. Likewise, it may be argued that artists at all levels to whom we now entrust preservation of the largely religion-based deposit of Western art — products themselves of a culture increasingly disassociated from religious observance of any kind — are less inclined to exhibit a personal, affective or even *spiritual* connection to patrimony in their care than a facility with the material that is strictly technical. A collegiate choir director-friend of mine who'd arranged to have his singers do some Christmas caroling, for example, lamented to me recently that few of his young singers knew even the first line of any of the hymns and carols long connected with the season.

Many in a Catholic campus ministry staff with which I'm familiar expressed similar concerns after commissioning a stained-glass artist



to fabricate new windows for the collegiate chapel where they oversaw daily celebrations of the Eucharist. Though recognized regionally for the quality of his colorful, free-form creations, the individual they hired was largely untrained in the conventions of ecclesiastical art-glass, including those likely to be received most favorably by assemblies of Catholic worshipers. He also was by no means a “church-goer” himself and openly expressed little affinity for the rules and rites of the Catholic Church. The man had been engaged partly on the strength of his reputation as a craftsman open to stretching the limits of his medium. What he’d bring to the project, the ministry team hoped, was an experimental spirit free of presuppositions about what religious art *ought* to look like. When unveiled, unfortunately, his windows met with criticism from many in the academic community confused by their highly abstracted treatment of subjects ranging from the annunciation to the crucifixion. Though the works fulfilled any objective standard of artistic quality, they clearly retained too few of the features traditionally associated with Catholic art to meet the needs of their immediate and most important recipients.

Hoping to avoid similar missteps by parish communities today throughout the country undertaking large-scale church-building or renovation projects, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, through its guidelines on art and architecture, acknowledges the value of so-called “liturgical consultants” (*Built of Living Stones*, 199-200), design professionals knowledgeable of the spatial and aesthetic requirements of sacred worship whose functioning within the Church is a relatively recent phenomenon. Such persons were virtually unheard of prior to implementation of the liturgical reforms of the 1960s, when architectural firms and parish bodies alike scurried to revise practices on which they’d relied for decades. The bishops define the role of such consultants as partly catechetical. Their task is to educate whole parish bodies and the architects they employ on the special demands the liturgy makes of its architectural setting (*Built of Living Stones*, 200). In so doing, shepherds of the Church, appear to be admitting at least some measure of inadequacy today in the liturgical fluency of their flock and in the practical training of those who provide them architectural services.

There was a time, of course, when religion was a means by which Roman Catholics and others in the United States gained an appreciation for the art of the wider culture in which they moved. One thinks immediately in this regard of the way that music and architecture for worship

helped shape the aesthetic sensibilities of immigrant Christians and Jews from Europe during the first half of the twentieth century. The church building or synagogue was a classroom for the senses as much as for the mind and soul, a place where the kinship of beauty and holiness found expression in forms that couldn't help but be affected by the artistic currents of the day. Exposure to religion as a young Christian or Jew, even if it should rely on what some regarded mere "peasant art," was an entrée to the more elevated pretensions of the secular gallery scene, concert hall or stage. One's spiritual formation preceded one's immersion in the aesthetic.

In a country where roughly a quarter of the populace now claims no religious affiliation at all, religion has ceased for many to be a starting point toward appreciation for the arts. Instead, art has become their entrée to religion.

So it was, for example, that Catholic parochial schoolchildren of the 1930s, who'd come to know a little about Romanesque or Gothic architecture, the paintings of the Renaissance masters or the beauty of liturgical vestments and vessels of the Baroque Era through a workbook series published by the Mentzer, Bush & Company titled *Art Education Through Religion* (1930), could later claim while vacationing abroad as adults that the whole of European art seemed somehow to be the province of their Church. Sixty years later, their grandchildren could make the same boast should their art education in a parish school be augmented by the contents of *Art Through Faith* (1996), a lavishly-illustrated catalog of paintings, sculpture, and architecture in the service of the Church issued by Seton Press. Christian children of other denominations and their Jewish counterparts educated by the nation's public schools likewise gained at least some appreciation of the fine arts, especially music, through the various, religiously-themed pageants and stage performances that once punctuated their academic year. To this was added contact in church-and temple-schools with large portions of Scripture read aloud with the authority of polished sermonizing or sung in metered time from hymnals as thick and timeless-looking as any bible. Lending libraries with recordings of poetry-reading, sacred music, and gallery-like facilities filled with art of a representational style prohibited from the synagogue proper were often accessible to Jewish children. Their Sabbath mornings were devoted to learning from rabbi and cantor how to intone the Torah's ancient texts in Hebrew. To be sure, sectarianism could sometimes



blemish the nation's religious landscape, but, in general, religion itself was regarded a positive force in American society and the bearer of much that was not only good and true, but also beautiful.

Today, it would seem, the tables have been turned. In a country where roughly a quarter of the populace now claims no religious affiliation at all, religion has ceased for many to be a starting point toward appreciation for the arts. Instead, art has become their entrée to religion. This is certainly the case in our public-schools, where teachers, warier than ever to remain neutral on the matter of human spirituality, are encouraged to employ the arts to illustrate the more ethereal aspects of one religion or another. A *Teachers Guide to Religion in the Public Schools*, published jointly in 2008 by the Tennessee Education Association and the Washington, DC-based First Amendment Center, for example, notes that "art, drama, music or literature with religious themes" should be incorporated into the lesson plans of those treating the topic in the classroom, but "only as examples of cultural or religious heritage."¹ A booklet entitled *Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools in the United States* issued in 2010 by the American Academy of Religion likewise prescribes a "Cultural Studies Approach" to religion in the higher grades built on the works of authors and artists illustrating how religious values become "embedded" in societies.²

Implications and Recommendation for Catholic Pastors

For the Catholic pastor committed to the ongoing catechesis of his parishioners and preservation of the Church's artistic tradition, the challenges described here may seem daunting. "It's hard enough to present the fullness of the faith to my people," a priest might think. "How do I begin to expose my parish community to the riches of sacred music, art and architecture, as well?" His problem is compounded by the deficiencies he may detect in the religious instruction of parishioners who came of age during the tumultuous decades in the Church that followed Vatican Council II (1962-65) and, generally, in the aesthetic awareness of those affected by recent funding cuts to arts education in parochial and public school systems alike. It is no more challenging, however, than what he is called to daily as a minister of the Church's sacraments and as a dispenser of insights for his people into the proper circumstance of liturgical prayer, actions the bishops of Vatican II encouraged all clergy to undertake with "zeal and patience" (*Sacrosanctum concilium*, 19).

As a liturgical consultant, designer, and educator who has worked hard for decades to raise the level of appreciation for the sacred arts in parishes across the country, I offer pastors these recommendations to help them:

1. Treat the artistic dimension of worship in your parish as a priority, not a luxury. It is a reality as important to the corporate prayer you offer God as any of the written texts you may offer from a liturgical book. In a sense, art and architecture are *complementary texts*, and music is the means by which words of praise and adoration take flight and assume a power truly able to affect the soul.
2. Treat your church building, no matter how modest, with the reverence you show any other liturgical vessel. Ciborium and chalice contain the body and blood of Christ in sacramental form. The building in which your parish worships is privileged to hold Christ's Mystical Presence. It is a tabernacle for the *ecclesial* body of Christ.

To help preserve the Church's vast patrimony of art, architecture, music and literature from the forces threatening it today, pastors must be models of an aesthetical life that finds in beauty an entrée to the sacred.

3. The Church encourages parishes to seek "noble simplicity rather than ostentation" in the arts that serve their rites (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 292). Do not treat the liturgical environment as something that needs always to be "added to" by way of embellishment. Let the architectural setting for worship *speak for itself* at times, conveying to users the ways in which space, form and light alone can affect the attitudes of those who behold them.
4. Strive to read, sing, and move beautifully and with obvious deliberateness through every part of the Mass. There is a built-in poetry to Catholic ritual twenty centuries in the making, a special manner of behaving at prayer sometimes called *Romanité*. We members of the Church of Rome have a special way of worshiping styled in part after the austere grandeur of Ancient Rome. The "Roman Way" in which worship unfolds



in your parish, based less on spontaneous emotionality than formality and reserve, will distinguish it from the sort of “praise services” that are the allure of many other Christian denominations.

5. Consider augmenting the works of devotional art likely located throughout your church building with good quality paintings and sculpture — suitable for display in other places. These need not be religious “clichés” or images drawn strictly from well-known historical sources (Filling rectories and conference rooms with photo-mechanical facsimiles of Leonardo da Vinci’s *Last Supper*, for example, won’t necessarily deepen anyone’s understanding of the Eucharist). Offer your people encounters with both “high art” and “high Christology” that will stretch their religious imaginations.
6. Refer to examples of the Catholic arts in your homilies, including some from your own place of worship. Do not assume that your parishioners have absorbed the fullest meaning of a special sculpture or furnishing that has been part of your parish’s patrimony for years. Build upon each religious object’s ability to teach. Thoughtfully amplify it with care, being sure not to reduce any work of music, literature, visual art or architecture to mere propaganda.

Pastors remain the “chief liturgists” of their parishes, a role they perfect by ongoing commitment to the sanctity of worship. To help preserve the Church’s vast patrimony of art, architecture, music and literature from the forces threatening it today, they must likewise be models of an aesthetical life that finds in beauty an entrée to the sacred. Along with sacraments he must dispense sets of new eyes and ears, new ways for his parishioners to perceive the materiality of the world and in it discover reason to reverence the immaterial.



Notes

¹ (art. 7; <http://www.teateachers.org/sites/default/files/teachers-guide-religion.pdf>).

² Part 3. <https://www.aarweb.org/sites/default/files/Publications/epublications/AARK-12 CurriculumGuidelines.pdf>.



EUCCHARISTIC LITURGY

A Refugee Family

by George Smiga

This article was originally given as a homily for the Feast of the Holy Family, 29 December 2019.

THE HOLY FAMILY WAS A REFUGEE FAMILY. THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT ABOUT THIS. WE hear in the Gospel of Matthew that King Herod was determined to kill the Christ child. So, an angel appears in a dream to Joseph to tell him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. Joseph does so and remains in Egypt until the death of Herod. This means that in the first year of his life, Jesus was forced to flee his own country, because of political oppression. What would have happened if the Holy Family had been turned away from the border in Egypt and sent back to Herod? Would Herod have been successful in his desire to kill Jesus before he could begin his ministry and accomplish our salvation? Of course, we cannot answer this question. But we should always be grateful to the Egyptians for protecting our Savior.

I wish I could tell you that in our world today there is no longer need for people to flee their homeland. But this is not the case. In fact, we are in the midst of a refugee emergency. In our world, there are 70.8 million people who have been displaced from their homes because of war or crisis. This is the largest number of displaced persons since the Second World War. Over half of that number are people who are fleeing from armed combat in Syria, southern Sudan, and Afghanistan. They, like the Holy Family, are fleeing political violence in an effort to save themselves and their families.

You may wonder why I mention such horrible statistics during the Christmas season. The lights are still on the Christmas trees. The poinsettias have not yet begun to wilt, and I am talking about refugees! I am doing so because I want to keep Christ in Christmas. Christmas is more than exchanging gifts and gathering together with our family and friends. If Jesus is the reason for the season, then we should know

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Jesus' teaching and follow it. What we discover is that the issue of refugees is high on Jesus's agenda. In the great Last Judgment scene, Jesus presents us with six issues that will concern him on the Last Day. The first three are these: "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (Matthew 25:35). Jesus places our treatment of those who are displaced on the same level as providing food and drink. This makes welcoming refugees central to our responsibilities. It is especially true this year. We all know that 2020 is going to be a very political year. There will be many candidates vying for our votes. As we consider who deserves our support, we should have the teaching of Jesus and its interpretation by the Church in our minds and hearts.

What would have happened if the Holy Family had been turned away from the border in Egypt and sent back to Herod?

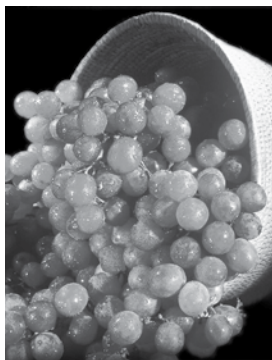
The Church opposes the evil of abortion. It also supports the free exercise of religion without government interference. We should also understand what the Church teaches on immigration. There are three points to Catholic social teaching on this issue.¹ First, it is a human right to migrate in order to survive and protect one's family. Second, governments have a right to regulate their borders and control immigration. Third, government borders should be regulated with justice and mercy. In the upcoming months, as you hear candidates talk about their immigration policies, ask yourself whether those policies are characterized by justice and mercy? If not, they are not consistent with what we understand as Jesus' teaching.

The flight of the Holy Family continues in our world today. The Holy Family is no longer fleeing Herod. It is fleeing political violence in Guatemala, Syria, and Afghanistan. The Holy Family is Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and every other religious sect. The Holy Family is white, black, brown, and yellow. The Holy Family speaks every language and dialect on earth. The Holy Family is looking for safety and humane treatment.

We are called to welcome refugees with justice and mercy. Let's welcome them as we would welcome Jesus. 🌹

Notes

¹ <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/immigration/catholic-teaching-on-immigration-and-the-movement-of-peoples.cfm> accessed



EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Triangularity: The Shape of Eucharistic Hospitality

by Darren Maslen, SSS

Saint Peter Julian Eymard founded the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. How did hospitality shape his eucharistic mission?

Born from Hospitality

SCRATCH UNDER THE SURFACE OF ANY HISTORICAL ACCOUNT AND THERE IS ANOTHER story ready to be told. The circumstances that gave rise to the emergence of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the mid 1850's in France is a myriad of stories, which can be neatly summarized by the popular expression, "demography is destiny."¹ With the onset of the French Industrial Revolution and the birth of capitalism, traditional rural ways of life, and how to form identities, was changing fast. The simple fact is that people were on the move — domestic migration on an enormous scale in order to populate the new industries in France's major cities — and with that movement of people, the capacity for giving and receiving hospitality was once again revealed.

Between the years 1851 to 1866, the population of Paris grew rapidly from 1 million to 1.7 million. Peter Julian Eymard and his companion Raymond De Cuers formed part of that rapid expanse of people who flocked into the capital for new enterprise. The urbanization of France brought with it the possibility for people to tell their stories of opportunity. However, the nascent years of industrialization brought largely miserable living and working conditions for those who had been formerly people of the land and masters of traditional crafts. The enterprise that had captivated Fr. Eymard's motivations toward Church and society was the Eucharist. Yet, here he was like thousands of others, launching into a new life from meager resources. Expressing something of the concrete realities of these days, Fr. Eymard reflected to Marguerite Guillot, "I would never have known the poverty nor the goodness of God without this new situation. We started as though

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in a desert, with one pair of sheets, a chair, one spoon, not two. It's striking!"²

Luke's gospel is often referred to as the "hospitable" Gospel; it is a narrative that weaves together a series of guests, visitors, dinners, encounters, and homemaking. In Brendan Byrne's reading of the gospel, he recognizes a paradigm moment as Jesus passes through Jericho on his way to Jerusalem, and encounters Zacchaeus. The reason why Byrne places such significance upon the hospitality shared between them is that it reveals how hospitality in the gospels is often a "triangular situation."³ This triangularity focuses upon Jesus, a principal character such as Zacchaeus, and a "they." In this case "they" means a visible or invisible witness(es) who observe the availability of hospitality, and comment about it either positively or negatively. Without a "they" the significance and meaning of the hospitality remains hidden.

There is a triangularity that rests within the very first weeks of Fr. Eymard's eucharistic congregation as it set out in Paris. Noticing Eymard's lack of necessities, Mother Guyot, the superior of a nearby religious order arranged for the delivery of a noonday meal for Father Eymard and Father De Cuers every day. Guyot's response to their basic needs was evidently witnessed, as it should be by anybody who wants to get to know the Apostle of the Eucharist, because the simple fact is *hospitality brought the eucharistic congregation to fulfilment*. Eymard and De Cuers first had to be fed, before they could feed others — *eucharisticize them*. Having been foreigners in Egypt, the Hebrew people had rooted in their consciousness the necessity of treating strangers with respect (Ex 23:9). Reminiscent of that consciousness, Fr. Eymard committed to memory the hospitality he had received. Eight and a half years later he continued to write to Mother Guyot recalling the importance of this, "...our thoughts turn preferably to those who are close to us: therefore, I am writing to send you a brief greeting. I do so at the holy altar every morning at 7:00, but I must bring you up to date about events here since you have been a friend since the beginning and the Blessed Sacrament is everything to you...."⁴

Church "Off-Center"

One insight that has spoken to me persistently since returning to Europe has been the necessity for the Church to be "off-center." Just as Fr. Eymard's mission was undertaken in light of the Church being

pushed to the margins of society, likewise, ministering in Ireland at this time offers both the same perspective and opportunities. When you are at the center of anything, it is often challenging to see the wider terrain with clarity. Standing off-center, it is easier to see what the central ground consists of. Indeed, Jesus' sharpest criticism was reserved for the religious leadership, whose central positioning meant that they could see very little of God's purposes for the life of the people and were merely *blind guides*.

Recently the Blessed Sacrament Chapel here in Dublin where I minister commemorated its fiftieth anniversary; during his homily, the city's archbishop touched upon the reality of a newly positioned Irish Church:

This chapel is part of the mosaic of the new Ireland that we are challenged to create. It is an icon of a Church presence in a changing society. It represents not a dominant Church that tries to impose itself. It is a Church of welcome. It is a place where in the face of a world that finds it hard to find God, we are led to God by learning in all simplicity to pray and worship. The chapel is a place where the eucharistic presence of Jesus reaches out and heals.⁵

Fr. Eymard's insights as to how the Eucharist can breathe life into the lungs of society grow out of the recognition that we are meant to belong and experience belonging.

Ireland is a good example of what happens when faith is removed from its center-ground, and what is revealed is a kind of vacuum that speaks of paradoxes of existence. On the one hand, life expectancy here continues to grow, and with it, the loneliness of seniors, as well as isolation of family carers. The tangible experience of being a family carer is a kind of relational deprivation from the world. As Paul O' Mahoney observes, "Many carers do not identify themselves as carers until they are in crisis and in urgent need of support."⁶ Meanwhile, both the U.S.A. and the U.K. are encountering a sharp rise in incidences of suicide, especially among young adult males. The reasons for this are complex, often gravitating around socio-economic factors and overburdened mental health services in these respective countries.



Yet, the tragedy of this phenomenon has a voice, and it communicates hopelessness. By way of appeal, clinical and forensic psychologist Joel Dvoskin states, “Suicide is about despair, and the only cure for despair is hope. Psychologists can prevent suicide by helping people to regain hope. If we’re not about that, we should get out of the business.”⁷

There is a tremendous capacity for the Church to pour life and hope into the evident longing and hunger that beset many lives in western societies, constructed upon an implicit individualism, yet always desirous of a collective. That capacity is called the Eucharist. Time and again studies of human behaviour highlight that *belonging* is a fundamental human need. It rests upon frequent, positive interactions with at least a few other people, and that these interactions take place within the context of long-lasting affective concern for another’s welfare.⁸ Fr. Eymard’s insights as to how the Eucharist can breathe life into the lungs of society grow out of the recognition that we are meant to *belong* and experience *belonging*. “The Eucharist,” he wrote, “gives (people) a center of life... it gives them a law of life, that of charity, of which it is the source; thus, it forges between them a common bond, a Christian kinship.”⁹

Triangularity of Eucharistic Hospitality

Human reflection is a mechanism for making the implicit explicit. In differing contexts, when invited to reflect on the value that the Eucharist brings to life and faith, what is often revealed is an implicit eucharistic hospitality that is triangular. How God, the local faith community, and the witness of a person all encounter one another. This reveals a living hospitality facilitated by the Eucharist.

Today the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament has a program where this triangularity is made evident. It is entitled the *Life in the Eucharist* program (L.I.T.E.). As eucharistic evangelization, the L.I.T.E. program gravitates around the offering of personal witness stories in light of eucharistic reflection. The offering and receiving of these faith narratives builds a bridge between the Eucharist as something that we do on Sunday, to a way of reading our entire life for the rest of the week.

Cathleen is a member of the L.I.T.E. team in Scotland. Her contribution to the program is a powerful witness that speaks of a time when she ached for the presence of God. Hearing the parable of the prodigal son

proclaimed one Sunday, she wept as she craved to be embraced in the arms of God, just as the wayward son was greeted by his father. She recognizes that as a child, the receiving of unconditional love by her parents was lacking. She always felt she had to earn it. Cathleen became conscious of a worshiper in her parish, who after receiving the Eucharist radiated something wonderful. By the woman's demeanour and her sense of presence, Cathleen just knew that something wonderful was happening in that moment. As Lent approached one year, she read in her parish bulletin "Do something extra for Lent!" and she responded by signing up for a parish program. Walking into the parish hall on the first evening, she was welcomed by that same woman:

I was met by none other than the same lovely woman who was so in love with the Eucharist. As she put her arms around me to greet me, I felt the warmth and sense of belonging, which was really remarkable. I have often called it my prodigal daughter moment.

In this moment of profound connection, Cathleen experienced eucharistic hospitality, where all three corners of the triangle met — God, the welcome of the community in the presence of the woman, and Cathleen, the prodigal daughter. For the first time in her life, *belonging* had become incarnated in Cathleen's life of faith.

Scan every verse of Scripture, and you will never find anybody alone in the cenacle: it is the place of belonging.

I am Hospitality

Eucharistic hospitality as a triangular reality comprising the important connection between God, community, and the individual person touches upon the profound experiences of those who surrounded Jesus. This is especially reflected in the images portrayed to us in the gospels' accounts of the upper room.

Scan every verse of Scripture, and you will never find anybody alone in the cenacle: it is *the* place of belonging. The Lord's words and actions in the upper room did not amount to a catechism class, but rather were about nurturing a profound sense of belonging to him. From the moment he commanded his disciples to love one another,



the connective tissue of the Church began to be woven into human experience and memorialized in the simple act of the breaking of the bread.

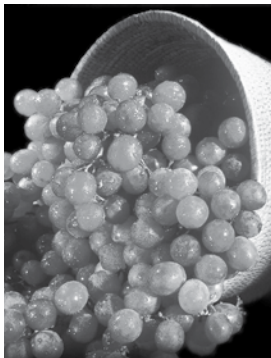
Diana Butler Bass summarizes the impact of Jesus' motivations in that upper room by simply stating, "To love, one must risk belonging."¹⁰ Indeed, one of Jesus' self-introductions to his hearers was about providing a shelter for those who were taking the risk of belonging to his person and purpose. Jesus incarnated hospitality as soon as he revealed, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst" (Jn 6:35).

The living legacy of St. Peter Julian Eymard invites us to bring the triangularity of eucharistic hospitality to a world on the move and with it, the encountering of strangers in our localities. It can also speak convincingly to many lives held captive by isolation and hopelessness. Indeed, to love, we must risk belonging!



Notes

- ¹ This saying is often attributed to Auguste Comte.
- ² Peter Julian Eymard, Letter to Marguerite Guillot (May 31, 1856).
- ³ Brendan Byrne, *The Hospitality of God: A Reading of Luke's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000) 5.
- ⁴ Peter Julian Eymard, Letter to Mother Guyot, (December 8, 1864).
- ⁵ Most Rev. Diarmuid Martin, Homily Notes, Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Dublin, Ireland, January 6, 2020.
- ⁶ Paul O' Mahoney, "CSO finds 8,150 increase in Family Carers while vital supporters are being cut." *Family Carers Ireland*. June 16, 2017: www.familycarers.ie
- ⁷ Kirsten Weir, "Worrying Trends in U.S. Rates." *American Psychological Association*, March 2019, Vol. 50:3, 24.
- ⁸ See, R F Baumeister & M R Leary, "The need to belong: desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation." *Psychological Bulletin* 1995, May 117 (3), 497- 529.
- ⁹ Peter Julian Eymard, *La présence réelle*, Vol. 1. (Paris, 1950), 270.
- ¹⁰ Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion* (New York, HarperCollins, 2012) 206.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Praying the “Our Father” in its Scriptural Context

by John Zupez, SJ

How does the context of the New Testament enhance our understanding of the Lord’s Prayer?

WE USE WORDS IN PRAYER TO KEEP OUR MIND FOCUSED. WHAT BETTER THAN TO USE the words of prayer that Jesus left us, to raise our minds and hearts to God amidst the cares of daily life? I propose here some thoughts that the “Our Father” might inspire, based on the deeper meaning of its words in Scripture.

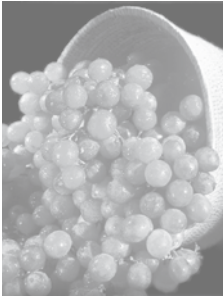
Our

The “our” brings to mind that Christ came in the middle of time to draw all to a oneness in himself (Col 1:20). This should give us a warm sense of oneness with all of creation, and of never being far from the “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph 4:6). God gave the divine Son to be our brother in whom we are brothers and sisters of one another (Heb 2:11-13).

Father

The second word “Father” reminds us how protective earthly fathers can be. We cannot doubt the protectiveness of God our Father, the source of all fatherliness. We are adopted children in the family of God, whom we are to call by the familiar term “abba,” “father” (Gal 4:4-7). Jesus, in his farewell discourse to his disciples, mentions the Father 63 times in telling of the love and care our Father in heaven has for us (Jn 14-17). God’s fatherly *and* motherly care was noted earlier by the Hebrews who heard God say to them: “It was I who taught Ephraim to walk, who took them in my arms; ...I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like those who raise an infant to

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their cheeks" (Hosea 11:3-4). And further: "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you" (Is 49:15). We also see in our mother Mary God's own motherly care for us, as Jesus pronounced of her: "Behold, your mother" (Jn 19:27).

Who art in heaven

We are pilgrims on earth with heaven as our home. We are people of the resurrection following Christ to glory (1 Cor 15:20, 49). And so, our thoughts and plans for ourselves should never stray far from heaven, our true home: "In my Father's house there are many dwelling places. If there were not, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be" (Jn 14:2-3).

Hallowed be thy name.

"In this way the love of God was revealed to us: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might have life through him" (1 Jn 4:9). And so we hallow or lift up the Father's name in praise and thanksgiving at every Mass, the eucharistic remembrance that Jesus left us (Lk 22:19), focused on the hope of resurrection brought us by Jesus (Lk 22:16), God's own Word to us (Jn 1:14; 14:10). Out of a grateful heart, an outgoing, generous life follows (Col 3:12-17). The purpose of our eucharistic celebration is to animate us to lift up God's name in the whole of our lives, as a priestly people filled with praise "of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet 2:9).

Thy kingdom come

The Hebrew people lived for centuries in expectation of the Messianic kingdom. Jesus initiated this kingdom and invited us, his disciples, to join in his work of spreading the good news of God's love to all peoples (Mt 28:19). By being "missionary disciples," to use Pope Francis' memorable phrase, we do our part in building up this kingdom, modeled on the charity or love that we are called to forever in heaven (1 Cor 13:8-13). And so, we live buoyed up by Jesus' saying: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32).

Thy will be done

God’s will is for our peace (Jn 14:27). In pursuing God’s will for us we find our true selves, “for we are his handiwork, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that God has prepared in advance, that we should live in them” (Eph 2:10).

On earth as it is in heaven

In heaven we will feel compelled by the vision of God to choose nothing outside of God, but on earth we are left free to choose (Rev 22:3-5). May heaven be even now the treasure we seek, “for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Mt 6:21).

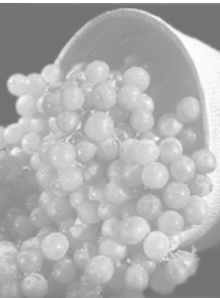
Give us this day our daily bread

Recall how Jesus introduced this prayer: “Your Father knows what you need before you ask” (Mt 6:8). God supplies our daily needs, giving us always good things (Mt 7:11) and the holy Spirit (Lk 11:13). When we seek first God’s kingdom and righteousness, all that is needful is given us besides (Mt 6:33).

The words of the “Our Father,” deeply dwelt upon in the context of the New Testament, make us aware of Christ praying within us in the moments after communion...

Forgive us ... as we forgive ...

Jesus elaborates on this a few lines later: “If you forgive others their transgressions, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your transgressions” (Mt 6:14-15). And unless we are reconciling toward all those who would be at peace with us, we are not welcome at the community celebration: “Go first and be reconciled” (Mt 5:24). Jesus is the compassion of God in human flesh, and he repeatedly exhorts us to learn this from him: “Be merciful, just as [also] your Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36).



Lead us not into temptation

Our Father never allows us to be tempted beyond our power to resist (1 Cor 10:13), and Christ reassures us: “My grace is sufficient for you” (2 Cor 12:9). In order that God might “deliver us from evil” we must choose, again and again, to remain “strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self” (Eph 3:16), the Spirit that the Father has sent in Christ’s name (Jn 14:26).

The words of the “Our Father,” deeply dwelt upon in the context of the New Testament, make us aware of Christ praying within us in the moments after Communion, and also when we close the door at home and pray in secret to the Lord, who has promised to hear and to answer our prayer (Mt 6:6).



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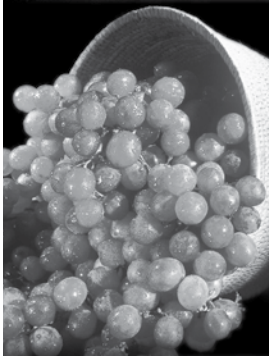
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EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Mt 25:31-46)

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

What does it mean to be called a “brother or sister of Christ?”

THE SCENE DESCRIBED IN THIS PASSAGE OF MATTHEW’S GOSPEL, THE FINAL SECTION OF Jesus’ concluding discourse, is one of power and grandeur. Though it is frequently called a parable, the formal parabolic element here is the comparison of the separation of the nations with the division of sheep and goats. Nevertheless, the scene has many of the characteristics of gospel parables, especially with its realistic and vivid dialogue between the king and those who are judged and the surprising questions that are put to the king. Many Scripture scholars maintain that this scene should more accurately be called an “apocalyptic parable” and should be interpreted from the horizon of the apocalyptic genre. For ease of discourse, here we shall refer to it simply as a parable.

Interpreting the Parable

The classic interpretation of this gospel passage is the following: When Jesus, the Son of Man, comes in glory, he will judge all peoples, and the criterion of judgment will be the works of mercy and charity shown to the needy, the marginalized, and the suffering of this world. Jesus so identifies himself with these that whatever is done to them, by way of service or neglect, is done to Jesus — “Whatever you did [did not do] for one of these least brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did [did not do] for me” (verse 40 and 45). People will be called “blessed” and “righteous” on the basis of actions that are done simply for any person in need.

Against this classic interpretation a number of objections have been raised. For example, in Judaism and early Christianity there is no clear instance where an unconverted Gentile is spoken of as an *adelphos*, the Greek word for “brother.” This word in Matthew’s Gospel is used

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in reference to Christian disciples. Also, Matthew uses the term “little ones” for the vulnerable members of the Christian community. Finally, this judgment scene comes at the end of a discourse that is delivered to disciples, and is preceded by three parables concerning proper discipleship. In light of these objections it has been argued that the “least brothers and sisters” of Jesus are Christian missionaries, who often endured privations and hardships, rather than the needy as such, and that the pagan nations will be judged on how they have received these missionaries. Though this judgment scene has likely undergone certain interpretative developments from Jesus to the written gospel, it is surely true to say that it brings together many important themes from Matthew’s Gospel and remains an inspiring source for Christian social ethics.

This parable transports us to that moment when Jesus, the Son of Man, will come in his glory and all the nations will be assembled before him. Then the people will be separated “as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” The time for change and conversion is past; what people have done during their earthly life will determine their eternal destiny. They will be compelled to recognize the judgment given, unable to avoid it. The king addresses a group as either blessed or accursed, and announces their fates: they will enter into his kingdom or be forced to depart from him. In parallel statements the king affirms why those on his right are blessed and those on his left are accursed, namely, because definite needs — feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, etc. — were either attended to or ignored.

Because Jesus has identified himself with every human person, to consistently refuse acts of charity to those in need, especially those in grave need, is so serious an omission that our eternal destiny is placed in jeopardy.

The surprise element in the parable is in the question that the blessed and then the accursed put to the king, and the response given to them by the king. The blessed are admitted into the kingdom not because they were fully aware of serving Christ in attending to the needs of the hungry, the naked or the ill, but simply because they cared for the “least brothers and sisters” of Jesus. In other words, Christ was served because he identified himself with those in need. Likewise, the accursed are denied the kingdom not because they refused to

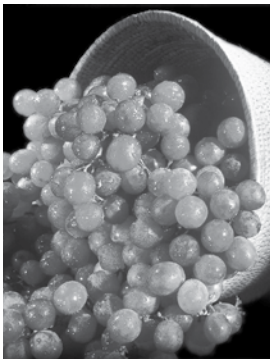
"see" Christ in the destitute, but because they withheld necessary care of those in need.

Application for Today

This parable constitutes an inspiring source for the social ethics of Christians. It urges and motivates us to recognize the presence of Christ in his "least brothers and sisters," those who are in want, and because of their sometimes-unattractive appearance and offensive character, are shunned by society. Moreover, the parable warns us of the seriousness of sins of omission. Because Jesus has identified himself with every human person, to consistently refuse acts of charity to those in need, especially those in grave need, is so serious an omission that our eternal destiny is placed in jeopardy.

Very appropriately we conclude our reflection on this parable with a quote from the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et spes*). "Today there is an inescapable duty to make ourselves the neighbor of every man (and woman), no matter who he (or she) is, and if we meet him (or her), to come to his (or her) aid in a positive way, whether he (or she) is an aged person abandoned by all, a foreign worker despised without reason, a refugee, an illegitimate child wrongly suffering for a sin he did not commit, or a starving human being who awakens our conscience by calling to mind the words of Christ: 'Whatever you did for one of these least brothers (and sisters) of mine, you did for me'" (GS 27).





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Eymard Along the Journey: Eucharistic Reflections of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

by Jim Brown

Jim Brown is the director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing in Cleveland, Ohio, and an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. He has a Master of Arts degree in biblical studies.

July

In a few days we will celebrate Saint Peter Julian Eymard's feast day. It is a joy for all members of the Eymardian family to share this "outstanding apostle of the Eucharist" with the rest of our Church. Those who read Emmanuel have been learning about Saint Eymard for many years. Whether you have been studying this saint for 30 years or 30 months you have undoubtedly formed an opinion of what he was like.

At the end of his very informative biography *Peter Julian Eymard*, Fr. André Guitton, SSS, asks "What kind of man was he? What face can we give him? What memories about him did his contemporaries cherish?"¹ Here are some quotes Fr. Guitton provides to feed our reflections during these days:

Tall, thin-faced with high cheekbones that revealed an ascetic, but a man full of the gentleness and sensitivity of the Dauphins. In conversation, his voice was a bit dragging but kind, like that of a man who thinks while he speaks. He was serious, and yet always had an attractive smile on his face and in his eyes. I never saw him lose his temper, nor heard a sharp or hurting word to his confreres.

Marist Fr. Molino

"I was always struck by his eyes which I called the eyes of a saint: a profound look, calm and alive at the same time, and seemingly shining from a supernatural light. He seemed to be engrossed in another world, looking at an invisible person and almost speaking with him without, however, missing one word of what we were telling him, or failing to answer everything with his usual clarity."

Mme. Charrat, née Carrel

The Servants of the Blessed Sacrament share the same charism as the Religious of the Blessed Sacrament. Father Eymard received a special blessing from Pope Pius IX in 1858 to undertake the founding of a woman's branch of religious to assist him in the First Communion catechesis of poor girls in Paris. On May 25, 1858, Marguerite Guillot, together with her sister Claudine and Mrs. Richerd, discretely entered under Father Eymard's tutelage at Rue du Faubourg Saint Jacques in Paris. On July 31, 1859, the first "Servants" pronounced their private vows. They later relocated to Angers and on May 26, 1864, received canonical recognition from Bishop G. L. Louis Angebault. Here is an excerpt of Father Eymard's letter to the Sisters on August 15, 1859.²

Dear Sisters and Daughters in our Lord,

At the feet of our Lord in his divine Sacrament I composed your rules. Today I place them beneath his Eucharistic throne, that he may bless them and approve them first in his love. ... Receive these rules, my daughters, with love in your hearts. They are as yet only a dead letter: give them life by your virtues, and fruitfulness by your love for Jesus, your divine Spouse. Honor the God of love hidden in his divine Sacrament, through your love for the simple, hidden life, with Mary your Mother. ... St. Francis cared for Saint Clare and her poor daughters. We shall care for you, my daughters, in the divine charity of our Lord and Master. But between you and us there will always be the adorable Eucharist, in whom I am, dear daughters,

*Your most unworthy and poor servant
EYMARD, Sup. SS.
Assumption 1859*



Notes

¹ André Guitton, SSS, *Peter Julian Eymard: Apostle of the Eucharist*. Translated by Conrad Goulet, SSS (Paris, Mediaspaul, 1992) Pg. 345.

² Catherine Marie Carron, SSS, *The Life and Letters of Saint Peter Julian Eymard. Volume Three: The Eucharistic Family 1858 - 1861*. (Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, Waterville, Maine) Pg. 161.



PASTORAL LITURGY

The Revised *Order of Baptism of Children*

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane, SSS holds degrees in music, education and liturgy. He currently serves as pastor of his home parish, Saint Paschal Baylon Roman Catholic Church, Highland Heights, Ohio. He has also been a pastor in Houston, TX & Albuquerque, NM, vocation minister, and diocesan director of liturgy. His works have appeared in numerous publications. For questions, other resources or workshops he could do for your parish, contact him at jtlanesss@gmail.com or (440) 442-3410.

ON FEBRUARY 2, 2020 THE REVISED *ORDER OF BAPTISM OF CHILDREN*, *SECOND Edition* (OBC) began and was fully implemented on Easter Sunday, April 12. Unfortunately, no preview copies were available before we received the ritual texts in late January. For the rest of the year this column will share some insights about the updated text as ministers of baptism become familiar with the new texts.

The previous edition needed a refresh, just as the other rituals and sacraments of the church published immediately after the Second Vatican Council have. While many are familiar with the “new translation principles” required from the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments’ *Liturgiam Authenticam* (LA) in 2001, the English-speaking bishops of the world have been slowly rolling out updated ritual texts (such as the *Roman Missal*) over the past two decades. Other ritual text revisions are still in progress, such as the revised *Liturgy of the Hours* and *Order of Christian Initiation of Adults*. This takes a good deal of time in the long process of translation, review and publication. With liturgical leaders having OBC in hand, here are a few items in the introduction to OBC that are worth noting:

- No explanation is given for using the word “order” in place of “rite.” Interestingly, in the bilingual and Spanish edition, the term “ritual” is still utilized. “Order” is chosen in English to emphasize the *process* of becoming a Christian, and the different *rituals* that are part of an *order*. In this light, consider the *Order of Christian Funerals* with the different ritual elements that make up the entire liturgical process of burying someone. This is the concept being highlighted through the use of the word “order” for the revised rituals of the Church.
- LA editing guidelines continue to be implemented with the capitalization of sacraments within the text. This is to

emphasize their importance in our Catholic lexicon.

- Impressively, the Preface to the Second Edition lists the variants and additions of the updated text, which has not been a common practice in prior revisions.
- The “General Introduction for Christian Initiation” (GI) remains the same. It is helpful to read this text and review the history and theology of Christian initiation. GI continues to use the word “rite” of baptism. However, in this instance “rite” highlights the structure of liturgy that became normative since the Second Vatican Council. In particular, it emphasizes the celebration of the Paschal Mystery in each sacrament, giving primacy to God’s word.
- GI 17 states that the laity (catechists, midwives, physicians and surgeons) are to be familiar with the requirements of emergency baptisms and are to be “taught by pastors, deacons and catechists.”
- GI 25 reminds us that the “paschal candle” is “to be kept in a place of honor in the baptistery,” and not in storage.
- “OBC Introduction” 1 reminds us of the age requirements of the child for this order to be used. It is to be used for children up to the age of discretion. Once a child has reached the age of 7 the OBC, the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), and Canon Law require them to receive the sacraments of initiation through the RCIA process.
- OBC:I 9 reminds us of the importance of celebrating baptism on a Sunday to make a connection with the Paschal Mystery and Eucharist. The order has norms for the preference of celebrating baptism within the context of Mass. I also think it is helpful to use the phrase “baptism Outside of Mass” for the times when the sacrament is not celebrated within Mass, because all sacraments are public events and not private. If a request is made for “private Baptism,” like “Last Rites,” we have to pastorally share the current terminology, practice, and theology of the sacraments since Vatican II. Therefore, in this instance, we celebrate “Baptisms Outside of Mass.”
- OBC:I 12 reminds us that unless there is a “grave reason” baptism is to be celebrated in a church and not a private home.

- OBC:I 30 reminds us that the sacrament may be celebrated on a weekday within Mass, and, that depending on the day, the readings from OBC may also be used. One can think of many days within Ordinary Time, where it might be beneficial to use OBC readings and not the Lectionary. Considering parents' busy work schedules, offering a weekday as an alternative can be a pastorally sensitive benefit.

The introduction and rubrics of OBC assist us in teaching parents, godparents and all the faithful in the importance of this gateway sacrament. In the next column we will continue our analysis of OBC.

Organizing for July/August 2020

Key: *Book of Blessings* (BB), *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers* (CHBP), *Ceremonial of Bishops* (CB)

Regular celebrations during these months:

- The Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the United States has its annual celebrations in honor of Saint Ann (July 26) and Saint Peter Julian Eymard (August 2). I am happy to offer you holy hours or rituals for your community to use to celebrate these holy witnesses of faith and eucharistic life.
- Beginning of the School Year (BB 522- 550)

Use the *Lectionary Supplement* for the readings on the following days:

- Wednesday, July 1, Saint Junípero Serra, presbyter, religious, and missionary (USA)
- Thursday, July 9, Saint Augustine Zhao Rong and his companions, martyrs
- Tuesday, July 14, Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, Native American virgin and martyr
- Monday, July 20, Saint Apollinaris, bishop and martyr
- Wednesday, July 22, *now the feast* of Saint Mary Magdalene, apostle to the apostles
- Friday, July 24, Saint Charbel Makhlouf, presbyter and hermit
- Wednesday, August 12, Saint Jane Frances de Chantal, religious

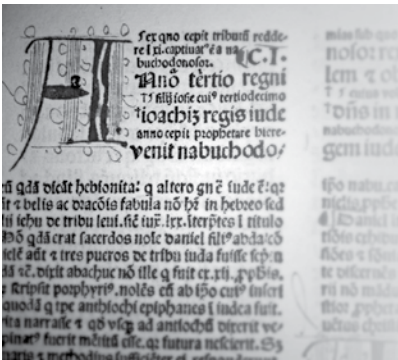
National holidays with *Roman Missal* and Lectionary readings:

- Wednesday, July 1, Canada Day
- Saturday, July 4, Independence Day (USA), but also observed on Friday, July 3 this year for those parishes that do not have a Saturday morning Mass.

Other days:

- Saturday, July 18, Optional Memorial of Saint Camillus de Lellis, presbyter (USA) is an appropriate day, under his patronage to celebrate the Anointing of the Sick
- Thursday, August 6, Feast of the Transfiguration of our LORD, a day to pray for the end of the death penalty, peace (remembrance of the Ember Days (August 6 – 9), and for Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance
- Saturday, August 15, Solemnity of the Assumption of Mary. While it is not a “day of obligation,” it still is a “holy day.” Perhaps using the title “Holy Day of Celebration” would help with this regular confusion about what days are obligatory. To highlight this celebration, consider the Blessing for the First Fruits of the Harvest (BB 1007- 1022) and/or Blessing of Produce (CHBP)





BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Paul Bernier, SSS

Blessed
Sacrament Father
Paul Bernier
is a popular
writer, preacher
and director
of retreats. His
most recent
book is *Ministry
in the Church:
A Historical and
Pastoral Approach*.
Second Edition
(Revised and
Expanded),
published by
Orbis Books,
2015.

July 5, 2020 Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Zechariah 9:9-10; Psalm 145:1-2, 8-9, 10-11, 13-14; Romans 8:9, 11-13; Matthew 11:25-30.

Pride has long been seen as the besetting sin of society (although it would seem to afflict men far more than women). Pride understood in the sense that one puts one's self in the center of the universe, and acts only to aggrandize one's self. People like this are so full of themselves that others become simply tools to advance their aims and goals. Examples are legion. The lack of bi-partisanship that we see in our congress is but one example.

Today's gospel passage was used recently for the feast of the Sacred Heart. Here, however, the first reading invites us to focus especially on Christ's humility and gentleness. This does not imply an insipid and sentimental sort of weakness on the part of Jesus. After all, king David, not exactly a weakling, also rode on an ass. Horses were symbols of warrior pride and aggression, and better suited to the coastal plains. Jesus, however, does not come as a ruler, but as a revealer of God. The knowledge of God such as Jesus could bring was only possible because of his total openness to God in the first place. He sought only to do God's will.

Jesus also implies that the knowledge of God that he is able to provide will make life easier and less burdensome. This is mainly because Jesus' yoke is not simply one that he places on us, but one that he himself has borne and continues to bear with us. Jesus took up the human condition — another example of true humility — and has become

our yoke mate. Jesus does not propose to diminish the weight of our accountability to God and the radical openness to God's will that should be ours. Instead, because it is based on a true understanding of God and a deep love for the one who has redeemed us, it is far easier to bear. Every time we who are "weary" turn to Christ, we find rest and peace of mind and heart.

The people to whom Jesus was speaking were already bearing a yoke: the yoke of the law. Jesus proposes an exchange: to take up a yoke of faith and of conscience. This is made possible through the experiences they have had of Christ's love. It is a yoke that we willingly bear out of our allegiance to Christ. Thus the rest that Jesus promises is not an offer of a vacation from responsibility to the law of God, but a less burdensome way of fulfilling that law. Disciples or followers of Jesus are not just "pupils" listening to his word. They are apprentices of his way of life, learning by watching a "gentle Jesus" who is willing to be rejected by the powers that be in order to live not for himself, but to live for God and others.

Jesus never asks anyone to do what he did not do, from his infancy to his death on the cross. As St. Paul tells us, Jesus, "did not regard equality with God something to be grasped" (Phil 2:6). He came not to be served by others, but to serve others because of his radical understanding of God and because he was sent to reveal the human face of God to others. In this sense, Jesus saw himself as an exemplar, an exemplar of how to live a fully human life. Jesus tells us that this form of life is liberating, allowing us to live with a sense of purpose, direction, and accomplishment that is life-giving — both for ourselves and for others.

July 12, 2020

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:10-11; Psalm 65:10-14; Romans 8:18-23; Matthew 13:1-23

The work of evangelization is persecuted and rejected in many parts of the world. In the U.S. and the western world, the rejection is more often a polite scorn: "Oh, you mean you actually believe *that*?" This, along with the fact of the scandal of sexual abuse and its cover-up, often results in Church teaching falling on deaf ears. This can be discouraging, and cause people to privatize their faith rather than try

to spread the good news of the gospel.

Chapter 13 of Matthew's Gospel, which will occupy us for the rest of the month, deals with various parables of God's reign. Today we have that of the sower and the seed. This is followed by an explanation of why Jesus speaks in parables and an allegorical explanation of the parable. I will comment only on the original parable (found in the short form of the gospel) rather than on the allegorical interpretation provided by Matthew. The idea that Jesus spoke in parables so that people would not understand is plainly incredible, and totally out of character with his concern to make God's will known to his people. People understood the parables all too well, but many found Jesus' challenge unappealing. The emphasis of this particular parable is on the fruitfulness of God's word.

In an era when the average crop yield was about sevenfold, Jesus' assurance that God's word would bear fruit anywhere from 30 to 100 times, despite the quality of the soil, is significant. It tells us that the sowing is worthwhile, despite the seed that remains unfruitful. This conviction that, regardless of meager beginnings, the harvest would be fantastic, came at a time when Jesus was encountering hostility from the authorities, a paucity of disciples, and misunderstanding even from his followers. None of this was sufficient to discourage him. He knew that God would prevail. The parable implies that it is Christ himself who sows the seed, though it is the soil that is closely described. The same is true today when Jesus' disciples sow the seed. What is important is the seed that is sown — not those who are sowing it. It is God's word with which we are entrusted today.

Isaiah, who also prophesied at a time of national disillusion, showed the same conviction. He makes the point that the word of God that goes forth from his mouth will not be in vain but that it shall achieve the end for which God sent it. It is not our efforts, as much as the power of God's word that will transform the earth. Matthew's allegorical interpretation does make the point that the Church is the bearer of God's word today, and the sowers will be rewarded, while those unfaithful to the word will be rejected at the end. This is God's concern, not ours.

The main temptation in life is to have an easy gospel, to look for an Easter Sunday without Good Friday. Thus, difficulties, lack of apparent success, etc., can cause us to avoid the missionary task that is the

responsibility of all disciples by reason of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. We can easily become disillusioned, throw up our hands, and say, "What's the use?" We must not only let the word bear fruit in us, but also make it available to others. We must leave the issue in God's hands, and still labor diligently, for God's seed is the bread of life. We are dealing with the word of life and must treat it with the reverence it deserves. There are always people who thirst to be fed and who are hoping for a word that will enlighten and inspire them. We may be tired or lonely, but the field is wide, and some soil will bring forth a hundredfold.

July 19, 2020
Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 12:13, 16-19; Psalm 86:5-6, 9-10, 15-16; Romans 8:26-27; Matthew 13:24-43

We are living in a time of polarization. In the world at large, fundamentalism seems to be on the rise, and people see things only in terms of black and white. Peoples are being demonized, neo-Nazism is on the rise, people seeking asylum are being turned back at the borders. Even within the Church — especially since Pope Francis' election — there seems to be a split between so-called liberals and conservatives, with each side insisting on its own brand of integralism. The two synods, one on the family and the other on the problems of the Amazon seem to have sparked open disagreement. Is this the way of God? All this seems in stark contrast with the readings today, which deal with God's compassion and forbearance.

The mention in the first reading of God's clemency and lenience links it with the first parable in today's gospel reading. There the farmer lets the weeds and the wheat grow together till the harvest. Only then will the weeds be pulled up and burned. The farmer was not lazy! He was truly wise. Trying to get rid of the weeds risked pulling up the wheat as well. In view of his own ministry to the poor and marginalized (and of being criticized for eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners), Jesus is warning us that we human beings are not competent to make the judgment and to separate the weeds from the wheat. In rooting out those we think are worthless, we may well be destroying

those that are good. Only God can make such judgments, and will do so in due course. In the meantime, what we need is patience and kindness with one another.

With God making the separation only at the end, God demonstrates forbearance, allows room for grace to work, and warns us that there may be a few surprises. For those who wonder why God allows evil to go unchecked in this world we are given the answer that good and evil are usually so intermeshed that it is well nigh impossible to destroy one without affecting the other adversely as well. While God waits, the seed is still growing and the yeast is still rising. The work of the kingdom will not be checked or stopped. Tellingly, in the longer version, Matthew addresses the concern that some feel about the mixed state of the Church, which contains “bad” as well as “good” Christians. He warns the “good” Christians that they should concern themselves more with persevering in doing what Jesus teaches.

Sadly, the presence of evil in the Church, the incompetence and venality of some in authority, the sexual abuse crisis, have not only caused scandal but also caused some to leave the Church. They focus on the weeds and not the good wheat. To concentrate on the real good that has been and is still being done; to concentrate on the many really holy people past and present would help balance the picture. We need not necessarily blame an enemy for causing the weeds to be there. Wickedness in our world is wicked; it is the false wheat in the field of human life.

In many ways, this parable is one of grace. God does not give up on God’s creation. Judgment will come only at the very end, giving us all a chance to improve and become more faithful. Meanwhile, God offers us grace through word and sacrament so that we might become fruitful. With the power of God’s Spirit, it is even possible that the weeds will become wheat! Contrasted with this forbearance, we must measure our human tendency to rush to judgment about others, to write people off, and to think that we are the only ones who know what is right and just.

July 26, 2020
Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 3:5, 7-12; Psalm 119:57, 72, 76-77, 127-130; Romans 8:28-30; Matthew 13:44-52.

Living in a secular culture, where religion no longer provides the underpinning of society, people may be baptized but lack even the basic understanding of the faith. Religion is not their primary identifier, and is often simply a veneer for a very secular world-view and practice. In their self-consciousness, they may see themselves first as Americans, then as professionals of one sort or another, and somewhere at the end of the line, as Catholics — in name only. They do not search for that pearl of great price which could transform their lives.

These two little parables in today's gospel call for a deeper faith in the God who is active in the tiny movement initiated by Jesus. Both parables speak of the kingdom of God as the primary value in life — one that must be chosen above everything else. The first reading and psalm reinforce this message. Just as Solomon chose wisdom over wealth, power, or length of days, so are we invited to choose what is really valuable. The psalm also tells us that the wise person loves the commandments of God "more than fine gold." The parables stress the human response to what God has done. Like buried treasure, God's activity is hidden and must be discovered. Like a pearl of immense value, it must be bought at all cost.

The emphasis is not so much on the finding, but on the overwhelming response made to the discovery. In each case the finder divests himself or herself of everything in order to acquire what has been found. Important to this gospel passage also are the final two sentences of the longer version dealing with the Christian scribe. This scribe is custodian of the kingdom for Matthew. He or she is able to take what is old (i.e. the gospel traditions they have received) and reapply them to new situations confronting the Church in their time. For them, parables, like the gospel itself, are windows, not locked doors. The ability to give new applications to the traditions we have received about Jesus is the indication that one is truly wise in the things of God.

God's word, after all, is alive. The faith is not like some trophy that we can put on the shelf and admire.

There is a lesson here for Church leaders of every age. As Vatican II told us (and as Pope John XXIII's allocution at the beginning of that council stated) *aggiornamento* is needed in order to bring the Church and its teachings up to date in every age. We cannot simply repeat our timeless truths over and over without concern as to whether they are understandable and reasonable to people today. Need we be reminded about how many of the theologians who were silenced before the council wound up as *periti* at the council? It took years to appreciate their ability to bring out of the Church's storeroom both the new and the old.

The gospel invites us to leave behind the pragmatic world that treats God as irrelevant, and enter a new world where God is the primary reality. The gospel is something so valuable that it must be taken seriously. We are urged to take drastic action to acquire that pearl of great price, and remain faithful to God and not compromise our faith. Perhaps some of the moral and doctrinal laxity that afflicts us today is because people are not sufficiently concerned about the faith to learn about it and grow in its knowledge and practice. The pearl of faith is worth selling all that we have in order to acquire it.

August 2, 2020 Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:1-3; Psalm 145:8-9, 15-18; Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 14:13-21

One of the things that has characterized the Church through the ages is its emphasis on the corporal works of mercy. Widows and orphans were provided for from the earliest days of the Church. Hospitals, schools, homes for the aged, and outreach to the needy and disadvantaged over many years attest to this. Now, especially through the emphasis that Pope Francis has placed on the mercy of the Lord, and on the social outreach of the Church, we are being given ample reminders of our responsibility in this area. Is all this something extra added on to our faith, or does it flow from the proper understanding

of the nature of Christianity?

The feeding of the multitude in today's gospel reading is the most important miracle in the life of Jesus. It is found in all four gospels, and even receives double billing in Mark and Matthew, where we have a feeding in Jewish territory as well as one in the Decapolis. It not only tells a story of Jesus' compassion for the sick and the hungry, but it is linked by the evangelists with the miracle of Jesus' love that we celebrate in the Eucharist. The telling has been shaped by the eucharistic tradition of the Church (Jesus *took, blessed, broke, and distributed*) the food, just as he gave us his body and blood at the Last Supper.

What is particularly noteworthy here is the role of the disciples. They make Jesus aware of the people's need — though they themselves are willing to do little more than get rid of the crowds! They are the ones through whom Jesus distributes the nourishment. The twelve baskets full left over (one for each disciple) are a reminder that the Church still has plenty of Jesus' bread to distribute. This will ever remain its task. Whatever gifts God gives us are not for our own use only, but for the good of all God's people.

Matthew, however, does not stress any association of this miracle with the messianic banquet foretold by Isaiah in today's first reading. Yet, the food and drink to be given by God in fulfillment of the covenant could not have been far from his thought. This was an Old Testament prophecy of what the messiah would do for his people. This miracle, as well as the one which will follow at the Last Supper, shows that the covenant that has been ratified in Christ's blood is a gift that is rich beyond comparison, exceeding anything imagined or hoped for.

The responsorial psalm that follows the Isaiah passage tends to focus us more upon the messianic, eschatological banquet of which the Eucharist is a foretaste. The gospel, however, stresses more that the gifts given to us are a means to alleviate the needs of a hungry world. This hunger is spiritual, to be sure, but it is physical and psychological as well. Unless our sharing in the Eucharist takes us into the needs and pains of others, it will only reinforce a narrow piety far removed from the generosity of Christ.

As mentioned above, the evangelists saw in this miracle the type and instance of the blessings that should come to us through the Lord's Supper, where earthly bread would become sacramental bread. Christ

is seen as the giver of the bread of life: life for us who share in his supper, and life for those to whom he expects us to minister in his name. The five loaves and two fish bespeak our human helplessness. The problems that beset our world may seem to be beyond our human power. They may be too much for human strength, but strengthened by the bread of Christ, we can continue the work that he began and try to assuage the hungers of the human family.

August 9, 2020 Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

1 Kings 19:9, 11-13; Psalm 85:9-14; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:22-33

Since Pope Francis' election, synods have become sources of contention. The synod on the family caused consternation in some quarters over the possibility of offering communion to some of those who were married outside the Church. Even cardinals and a number of bishops challenged the pope. The synod on the Amazon suggested the need for a married priesthood. This also raised the temper of a number of bishops. Meanwhile, the Church is losing many members to a number of Fundamentalist sects in areas where people are deprived of Mass for long lengths of time. The Church seems to be a beleaguered one. Church authorities can no longer expect blind obedience, or docile acceptance of official pronouncements.

Mark's telling of Jesus walking on the water was to reveal who Jesus really is (despite the misunderstanding of his disciples). Matthew has changed the story significantly by adding the incident of Peter walking on the water. This focuses the story more on the meaning of discipleship. The boat symbolizes the Church, being *tortured* by the waves. Jesus is shown here to be ever with his Church, ever ready to help, no matter what trials and persecution it endures. Jesus will always champion those who call to him in faith. Peter typifies what it means to be caught between faith and doubt. He represents those who dare to believe that Jesus is truly our savior, are willing to step out into the waters in the confidence that he will sustain them, but then forget to keep their gaze fixed on him instead of the waves that threaten to engulf them. Only when they turn to Christ again in faith

and cry out for help are they saved.

This also shows that faith is a risk. It does not have the certitude we might gain from mathematics or science. Yet it deals with things far more important — the ultimate meaning of life itself. Jesus challenged Peter to trust him. Peter's faith, however, was mixed with too much doubt, for which Jesus rebuked him, "Oh you of little faith! Why did you doubt?" Christian existence is often a case of faith mixed with doubt. Only by grace can doubt be kept subordinate. Those with little faith are here warned to exercise it, or it will wither away like an unused muscle.

Various interpretations have been given as to what actually happened in this story. From Matthew's point of view, it surely was meant to bring comfort and strength to the Christian community in times of persecution and martyrdom. It may also have vindicated the leadership of Peter in the Church. We may well ask why Peter's faith failed; after all, Jesus had told him to come. Peter allowed himself to be overtaken by fear. Instead of relying completely on Jesus, he began to wonder if he could really walk on the waves. And so, he faltered. Is not the same true of us when our eyes are no longer fixed intently on Christ?

In tumultuous times, we are reminded never to doubt that Jesus is there, able and willing to come to the help of his people. To be the Church is to expect to be storm-tossed. It may come from persecution, as is still true in many parts of the world. Or it may come from within, from those who are entrenched in their positions and challenge anyone opposing them. However, Christ is able to still the storm and bring us to safety. Our ability to entrust ourselves to him depends on our not faltering, not doubting either Christ's presence or his desire and ability to save. This enables us to confess, "Truly you are the Son of God!"

August 15, 2020

The Assumption of the Virgin Mary

Revelation 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10; Psalm 45:10-12, 16; 1 Corinthians 15:20-27; Luke 1:39-56

The Assumption is one of those feasts that cause ecumenical problems.

Having been declared a dogma of faith just over a half-century ago, this exercise of infallibility by the pope has provoked reactions even by the Orthodox, despite the fact that belief in the assumption of Mary has been part of Orthodox piety for centuries. It might be better to view this feast (and Mariology in general) the way the Vatican Council did: as part of ecclesiology. It is also an aspect of Christology, inasmuch as Mary was the chosen instrument of the incarnation and also needed the redemption wrought by her son. The grace of her immaculate conception is seen as having been granted to her in view of the foreseen merits of Jesus. Her assumption also was merited for her by her son. The feast is, according to Reginald Fuller, part of the poetry of our faith. Since it was proclaimed mainly out of piety (and not to counter any heretical teaching in its regard) it is probably best treated as an act of love to God and to his mother.

The gospel today depicts both the visitation and Mary's *Magnificat*. We should understand this utterance coming from Mary as representative of the true Israel. It is suffused with a complete belief in, and total acceptance of God's covenant fidelity on our behalf. It stresses that in God's interventions in history God has tended to use the humble and insignificant to humble the pride of the arrogant. Those who are exalted — and thereby able to be used by God in salvation history — are those who recognize that their true glory is to be willing servants of the Lord. This enables us, like Mary, to become instruments of salvation for others.

We are all familiar with the *Magnificat*. In relation to the feast of the Assumption, however, we should perhaps focus on the fact that Mary, who has just conceived by the Holy Spirit, assumes the initiative in bringing Christ to Elizabeth (and others). Her visit quickens John with new life in the Spirit and fills Elizabeth with the Holy Spirit as well. In her joy she proclaims the significance of what God has wrought. Mary's faith, her readiness to believe that God's word to her would be fulfilled stands in stark contrast to Zechariah's failure. In Mary, as well as the Church that she represents, faith is a condition for new life and the ability to speak God's word with power. Mary's canticle notes the marvelous reversals that have taken place in history. God is able to reduce human pride and power to nothing and to exalt the lowly. Mary — peerless representative of the true Israel — reminds us again that God's ways are not our ways, and that even the lowliest among us can become instruments in God's hands for the world's salvation. Because of her receptivity and openness to God, Mary truly deserves

to be called *blessed*, for she models what Christian faith is all about. She thus enjoys the blessings of the world to come reserved for all who have been faithful.

The Assumption looks at Mary from the *end* of her life. It gives us an appreciation that only hindsight can bring. Everything we say about her is suffused with the hope that one day we will also see ourselves together in heaven. What we have in common with her as believers is the ability to go through life with an active search for God's will and a positive acceptance of the vocation that is ours. Mary was able to embrace the future and whatever God held in store for her because she knew God to be faithful and kind, one whose mercy reaches from age to age. Like us, she could not see all the consequences of her stepping out into the dark of faith. She knew, however, that God would be with her every step of the way. Only this enables us to do great things for God.

August 16, 2020 Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 56:1, 6-7; Psalm 67:2-3, 5-6, 8; Romans 11:13-15, 29-32; Matthew 15:21-28

Today's gospel story has bedeviled exegetes for ages. How could gentle Jesus call a woman in need a dog?! It goes against everything we think we know about our loving savior. We have a hard time thinking that Jesus would pick up on the prejudices the Jews felt towards these pagans. We can point to the same phenomenon today when we encounter Americans labeling Mexicans in derogatory terms. The same is true for all the other racial stereotypes that are still too prevalent in our world.

Various theories have been advanced to explain the difficulties here. The solution may be one that is the simplest. We have here two proverbs, and proverbs are seldom meant to be taken literally. If we say that one can lead a horse to water but can't make him drink, we are not calling anyone a horse. Or if we say that birds of a feather flock together, we are not calling anyone a bird. In the same way, saying that it's not right to take the food of children and feed it to the dogs

need not imply that the woman was a dog. Jesus was surely testing this woman's faith, but not throwing insults at her. He was awaiting her response. It came quickly back: "Please, Lord, even the dogs eat the scraps that fall from their master's table." In cultures that enjoy verbal parries like this, her response pleased Jesus, and he was loud in praising her faith.

The character of this woman is clear. She had a deep mother's love for her daughter. She was willing to do anything to bring her healing. She had persistence and a quick wit. She was not presumptuous, but humble. She called Jesus "Lord, son of David!" She must have heard something about Jesus and had a belief that God's power worked through him. Her persistence and her faith brought joy to Jesus, who had just crossed from Israel into pagan territory after some trying days. He had just been rejected in his own hometown. Herod was wondering about him and had just killed John the Baptist. The Pharisees were criticizing him for breaking the tradition of the elders and even the commandments of God. He was not finding much faith in Israel.

Jesus must certainly have believed that he was called primarily for his own people, but he did not exclude others. He had cured the servant of the Roman centurion, and he was about to cross into the Decapolis and feed four thousand more people. He had preached to them for three days and, we are told, his heart was moved with pity for them, because they were beginning to run out of food. There is a lesson here for our own modern tendencies to scapegoat people. Jesus did not exclude "the other" from his grace. The ability that we have to exclude rather than include others is contrary to everything that Jesus stood for and practiced.

It is gestures like these that gave warrant to the early Church to spread the faith to the Gentiles. We know how ingrained was the separation of Jew from Gentile. Two of the earliest problems for the nascent Church — both dealt with in Acts — were the scope of the apostolate and whether Gentiles who became Christian had to become Jewish first or embrace Jewish practices, notably circumcision. Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the Jerusalem community to call them out for baptizing Gentiles. He was "a good man and filled with the Holy Spirit and faith," we are told. So, instead of reproofing them, he stayed among them to encourage and teach the new converts (Acts 11:19-26). Similarly the Council of Jerusalem, described in chapter 15 of Acts deals with whether converts should be required to undergo circumcision.

The more inclusive practice of Jesus would have helped them, and Matthew must have had this in mind for recalcitrant people in his own community.

August 23, 2020 Twenty-First Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 22:19-23; Psalm 138:1-3, 6, 8; Romans 11:33-36; Matthew 16:13-20

Pope Paul VI once sadly acknowledged that one of the chief obstacles to reunion was the papacy. And in *Ut unum sint*, Pope John Paul II asked for a critique of the way in which the papacy was exercised. The Petrine function in the Church is thus at center stage in many ecumenical discussions. It is one of the main reasons the Eastern Churches split from Rome in 1054. Even within the Church — especially since Pope Francis was elected — there is disagreement as to the type of obedience owed to the pope and magisterium. Will there ever be consensus in this area?

The gospel passage is one that has long been used to ground the special place of Peter in the Church. Matthew, working with a Markan passage, has made a number of significant changes to it. For one thing, he gives great significance to Peter's profession of faith that Jesus is both messiah and Son of God. To this Jesus exclaims that only divine disclosure has made this confession possible. Jesus then goes on to say to Peter, "You are stone (*petros*), and on this rock (*petra*) I will build my Church." Matthew is the only evangelist to call the early Christian community a Church, indicative of his ecclesial concern. Whether Jesus intended to found a Church separate from Israel may be doubted. For some 1,500 years, though, the rock on which this Church was to be built was said to be the *faith* of Peter (witness the prayer used for the feast even today).

Since the Protestant Reformation, however, exegetes tend to split more along confessional lines, with most Catholics holding that the Church is built on Peter himself. The function of the keys as well as that of binding and loosing (cf. the first reading) surely indicates that the messiah has given special powers and a unique primacy to

Peter. However, note that in Matthew 18:18, Jesus gives the power of “binding and loosing” to all the disciples. Peter’s name-change is also an indication of a different role or function within the Twelve. Of this most people are agreed. The split occurs as to whether the role given Peter continues in the Church. Of this the text says nothing. And other New Testament writings seem to indicate that James replaces Peter as the leading light in the Jerusalem community rather quickly. It seems likely, however, that in some way Christ intended Peter’s role to be continued in the Church as a source of unity.

The role of Peter has remained one of the most sensitive and divisive areas of New Testament inquiry, particularly because of its implications for the position of the papacy in Christendom. In 1971 a notable group of Protestant and Roman Catholic New Testament scholars sat down together over a period of nearly two years to study this matter in the light of modern biblical criticism — surely a “first” in cooperative ventures since the Reformation. The results of their joint study, concisely presented in a book intelligible to the interested reader (*Peter in the New Testament*), are significant both in terms of what can be known with assurance about the historical career of Peter.

This study, which moves the discussion beyond many old impasses, has biblical, theological, and ecumenical implications for all Christian Churches. There is general agreement that a special Petrine role is attested in the Scriptures. To express the nature of the firm support he intends to give his group, Jesus uses the symbol of a rock. This refers primarily to the faith that Peter expressed. If there is ever to be Christian reunion, we need to approach this question with Christian love as well as a more collegial style, if there is ever to be Church reunion.

August 30, 2020 Twenty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 20:7-9; Psalm 63:2-6, 8-9; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

There are many religious groups these days that are very committed to their version of Christianity. They will send missionaries to knock on door after door, and give years of volunteer work to make converts.

We Catholics, who often lose members to these proselytizing groups, have never mounted a similar effort. Nor have our members been willing to commit themselves so freely to Church work. Why?

Matthew follows Mark in putting a prediction of the passion immediately after the profession of faith by Peter and the Twelve. From that moment on Jesus will prepare his disciples for his coming death. This prediction is meant to provide his disciples with important instructions regarding what this meant for their own lifestyle. Peter's negative reaction to Jesus statement is understandable. The idea that the messiah (or any good person) should suffer was a real scandal to them. Peter, the stone, is making himself a scandal to Jesus, however, a stumbling block to him on his road to Jerusalem. His mind is filled with human thoughts, not those that come from God.

Jesus' rebuke of Peter, however, should be understood for what it really means. There is a tendency in many translations to read it as banishment of Peter ("Away with you, Satan!" or "Get away from me, you Satan."). In actuality, Jesus is telling Peter to get back in line, to follow him again instead of following the ways of the world. Satan here is the tempter. In the Markan version, we are told that Jesus turned and looked *at the disciples*. Peter's statement was tempting Jesus and the rest of the disciples to want a discipleship without the cross. Notice what Jesus says to his disciples in the very next verse: "Whoever wishes to come after me..." This phrase in Greek is exactly the same (*opiso mou*) as the one addressed to Peter. Jesus goes on to say what the condition discipleship is: that a person must deny himself or herself, and take up their cross. We are not to fear suffering in living out our discipleship. Furthermore, the idea of bearing our crosses should not be trivialized and applied to the petty annoyances and trials, arthritis, or other sickness that we have to put up with each day. Jesus is referring to whatever sufferings and hardships we have to endure in pursuit of Christian mission. This is reinforced in another editorial change Matthew has made to Mark's account. Verse 26 has been converted to a judgment scene. We will be judged on the extent to which we were willing to devote our lives to spreading the good news of Christ to others, regardless of the cost. True discipleship implies commitment to the kingdom for which Jesus lived and died.

The notion of losing our life to find it is more than good advice. This phrase is found five other times in the gospels. We are faced here with a fork in the road, as Robert Frost told us. In this case, "the road less

traveled” is an axiom for our souls. We die if all we seek is our own pleasure; but when we work for a higher cause, for the good of others, we achieve the highest good for which we were created.

If there is anything missing in the standard Catholic psyche, it is the importance of the commitment to mission. Jesus’ challenge in the gospel today implies that all disciples should have the same commitment to bringing about the Father’s reign that he did. We should be ashamed that other Christians have taken this far more seriously than we do. In point of fact, however, every celebration of Eucharist ends by sending us forth with the directive to go and serve the Lord. The whole Church is missioned, sent to transform the world.





EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Meaningful objects can help get us through difficult times. A photograph of a loved one, a keepsake from a meaningful relationship, a prized possession that speaks to one's identity, all of these can provide strength during difficulty. Ponder for a moment if your life were reduced to a handful of items. What would they be? Amidst the necessities there would no doubt be one or two personal belongings that spoke to your heart, to your identity, to the life you've lived.

Photographer Tom Kiefer has amassed a collection of just such objects. For eleven years he worked part-time as a janitor at a Border Patrol facility in Arizona. As people were detained crossing the US-Mexico border almost all of their belongings were deemed inessential. These belongings were confiscated and thrown away. "Deeply personal belongings," Kiefer said, "a Bible, a rosary, a family photograph. And I just, you know, instantly knew that this was not right."¹ He lamented, "The whole point is just to dehumanize and strip people of their — any scintilla of hope and humanity."² Faced with the injustice he perceived Kiefer responded in two ways. First, he retrieved the discarded items from the trash and saved them in the hopes that they could one day be returned to their rightful owners. Second, he photographed these items in an ongoing series entitled, *El Sueño Americano* (*The American Dream*).

The photographs are subtle and poignant. Each displays everyday objects, sometimes contrasted with a vibrant background color. The viewer sees water bottles, children's stuffed animals, rings, clothing and more. A documentary film, *Los Amulets Migran* (*The Amulets Migrate*), that accompanied Keifer's exhibit at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles features a woman named Dora Rodriguez perusing through Keifer's gallery and explaining the significance of the items she sees. She had crossed the border in dangerous circumstances in the 1980's and her memories inform her descriptions. At one moment she pauses

Art Review



NUEVOS
TESTAMENTOS
Tom Kiefer
Photograph

John Christman,
SSS

and picks up a small container of women's make-up. She then tells a story of a woman who crossed the desert with her. This woman had brought make-up because she wanted to look nice when she was finally reunited with her husband in the US... but she died before she could be with him again.³ So many stories contained within each object.

Our eyes might instantly be drawn to a photograph entitled *Nuevos Testamentos* (front cover), a picture of worn well-read bibles, lying on a yellow bandana. Or perhaps we are drawn to a photograph of a large pile of rosaries, or even a picture of small statues of Our Lady of Guadalupe. All of these provided strength, grace and hope along an arduous journey. And all were then deemed "inessential."

Nevertheless, whether a personal bible in which someone wrote their own notes and spiritual thoughts or a small case of make-up, each offers an encounter with another soul. Each photo is a very real call to a genuine encounter with another human being. As Kiefer has written, "My intent is to explore the humanity of the migrants who risk their lives crossing through the desert and to create a personal connection for the viewer to a migrant and their hope for a better life."⁴ Theologian Leonardo Boff might call these objects "human sacraments" because of the meaning and communion they offer.⁵ Whatever we wish to name them, they point to something sacred: another human being made in the image and likeness of God.

Notes

¹ <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/04/812246866/photographer-documents-the-personal-items-confiscated-by-border-patrol> accessed March 19, 2020

² Ibid

³ <https://www.skirball.org/exhibitions/el-sueno-americano-american-dream-photographs-tom-kiefer> accessed March, 31, 2020

⁴ <https://www.tomkiefer.com/2016/7/26/re1w3x3bxrzdaivd5y9nsfsdlfvrhc> accessed March 26, 2020

⁵ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*. (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 1987) pg 29.

Poetry

The Fattened Calf

Feasts or starvation
are at the center
of this parable of the prodigal

who devoured
a third of his father's estate
going off to a distant

country where, famished
from lust, he worked as a pig tender
longing for the pods they were fed.

His older brother complained that
their father did not give him a goat
to celebrate what — greedy self-righteousness?

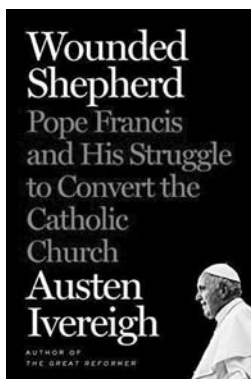
Yet their merciful father probably raised
temple sheep and kept a stable full
of cattle, though none like the calf

who was fattened on a special,
holy diet so he could be sacrificed
for one who once was lost

but now found. Hungering for forgiveness,
the prodigal was welcomed at a feast
of fattened calf, bread, and rich dark wine.

Philip Kolin

Book Reviews



**WOUNDED
SHEPHERD: POPE
FRANCIS AND
HIS STRUGGLE
TO CONVERT
THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH**

Austen Ivereigh,
Henry Holt and
Company, New
York.
2019.

In 2015, I wrote a very positive review of Ivereigh's first book on Pope Francis, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope*. I was enthusiastic about the book and told many of my friends and colleagues that if they really wanted to understand this pope, what shaped his pastoral plan; what impact his formation and life as a Jesuit had on the man who now wears the white cassock; what were the influences of his South American heritage and Aparecida on his concept of leadership and synodality, they should read this book. Many of them did and came away with the same enthusiastic and positive hope for him and his "reform."

It is now 2020 and Ivereigh offers us a new book, a kind of evaluation of Pope Francis' efforts at reform and renewal after serving as pope for six years. The "Great Reformer" had become the "Wounded Shepherd." Ivereigh remarks several times that Pope Francis gets high grades from the people, those who fill St. Peter's Square regularly and those who turn out in the hundreds of thousands to greet him at his apostolic visits throughout the globe (where in several countries Catholics were in the minority) and from millions who admire him from across the globe. People like the way he talks, his down-to-earth language and metaphors. They admire his humility and his closeness to the poor and marginalized. He speaks to their hearts. His focus is not on peoples' failings and sinfulness, but on the great mercy of God who waits with open arms for them.

But there is a flip side. There is a small but powerful anti-Francis lobby (much of which is centered here in the US) which is uncomfortable with Francis' pastoral approach, his critique of unchecked capitalism and the horrible impact of globalization on the poor, his "unrealistic" support for immigrants and demands that countries open their borders. Some attack his theology which they believe is almost heretical. Others are at odds with his concept and implementation of synodality. There are those who bristle at his selections of cardinals from peripheral countries where Catholics are in the minority and passing over large metropolitan sees who have traditionally had a cardinal.

Ivereigh had a meeting with Francis as he was completing this new book. The Pope's comment to him regarding the author's first book was, "You're too kind to me." He wanted the next book to be more

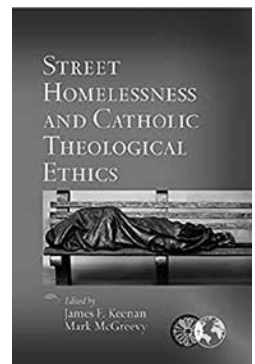
"critical." Pope Francis had laid out a challenging reform agenda in the early years of his papacy. Ivereigh charts his successes, his roadblocks and his failures. His encyclicals and apostolic letters brought joy to some and horror to others. His record on sexual abuse of minors is checkered. His attempt to introduce a radically new vision of synodality which, unlike his predecessors, did not have a prepared agenda, a list of topics that were off the table, with very little opportunity for discussion. He made it clear that at the synods people should talk openly and speak from their experience. He invited young people, lay people and women to be involved in the synods. Of course, this new vision created conflict. His desire that the topic of the possibility of full participation in the Eucharist by those who were divorced and remarried be openly reflected upon caused great consternation among those whose preoccupation is with the law rather than the lived experience of the people.

These and many other issues and situations that the Holy Father addressed are thoroughly examined by the author. As in his first book, Ivereigh uses a variety of sources including many conversations he had with members of the Curia as well as bishops, theologians, journalists and commentators throughout the world. He also relies on the pope's writings, homilies, allocutions and his off-the-cuff comments to journalists on his plane trips back from apostolic visits.

Ivereigh offers the readers a solid report on the accomplishments of the Holy Father in his attempts to reform the Church. I highly recommend it and I do look forward to another book by this author as he continues to chart this pope's ministry in his Petrine Office.

Patrick J. Riley, D.Min
Book Review Editor
Emmanuel Magazine

This is the eighth volume in the series that treats relevant and often-neglected issues under the commodious umbrella of *Catholic Theological Ethics in a World Church*. It is a collection of essays focused on the moral issue of homelessness. Like the other books in the series, it goes beyond a parochial approach, say, of people without housing that are on the streets and shelters in New York. Essays include perspectives from Africa to Asia, Cameroon to Jamaica. The



STREET
HOMELESSNESS
AND CATHOLIC
THEOLOGICAL
ETHICS
James F. Keenan
and Mark
McGreevy, eds.
Maryknoll, New
York: Orbis Books,
2019
278 pp.

representative voices are not only those of recognized theologians but of those who work with the homeless and/or have themselves experienced living without permanent shelter.

The first section of the book lays out in detail the situation throughout today's world, often through the stories of real people and their experience. Many of the articles are starkly depressing. Yet they contain also a grain of Christian hope. The comment, "None of us is home until all of us are home" (p.8) says it well. The threads that weave through each narrative include the dignity of all persons, the equal status of those who are homeless with those who strive to help them, and the ubiquitous reality of homelessness in many layers of society as well as in different cultures. Nevertheless, words like "burden," "indifference," and "socially unacceptable" continue to knot those threads and make it difficult to create adequate solutions for this vast moral problem.

The second section considers strategies to end homelessness, including the lacunae in optimistic plans. From papal proclamations to global initiatives, what is said does not translate into adequate iterations of change. Some articles highlight theological analysis and biblical paradigms. There are proposed solutions from above — organizational intervention — and from below — micro-inventiveness such as welcoming shelters and compassionate listening and presence.

The third section details local responses currently in place worldwide. Not all homeless people are adults. Factors often place innocent children in this category. The plight of women is raised, particularly homelessness that is caused by flight from domestic violence. The reader is not permitted to reduce the problem to disembodied clichés.

Homelessness is complicated. Causes range from job loss to addiction, mental illness to domestic violence. Displacement can result from poverty, the scars of war, lack of environmental sustainability as climate change erodes habitable places. Simply being gay or a woman can provoke the loss of permanent shelter. These dire realities exist beneath the glamour of affluent cities and in the missing data that should count those who may have only serial places to lay their heads. Again, many of these "uncounted" are, as in the biblical story of the loaves and fishes, are women. Yet, like the "enemy" in the Pogo comic strip, all of them are "us."

The book lifts up a kaleidoscope of voices from every continent. It is

a treasure trove of data about those who experience homelessness and those who observe it by inserting themselves into the problem and attempting to address it. Key themes resonate through all parts: community, common good, respect, solidarity, empathy, listening, and accompaniment. “Do you feel me?” is a question that calls the reader to know — in a deep and responsive way — the reality of this growing problem in today’s world.

While it is impossible to evaluate adequately a book that contains nearly three dozen articles, it is important to indicate that this effort is a rich contribution to the field of an important moral question. The essays are brief; some are better than others. They can be used profitably to enrich homilies that deal with the biblical call to justice and human dignity.

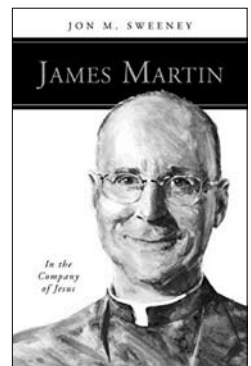
For the general reader, this is an eye-opening book exposing the reality of this serious moral issue in today’s world. I offer a cautionary tale for those who might pick it up. It is hard to read without opening a door — our hearts — to our own indifference. Can this change lead us to effect satisfying solutions?

Dolores Christie, Ph.D.
Cleveland, Ohio

At the end of March, 2020 with New York at the national epicenter of the coronavirus epidemic, coping with 44,000 infected persons and 519 deaths, the *New York Times* asked Jesuit Father James Martin to give some sort of religious response to the crisis. It was not the first time that the *Times* sought out Father Martin. In some ways he had become the go-to-priest for comments on all things Catholic. He was also a frequent visitor on the *Stephen Colbert Show* where his more humorous side emerged. He was also a frequent guest at *CNN* and other news outlets.

Many Catholics were familiar with Father Martin through his many books and articles, and his life-long presence in *America Magazine*. *My Life with Saints*, *The Jesuit Guide to (Almost) Anything*, *Between Heaven and Mirth*, and *Jesus: A Pilgrimage* were all best sellers.

Jon Sweeney offers a biography of this Wharton School graduate,



**JAMES MARTIN:
IN THE
COMPANY OF
JESUS**
Jon M. Sweeney
The Liturgical
Press, Collegeville,
MN.
2020.

successful executive at GE, who left the corporate world behind to seek a new life in the Society of Jesus. The author writes on Martin's difficulties with the traditional Jesuit formation which combines strong intellectual formation with periods of various experiences with the poor and alienated. He became ill during a year-long stretch with immigrants in Ethiopia and, returning to the States, he was assigned for the last six months of that year to work at *America*.

He developed a passion for writing, and after ordination, he was assigned full time to *America Magazine*. There he wrote a weekly column in which he commented on cultural life, the arts, and a wide variety of topics. He eventually rose to his present title of Editor-at-large. It has been the only assignment to which Martin was posted by his Province.

But it was not only in the media that Martin exercised his priesthood. Since ordination he has served in parochial ministry at the Jesuit-administered St. Ignatius Parish on the upper East side of New York. There he celebrates Mass, hears confessions, and presides at weddings and funerals. He has also developed a following of people who seek him out for spiritual direction, and he has directed a significant number of people in the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius.

Most of Martin's books have dealt primarily with spirituality and, as noted above, they were well received, and many earned literary awards. But he was about to move into troubled waters in 2018 when he published *Building A Bridge: How the Catholic Church and the LGBT Community Can Enter into a Relationship of Respect, Compassion, and Sensitivity*. The previous year a young security guard broke into Pulse, a crowded gay bar in Orlando, Florida and killed 49 individuals and another 53 were left wounded. Martin was disturbed that too few bishops responded to this massacre and fewer yet offered any expression of condolences to the gay community. In the book he argued that both the Church and the LGBT community needed to develop a mutual sense of respect, compassion and sensitivity. The book created an uproar and Martin suffered the loss of a number of speaking engagements. While Martin focused on persons, many of those who vilified him were focused primarily on the "sin" of homosexuality. While most of the gay community were appreciative of Martin's efforts, many outside that community had very hateful things to say. Father Martin has not backed down from what he wrote and continues to advocate for the focus of this book. Martin was

received by Pope Francis in a private audience and he states that the Holy Father encouraged him in his ministry to the LGBT community.

Sweeney offers us a very fine introduction to the man who has shared so much of himself and his spirituality with us through his writing.

Patrick J. Riley, D.Min.
Book Review Editor
Emmanuel Magazine





EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

Daniel Krenicki, Jr.

Norwalk, Connecticut

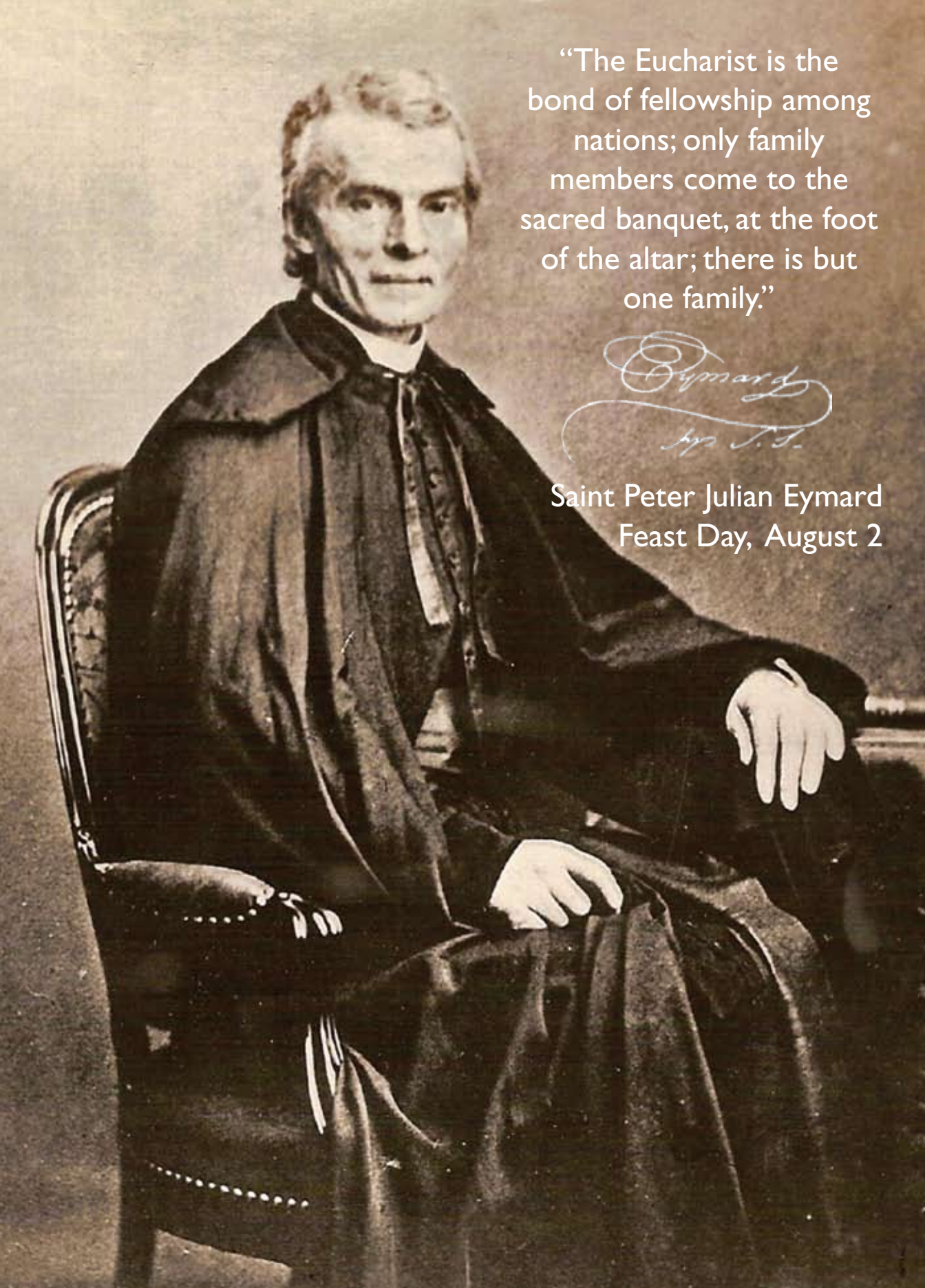
Not long ago the youth of Saint Philip Parish in Norwalk, Connecticut, participated in a 24-hour food fast to bring awareness to world hunger. The participants heard from numerous influential speakers. Bishop Frank Caggiano spoke to them about sacrifice of self - giving up their weekend for the sake of others. Norwalk's Mayor Harry Rilling told the youth that they would wake up in the morning with empty stomachs and experience the pain of hunger! Nevertheless, they were reminded that they were doing the work of Jesus as written in the Gospel according to Matthew: They were hungry so that others may not be hungry tomorrow! The mayor's wife, Lucia, told them they were there to serve and to make the world a better place.

Associate of the Blessed Sacrament Paul Sullivan spoke about the mission statement of Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and three key words: *faith - action - results*. The youth learned that 1 out of 9 people in the world are under-nourished. That is approximately 792 million people! In Matthew's Gospel Jesus commands us to be doers of the Word, not just hearers. The youth responded to that message in numerous ways.

Some of them went to Open Door Shelter to serve the homeless and poor of Norwalk. Others went to Filling in the Blanks — a non-profit organization that provides meals to children in need — so their fellow students in Fairfield County would not go hungry when home from school over the weekend. Still others joined me at Cranberry Market collecting food items from our generous neighbors so that visitors to Saint Philip's Pantry could have food for the upcoming weeks. Our pastor, Father Sudhir DSouza, reminded us, Saint Philip parish conducts about eight trips into New York City each year to feed and clothe our homeless brothers and sisters. Pledges the participants collected were donated to CRS to end world hunger.

Throughout the weekend, I continually felt the presence of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, who among other things, dedicated himself to welcoming struggling children and young people in Industrial Revolution France. He offered them spiritual direction and awakened in them a desire to pray and allow faith to grow. The highlight of the weekend for me was watching everyone break his or her fast by receiving the Eucharist.



A sepia-toned portrait of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, an elderly man with white hair, wearing a dark clerical cassock and a wide, dark cape. He is seated in an ornate chair, looking directly at the camera with a serious expression. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

“The Eucharist is the
bond of fellowship among
nations; only family
members come to the
sacred banquet, at the foot
of the altar; there is but
one family.”

Eymard
S. J. S.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard
Feast Day, August 2

“It is at the consecration that God acts as an immigrant, because he enters into our world as the bread and wine are transformed into the Body and Blood of our Lord. We, in turn, migrate into God’s realm as we reenact and re-present the death and resurrection of Jesus.”

*Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B.
Eucharist without Borders:
The Church’s Vision for Immigration Reform, 2011*

