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Eucharistic Spirituality

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Eucharist and Christian Unity

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

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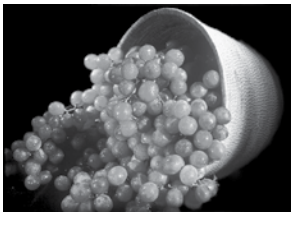

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FROM THE EDITOR

Recently, as I was preparing to speak on "cheap grace" in light of Matthew's Parable of the Wedding Feast (22:1-14), I turned to an old friend for inspiration, the German Lutheran theologian and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer, author of *The Cost of Discipleship* and *Letters and Papers from Prison*.

In researching Bonhoeffer, who was imprisoned and hanged for his participation in a plot to overthrow Adolf Hitler, I learned something new about this courageous Christian: Bonhoeffer was an ecumenist. Dr. Keith Clements, former general secretary of the Conference of European Churches, writes in *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Critical Prophet of the Ecumenical Movement* (2015):

> From the conclusion of his student years in Berlin to his death on the Nazi gallows at Flossenbürg, the ecumenical movement was central to Bonhoeffer's concerns. During these years, he fulfilled several distinct roles: academic theologian and teacher, leading protagonist for the Confessing Church, pastor, seminary director and - most dramatically and controversially - willing participant in the German resistance and the conspiracy to overthrow Hitler. But it is his commitment to and active involvement in the ecumenical movement that forms the most continuous thread of his life and activity and links all his various engagements.

Bonhoeffer believed in the concept of the Church as "Christ existing as community." The Church is a body of persons gathered under the word of Christ. As Catholics, we would add, gathered under the word of Christ *and the sacrament of his transforming presence*. Word and communion in the body and blood of Christ bring about the deep union of all who are in Christ. Moreover, sacramental communion in

the body and blood of Christ gradually changes us, individually and as Church, into his body.

Bonhoeffer's ecumenical vision was global, not denominational; it focused on the role of the Church in modern secular society. If anything, this emphasis is needed even more today, given the growth of secularism and its enshrinement in contemporary political thought. Bonhoeffer believed that the Church is constituted to proclaim the Gospel, to teach truth, and to oppose all forms of evil and injustice.

The Confessing Church was formed in the 1930s when approximately 3,000 Protestant pastors broke off from the main religious bodies in Germany, Lutheran and Catholic, in protest of their acquiescence in the rise of National Socialism and its program of Aryan domination, antisemitism, and human rights violations. Bonhoeffer was a leading witness to the fact that people of conscience and moral courage are found everywhere. He is also a window into the institutional dynamics of church and state that both facilitated and hindered Hitler.

Bonhoeffer teaches us that we must think and act boldly, as God gives us the grace to do. The demands of the Gospel and the needs of the world today are simply too great for us to do anything less; this was an important insight of Vatican II. We who profess one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and gathered under the word of Christ and the Lord's table must have the global vision of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. For, as the Lord said, "whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40).

Anthony Schueller, SSS
Senior Editor

In This Issue

The Eucharist and Christian Unity is the theme of this issue. Here we approach from an appreciative perspective what differing Christian faith traditions share in common in their eucharistic theology and practice. Ernest Falardeau, SSS and Phil Hardt together explore the current state of Catholic-Methodist dialogue on the Eucharist. Michael DeSanctis discusses the shared values of eucharistic prayer and sacred space with pastors belonging to different Christian traditions. Dennis Billy, C.Ss.R. explores the unique eucharistic understanding of the beloved author C. S. Lewis. And Darren Maslen, SSS shares of his journey from the "eucharistic renaissance" of the Anglican tradition to a Catholic religious order dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament. The beauty and importance of Eucharist shines through each of these great articles.

EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Anglican-Catholic Perspectives on the Eucharist: An Appreciative Dialogue —*Ritually Speaking*

by Darren Maslen, SSS

What unique eucharistic insights might we gain through the experience of an Anglican priest who became a Catholic Priest?

Darren Maslen began ordained ministry in the Anglican Church in the year 2000 after his formation at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, a monastic foundation in Yorkshire. Having served in two parishes in England for nearly ten years, he was received into full communion with the Catholic Church in November 2009, and undertook formation into the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He is currently the superior of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Dublin, Ireland.

Reading Life Through Eucharistic Rituals

In their *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals,* Herbert Anderson and Edward Foley reflect upon how public worship functions by weaving together both God's and our own human stories. This notion of weaving continues to speak to me profoundly because from the moment I first encountered it as a student of Edward Foley the vital sense of it remains the same: this is how I have been reading my life in the respective faith communities to which I have belonged through the celebration of the Eucharist. Recognizing how worship is indispensable as an activity of faith, the authors continue, "Without weaving the human and the divine narratives into a single web, it is unlikely that any Christian community of faith can survive. In that way, we understand the Lord's Supper as the ultimate embodiment of the Christian's *mighty story.* And so it becomes our most *dangerous ritual.*"[1]

I was socialized into Christian faith as an Anglican in England through participating in the Eucharist. My reading of the Church of England during the 1980s was that it was experiencing a kind of *eucharistic renaissance* which coincided exactly with the beginning of my life of worship. The publication of the *Alternative Service Book* in 1980 returned the Eucharist back into the center of England's Anglican worship. Through the marrying together of its contemporary language with eucharistic rituals, I was discovering a new foundation that to this day as a Catholic allows me to read life with God through the Eucharist. Rituals contain a power that can direct and guide us. The fascinating thing about ritual is that it transports us from the world of direct experience and into the realm of epiphanies. We need to give to eucharistic rituals their capacity to do just that. As Mark

Searle has written:

> Allowing the ritual to guide our attention, we will find ourselves anew in the breaking of bread, in the beating of the breast, in the bowing and bending, in the gesture of peace. Liturgy is ritual: not improvisation but discipline, not spontaneity but practice. It is the rehearsal of a role we shall take a lifetime to grow into. It is our sanctification. God is glorified when we make room for God's presence and allow God's action to find its full scope in our lives.[2]

Having been both a lay and ordained member of the Anglican and Catholic Church, I am acutely aware of a historical consciousness that continues to shape how post-Reformation societies mentally map beliefs and expectations about *other* Christians and what they do. We inherit mental models through our socialization into faith. This happens largely through belonging to a parish or local church and these mental frameworks shape our unconscious assumptions and expectations. The challenge is that our mental models form a complicated web that is not easy to untangle precisely because they do not always represent concrete realities. This is most clearly manifested in perceptions about Anglican and Catholic eucharistic practices and beliefs. Indeed, the Reformation in England was fuelled in part by the attempts of reformers to encourage worshipers to ritually embody Catholic Reformed beliefs during the celebration of the Eucharist.

Reading Historical Consciousness Through Ritual

Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* is an intriguing painting. Created in the same year that the future Queen Elizabeth I was born, the image functions in much the same way as a photograph by providing a still life "snapshot" of 1533 and a Tudor England in transition. King Henry VIII had unsuccessfully petitioned Pope Clement VII for an annulment and subsequently married Ann Boleyn most likely in 1532. This significant contributory factor to the English Reformation was up and running as Holbein set to work. In the painting, two French ambassadors stand on either side of an array of objects that are meticulously arranged on a two-tiered table, which communicates to the viewer how religious, scientific, political and civic aspects of European culture were impacting England. The lower tier includes an open hymnal that reveals two hymns written by Martin Luther and composed with the intention of serving new rituals through enhancing the participation

of the faithful in public worship.

It was important for Holbein to include in his snapshot the extent to which Protestantism highlighted the relationship between religious ritual and building up the faith community. The sociologist Richard Sennett observes that, "Apart from its beauty, *The Ambassadors* is an iconic painting in that it marks three great changes in European society in the sixteenth century. These were the transformation of rituals in religion; changing practices of material production; and the appearance of a new ethics for sociability."[3]

It was during the same year that this painting was created that King Henry appointed Thomas Cranmer as Archbishop of Canterbury. The dealings between these two men reveal that despite the scandal of the King's challenge to the Holy See, as far as the Mass and public worship were concerned, Henry was no reformer. It would only be after his death in 1547 that prominent English reformers coalesced to varying degrees with the crown, instigating the period of ecclesial liturgical history that would shape Anglican worship.

From 1548 to 1662 a series of mandated prayer books were produced, with rubrics that married the words and rituals of the Eucharist so that they expressed both implicitly and explicitly what English reformed Christianity purported to believe. These texts generally amounted to the introduction of a gradation of rituals corresponding to language, which were systematically moved away from any ontological change to the elements of the bread and wine. The liturgical sense of the English Reformation quickly became focussed on their status to the proximity of the question of the presence of Christ. The question as to whether the bread and wine "are", "point to", or "signify" Christ's body and blood dominated how people worshiped. Similarly important was how the carefully chosen words expressing beliefs were crafted, as well as how worshipers were guided in their ritual gesturing to proclaim and embody these beliefs.

We can glimpse something of this in how in just three short years from the 1549 to the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* the words addressed to communicants at the administration of Holy Communion respectively refocus away from what the bread "is" to what it "signifies" through memorialization. Compare: "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life" (1549) with: "Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for

thee, and feed on him in thy heart by faith with thanksgiving" (1552). Corresponding to the language of these two prayer books were instructions on how to ritually understand the bodily gestures at the point of reception. The 1552 text included an addendum stating that the communicant kneel in recognition of worthily receiving Christ's spiritual presence: "For as concerning the sacramental bread and wine, they remain still in their very natural substances, and therefore may not be adored, for that were idolatry to be abhorred of all faithful Christians."

My reading of the Church of England during the 1980s was that it was experiencing a kind of eucharistic renaissance which coincided exactly with the beginning of my life of worship.

The whole question of how to understand the nature of the presence of Christ — primarily in the eucharistic elements — proved to be so redolent during the sixteenth century because it made *the* statement about how to perceive and experience the personal presence of Christ *with* the people. The Anglican theologian John Macquarrie highlights that while transubstantiation, as the means to explain eucharistic presence had much to commend it, what seems to have troubled the reformers is its space-time specificity. While it "ruled out all magical theories of presence… transubstantiation is concerned primarily with a presence understood as presence at a particular time and in a particular place."[4] In an age with increased access to spiritual and religious literature coupled with attempts to bring the enactment of worship more directly to the people, what transubstantiation brought was the continuation of the theatrical spectacle of the Eucharist performed by the priest entirely focused on bread and wine transformed. By and large this represented a gulf too wide between the activity within the sanctuary and the people who made for English society.

Ritual Realignment

Appreciative dialogue between Anglicanism and Catholicism has been underway since Pope Paul VI and Archbishop Michael Ramsey jointly commissioned the *Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission* (ARCIC) in 1967. Responding to an emerging willingness for ecumenical dialogue, as well as a deeper appreciation of biblical

perspectives the Commission published the first fruits of its dialogue concerning eucharistic doctrine in 1971. As far as the question of eucharistic presence was concerned the statement highlighted Christ's active presence in various ways during the whole eucharistic celebration, insisting on the objective reality of this presence *in the eucharistic signs* as well as for the subjective response of faith.

> The sacramental body and blood of the Saviour are present as an offering to the believer awaiting his welcome. When this offering is met by faith, a lifegiving encounter results. Through faith Christ's presence — which does not depend on the individual's faith in order to be the Lord's real gift of himself to his Church — becomes no longer just a presence "for" the believer, but also a presence "with" him. Thus, in considering the mystery of the eucharistic presence, we must recognize both the sacramental sign of Christ's presence and the personal relationship between Christ and the faithful which arises from that presence.[5]

The initial work of ARCIC reflected two background contexts that to some degree were in themselves being realized. The first was the eucharistic pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council that reemphasized the Christ-centredness of the Church's liturgy and its affirmation of the whole presence of Christ in the Word, the person of the priest and the people as Church gathered, as well as the eucharistic species.[6] Secondly, the 1958 Lambeth Conference responded to the globalization of Anglicanism by insisting that recommendations be prepared for the restructuring of the 1662 Prayer Book's Holy Communion service so that churches within the Anglican Communion who were revising its eucharistic rite could be guided in conserving the doctrinal balance of Anglicanism and assimilating present liturgical knowledge.[7]

This single resolution would be the instigating factor to a series of events in the Church of England that would see the introduction of the eucharistic rite through which I was socialized into the living world of Christianity. Globally, other Anglican provinces followed the same pattern that was essentially about departing from the ritual (and to some degree theology) of the Prayer Book to a rediscovery of patristic models of eucharistic worship. It did not go unnoticed that many of

Anglicanism's new eucharistic rites were influenced by the revisions undertaken by the Roman Catholic Church, especially in the location of the act of penitence, the style of the prayers of intercession, and departing from a single form of eucharistic prayer.

The latter decades of the twentieth century witnessed what appear to me as a *ritual realigning* in the eucharistic rites and worship of Anglicans and Catholics. With greater parity in how people worship, it becomes possible for appreciative dialogue concerning the Eucharist to be inspired and undertaken from a variety of perspectives.

Listening as Ritual Speaks

Within an article written in 1973 can be found an invitation by Robert Bellah to resuscitate ritual as shared ground for eucharistic Anglican-Catholic appreciative dialogue. Here Bellah counselled the Church to guard its belief in real presence, but emphasized that it is necessary to stand aside from abstract explanations so that people can hear what the great eucharistic symbols have to say: "We need to let them speak and we need to listen."[8] He continued:

> The interplay between reason and experience is part of any healthy religion. But for too long the disembodied intellect, Protestant literalism and Catholic rationalism, has tyrannized over experience… The great symbols of the Eucharist cannot be finally captured in any theology. Their inexhaustible depth of meaning can be explained in different and even contradictory ways by a variety of theologies without their own inward vitality being affected.[9]

Here is where Anglican-Catholic appreciative dialogue can be most compelling: keeping the speech of eucharistic ritual alive so that believers can listen.

The faculty of speech that Bellah gives to eucharistic symbols I also identify within the rituals of the eucharistic celebration. Eucharistic rituals are expressive speech: they express the insight of Eucharist to those assembled, and a ritual's ability to communicate occurs when members of the worshiping community attend to the business of the

celebration of God's saving activity in Jesus Christ. It is through the attending of the community that ritual will speak and the community can listen.

Here is where Anglican-Catholic appreciative dialogue can be most compelling: keeping the speech of eucharistic ritual alive so that believers can listen. Aloysius Pieris may be onto something when he identifies from history what happens when speech and listening are diminished. "A religion fades out of history when its symbols and institutions lose their capacity to evoke among its followers the distinctive salvific experience that defines its essence. Did not this happen to the great religions of Ancient Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Mesopotamia?"[10] For both the Anglican and Catholic communities the vital point to be grasped is that through the embedded eucharistic rituals of their worship the original experience of the presence of Christ to those who surround him is readily available. It seems to me that that is worth dialoguing about in a spirit of appreciation.

Rituals: Holding onto the Rope

Call the Midwife is a hugely popular television drama watched by millions on both sides of the Atlantic. The show portrays how Anglican religious sisters and midwifes bring new life into the world in the east end of London in the 1950's. Sister Monica Joan is the eccentric yet matriarchal presence in the community, whose pronouncements are often obscure but received with love. The final episode of the third season finds her reflecting upon the activities within the community chapel, before stating, "The liturgy is of comfort to the disarrayed mind. We need not choose our thoughts; the words are aligned like a rope for us to cling to."

It seems to me that clinging to the rope of eucharistic rites is what I have been doing since I was ten years old. The parish community of St. Nicholas, serving the small village of Winsley in Wiltshire is where I first appreciated that by holding onto what I was experiencing every Sunday morning during the parish Eucharist was never about understanding it, but welcoming tangible intuitions about what the priest and people together were expressing ritually. In retrospect, I was giving hospitality to the mystery that Eucharist is. Sure, I did not understand the theological nuances of the spectacle of the priest's hands at the action of the *epiclesis,* but it was a constant epiphany. This ritual gesture manifested something of how a group of villagers

belonged to each other in a distinctive way because first we all belonged to the God who was being made present to us in our small village faith community. Likewise, throughout the eucharistic prayer my eyes were constantly being drawn as if by a magnet to the large wooden cross that hung over the altar. Simple in design with no corpus attached, this intense ocular moment consistently sealed the connection between proclaimed words and the widely extended arms of the celebrant to the people who surrounded me which always seemed impenetrable: "He opened wide his arms for us on the cross; he put an end to death by dying for us and revealed the resurrection by rising to new life; so he fulfilled your will and won for you a holy people."[11]

It is when words, rubrics, signs and symbols are removed from the page and taken into actions that eucharistic rituals have that capacity to weave the divine story with ours.

These formative experiences have never been too far away in my ordained ministries; rather, they have been absorbed into who I am and what I do. This is largely due to the performative character that all liturgical rituals have. We should not mistake use of the word *performance* in the theatrical, acting sense, but rather how eucharistic liturgies carry into effect or fulfill what they are meant to be: liturgy is something that is *done* — made actual. That is precisely why rituals in general do not communicate anything meaningful to onlookers but speak with clarity to those who practice them. I have been reminded of this in the last few years with the undertaking of part of my formation in India and subsequently serving in ministry assignments there. As an onlooker the rituals which furnish the Indian rite Eucharist were certainly intriguing. As time went on, they began to speak. Celebrating the Eucharist with new rituals such as *panchanga pranan* — a profound bow with one's head resting on crossed hands as a sign of contrition, or concluding the Eucharist with *manasa puja* — the placing of flowers, flame, and ointment on the table altar representing the humanity, divinity and resurrection of Christ returned me to the intrigue, welcome, and listening that was my socialization into Christian life and worship through the new eucharistic rites of the Anglican church in England.

It is when words, rubrics, signs and symbols are removed from the

page and taken into actions that eucharistic rituals have that capacity to weave the divine story with ours. I had known for sometime that my home was no longer the Anglican communion, yet it was as I elevated the host during the celebration of the Eucharist on a Tuesday lunchtime in May 2009, that I simply responded to a surge of energy inside of me as I muttered, "OK, I'll do it!" "It" was being received into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church.

With that moment began the appreciative dialogue that my life seems to have become and weaved. Appreciation is not a static stance about something but calls for direction and response. The inculcation of appreciation of my socialization into faith through the rituals of the Anglican Eucharist is now manifested in how I celebrate the eucharistic rites of the Catholic Church. Celebrating the Eucharist is giving what I in turn received: a journey where holy habits are constantly becoming *the* way of life.

Notes

[1] Herbert Anderson & Edward Foley, *Mighty Stories, Dangerous Rituals* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001), 157.

[2] Mark Searle, *Called to Participate: Theological, Ritual, and Social Perspectives* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 62.

[3] Richard Sennett, *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures & Politics of Cooperation* (London: Penguin Books, 2012), 98.

[4] John Macquarrie, *Paths in Spirituality* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 89.

[5] Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, "Eucharistic Doctrine" (The Windsor Statement, 1971), in *The Final Report* (Cincinnati, OH: Forward Movement Publications; Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1982), 15, par. 8.

[6] See *Sacrosanctum concilium,* 7.

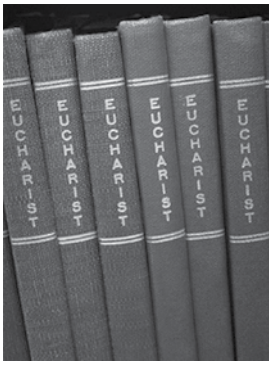
[7] See The Lambeth Conference Resolutions Archive 1958, resolution 76.

[8] Robert Bellah, "Liturgy and Experience" in James Shaugnessy, ed., *The Roots of Ritual* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973).

[9] Bellah, "Liturgy and Experience" in *The Roots of Ritual*, 233.

[10] Aloysius Pieris, "Christianity and Buddhism in Core-to-Core Dialogue," *Cross Currents,* 37: 1 (Spring 1987): 57.

[11] Central Board of Finance of the Church of England, *Alternative Service Book 1980,* [Rite A: Third Eucharistic Prayer], section 40.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

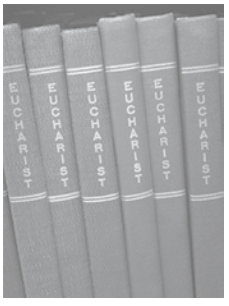
C. S. Lewis on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, C.Ss.R.

How did the beloved author C.S. Lewis understand the mystery of the Eucharist?

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

Clive Staples Lewis (1898-1963) was a British scholar and lay theologian known for his studies in Medieval and Renaissance literature, his popular expositions of the Christian faith, his Perelandra space trilogy, and his famous Narnia tales. Born in Belfast, Northern Ireland, his early education consisted of private tutors and time spent at Wynyard School, Campbell College, and Malvern College. He entered Oxford University in 1917 but was there only a short while before he entered officer school for the British army to fight for his country during the First World War. After his training, he was commissioned as a second lieutenant and sent into trench warfare on the front lines in the Somme Valley in France, where he was injured and eventually sent back to England to convalesce. Upon his discharge from the army in 1918, he resumed his studies at Oxford University. In 1924, he became a tutor in philosophy at University College, Oxford and in 1925 was elected Fellow and Tutor in English at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he remained until accepting a chair in Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Magdalen College, Cambridge in 1954. In 1956, he married Joy Davidman Gresham in a civil ceremony, and the two remained together until her death from cancer in 1960. Although he was baptized into the Church of Ireland as an infant, he became an atheist at the age of fifteen and converted to Christianity at the age of thirty-two through the influence of his friend, J. R. R. Tolkien. Along with Tolkien, he was a member of the informal literary club known as "The Inklings," which met regularly at The Eagle and Child pub in Oxford and in Lewis's rooms at Magdalen College. A prolific author, he is known for such works as: *The Discarded Image: An Introduction to Medieval and Renaissance Literature* (1964), *Mere Christianity* (1952) and his popular children's books series, *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950-56).[1]



Lewis's Spiritual Outlook

Although he was raised in a religious family, Lewis disavowed any belief in God in his teenage years and was an atheist for most of his young adulthood. His newfound faith, first in God's existence and later in the Christian God, came through his friendship with J. R. R. Tolkien and Hugo Dyson when, during a long evening walk, they discussed the idea that Christianity was a myth that had become fact. The mythologies of Ancient Greco-Roman civilization and of the Norsemen, he came to see, were nothing but faint glimpses of a deeper reality that would manifest itself through God's gradual self-revelation to the Hebrew people and ultimately reach its fullness in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-man and Word-become-flesh.[2]

Lewis's conversion affected him deeply and changed the way he viewed himself, others, and the world. God, for him, was not a distant, impersonal force who created the world and then left it to fend for itself, but a supra-personal reality who does not merely embody the reality of Love but actually *is* Love itself. Since Love, by its very nature, is other-oriented, this otherness must exist within the Godhead and is expressed in Christian doctrine through the belief in a Triune God of Father (God-transcendent), Son (God-incarnate), and Holy Spirit (God-immanent). Lewis's Christian apologetics flows from the fundamental insight that the God of love expresses God's self through the three loving actions of creation, redemption, and sanctification. Although God is one and always acts as one, each of these actions is typically associated with one of the persons of the Blessed Trinity: creation with the Father; redemption with the Son; and humanity's sanctification and the transformation of the world with the Holy Spirit. In his Christian writings, Lewis employed a simple, popular style to show that these and other basic doctrines of the Christian faith (what he called "mere Christianity") were not mere imaginary well-wishing, but beliefs that could be rationally explained and verbally defended. Belief was not contrary to reason, but something that enlightened reason and enabled it to peer more deeply into the mystery of things.[3]

Lewis himself admitted that he vehemently resisted coming to a belief in the Christian God but ultimately came to see that his objections could not withstand various counter-arguments showing that such beliefs were, in the very least, plausible — and even appealing.[4] He sought to show through his writings that belief in Christianity was

credible and that educated persons should not simply dismiss its doctrines as wishful ("pie-in-the-sky") thinking. A devout member of the Catholic wing of the Church of England, he believed that worship should be God-centered and embrace rituals that helped the faithful honor God as creator, redeemer, and sanctifier. Instituted by Christ at the Last Supper, Lewis believed that the Eucharist was the appropriate place where such homage should take place.[5]

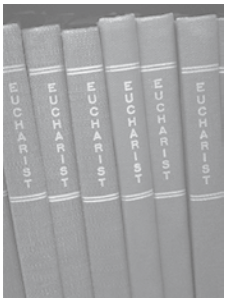
Lewis's Teaching on the Eucharist

Lewis did not write at length about the Eucharist. This conscious decision on his part was due, in part, to his focus on the basics upon which all Christians could agree. He was well aware that the meaning of the Eucharist differed across the various denominations and that this "sacrament of unity" had, in many respects, become a source of division among believers. He was also well aware that he was not a trained theologian and that he was not privy to the rarified distinctions commonly made by those better equipped to deal with the subject.

"Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself," Lewis claims, "your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses."

As a member of the High Anglican tradition, Lewis believed that, along with baptism, the Eucharist was one of the two sacraments instituted by Christ. As a member of that tradition, he also believed in Jesus' Real Presence in the sacrament, although he hesitated to explore the nature of that presence in any great detail, preferring to leave it to the realm of mystery and the power of divine providence. In "The Weight of Glory," a sermon he preached on June 8, 1942 at St. Mary the Virgin Church in Oxford, he closes with the words: "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself, your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses. If he is your Christian neighbor he is holy in almost the same way, for in him also Christ *vere latitat* — the glorifier and the glorified, Glory Himself, is truly hidden."[6] Jesus, he believed, was truly present, yet hidden, in the Eucharist. His glory is a hidden one, something that speaks of his humility in entering our world and taking on the burden and the weight of human flesh.

One place where Lewis chooses to treat the Eucharist is in chapter nineteen of his posthumous work, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*



(1964).[7] There he explicitly states that one reason why he has never written very much about Holy Communion is because he is "not good enough at theology."[8] His general silence on the matter is not that he doesn't welcome the sacrament, but that he does not wish to unsettle people's minds: "…the very last thing I want to do is to unsettle in the mind of any Christian, whatever his denomination, the concepts — for him traditional — by which he finds it profitable to represent to himself what is happening when he receives the bread and wine. I could wish that no definitions had ever been felt necessary; and still more, that none had been allowed to make divisions between churches."[9] He understands that people have devised different theories about what takes place during the consecration of the bread and wine but wonders what Jesus' disciples themselves thought was happening. He finds it hard to fathom the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, saying that he finds it difficult to imagine what it is: "…I find 'substance' (in Aristotle's sense), when stripped of its own accidents and endowed with the accidents of some other substance, an Object I cannot think. My effort to do so produces mere nursery-thinking — a picture of something like very rarefied plasticine."[10]

Lewis believed in the Real Presence but decided to leave explaining what happens there to mystery: "The command, after all, was Take, eat; not Take, understand."

At the same time, Lewis is not satisfied with merely saying that the bread and wine are symbols of Christ's body and blood: "I get on no better with those who tell me that the elements are mere bread and mere wine, used symbolically to remind me of the death of Christ. They are, on the natural level, such a very odd symbol of *that*."[11] What is more, why were bread and wine chosen, since Lewis could think of a hundred other things that would remind him of Christ's death.[12] He does not wish to say that anyone's explanation of what takes place at the Eucharist is wrong, but simply states that every explanation does not exhaust its mystery. Lewis much prefers putting aside the various attempts to explain what takes place in this sacrament and simply accept it as such: "…I find no difficulty in believing that the veil between the worlds, nowhere else (for me) so opaque to the intellect, is nowhere else so thin and permeable to divine operation."[13] Lewis believed in the Real Presence but decided to leave explaining what happens there to mystery: "The command, after all, was Take, eat; not Take, understand."[14] He preferred to preserve what he called the

"magical" element in Christianity which puts us in touch with the divine Other. Theological explanations of the Eucharist, however refined and accurate they may be, will never exhaust the mystery it embodies.

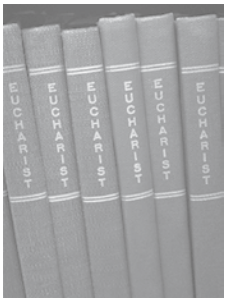
Some Further Insights

Lewis's views on the Eucharist reflect his interest in highlighting what Christians have in common rather than what divides them. Although he believed in the Real Presence, he was hesitant to delve too deeply into the explanations concerning what actually happens to the bread and wine during the celebration of the sacrament, preferring instead to allow the mystery of the sacrament to speak for itself. The following remarks seek to delve a bit more deeply into Lewis's view on the sacrament.

Lewis's views on the Eucharist reflect his interest in highlighting what Christians have in common rather than what divides them.

To begin with, Lewis's approach to the Eucharist must be understood within the context of his understanding of the purpose of Christian worship as a whole. He believed that such worship should be God-centered and universal in scope. A conservative and traditionalist by nature, he was against innovation for innovation's sake yet understood the importance of rendering praise and glory to God with the best that we have to offer God. Although what that might mean may vary from culture to culture, he was a strong advocate for constancy in worship: "My whole point," he claims, "was that any form will do me if only I'm given time to get used to it."[15] The repetitious nature of Christian ritual calmed the soul and was more likely to carry the community to the threshold of the sacred. Worship, moreover, was to be carried out regardless of what one was feeling at the time. It allows us to leave the ordinary run-a-day circumstances of our lives and enter into the realm of *Kairos* (sacred time). Instituted by Christ as a memorial to his sacrificial death and resurrection, the Eucharist, he believed, was especially suited to leading the Christian into the sphere of the sacred. Jesus' Real Presence in the sacrament guaranteed that, regardless of our private and communal failures at authentic worship, he would always be in our midst taking our humble offering into his hands and offering them to his Father in heaven.

Lewis does not wish to denigrate any attempts to formulate explanations



of what takes place at the Eucharist. He merely is pointing out their inherent limitations. He finds them all unsatisfactory, because, despite however good they may seem, they all fall short of expressing the fullness of its mystery. While he believes in the Real Presence, the nature of that presence will always remain hidden, and he prefers to have it that way. He wishes to preserve the element of mystery and awe around this sacrament (what he likes to call "magic"). Because of its inherent limitations, language hides as much as it reveals. For him, the hidden nature of Christ in the Eucharist represents its deepest, truest meaning. Attempts to define what happens during its celebration can take away from this sense of mystery rather than promoting it. They appear like sawdust to him, because, in the end, they lose sight of a mystery that no words (however finely tuned) can exhaust.[16]

Lewis believes that "the veil between the worlds" thins at times and the union of heaven and earth becomes almost palpable.[17] For him, the Eucharist is the place *par excellence* where this "thinning" takes place. Closely connected to Jesus' passion, death, and resurrection, it represents the nearness of God's presence to humanity made possible by Christ's suffering and death on the cross. At the moment of Jesus' death, the veil in the temple before the Holy of Holies was rent in two, and the power of God was unleashed upon the world (Mt 27:51). In a similar way, the boundaries between heaven and earth dissipate at the celebration of the Eucharist. We are given heavenly food to eat and digest and to make a part of ourselves so that God can give us a share in God's divine life. Holy Communion represents the sacred bond, the new covenant, between God and humanity made possible by Jesus' paschal mystery and memorialized in the sacrament.

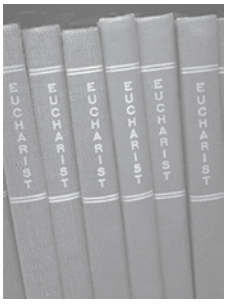
After the Eucharist, the other place where the veil between heaven and earth grows thin most clearly is in one's neighbor. "Next to the Blessed Sacrament itself," Lewis claims, "your neighbor is the holiest object presented to your senses."[18] For him, the bond between the Eucharist and our neighbor is very close. Holy Communion refers to communion not merely with God but also with all those who believe in him and, ultimately with all of humanity. After all, Jesus himself said, "I assure you, as often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (Mt 25:40).[19] When seen in this light, the celebration of the Eucharist is a celebration of the new humanity. Jesus is the New Man, and we are members of his body. The mystery of the Eucharist, for Lewis, pours into the mystery of our communion with each other. It is

the "sacrament of love," the sacrament of God's love for humanity, and of our love for God and one another.

For Lewis, understanding is secondary to following Jesus' commands. He understands that there are some things that our finite minds will never fully fathom. Few (if any) of us completely understand the process of digestion, yet we take food each day for nourishment, nonetheless. In a similar way, Jesus said, "Take, eat: not Take, understand."[20] Here, Lewis is not denigrating our desire to understand the nature and meaning of our faith, only that we must recognize our limitations and work within those boundaries. He is worried that placing understanding before action will lead us into a paralyzing inaction and the kind of Gnosticism that has haunted Christianity since its earliest years. Jesus said, "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other" (Jn 13:34). People, Lewis affirms, will know we are Jesus' disciples by the way we love one another, not by our level of understanding.

Jesus' Real Presence in the sacrament guaranteed that, regardless of our private and communal failures at authentic worship, he would always be in our midst taking our humble offering into his hands and offering them to his Father in heaven.

When Lewis speaks of the magical element of the Eucharist, he is not thinking of any cheap, paltry, hocus-pocus attempts to control the forces of nature, but to a sense of awe and enchantment that embodies a sacred (as opposed to secular) view of the world. Much of today's world has lost its sense of the sacred. The sacrament, he maintains, preserves this sense of awe and wonder at the heart of all reality. It does so by preserving a sense of mystery at the very heart of existence itself. In his mind, there is much more to reality than what meets the eye, much more than what the empirical sciences can detect and measure. A world that has lost its sense of the "magical" (i.e., the "sacred") deprives itself of the opportunity to peer beneath the appearances of things and come to an encounter with the source of all Being. As a sacrament, the Eucharist preserves this sense of the sacred and enables us to find meaning in the objective order and meaning in our place in it. It forces us to encounter Mystery outside of our own subjective awareness of things and to recognize that we are not the ultimate measure of things.



Finally, something should be said about Lewis's relationship to the Catholic Church. Although his conversion to Christianity was very much influenced by his close friendship with J.R.R. Tolkien, a devout Catholic and fellow Inkling, Lewis never became a Catholic, even though many of his ideas resonated with the truths of the Catholic faith. He seems to have had a suspicion of Catholicism (some might even call it a prejudice), which was partly due to his upbringing in the Protestant section of Northern Ireland and partly due to his distaste for the kind of theological reflection that tried to explain too much and not give the mystery of the faith its due. He found the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, for example, to be not only somewhat contrived and difficult to imagine, but also something that, when all is said and done, did not fully satisfy the imagination. It remains a moot point as to whether Lewis would, if he had lived longer, eventually have become a Catholic. It is well known that his friendship with Tolkien waned in his later years and, even though he believed in the Real Presence, confessed his sins regularly, and was against the theological and liturgical innovations arising with Anglicanism at the time, it seems that his decision to focus on "mere Christianity" (i.e., what all Christians share in common) would have led him to remain where he was, a committed member of the Church of England.[21]

Conclusion

Although Lewis believed in the Real Presence and loved the sacrament, he wrote very little about it, because he sensed that the various explanations given it were more often than not the cause of division and dissension within the Christian denominations. His emphasis on "mere Christianity" led him to concentrate on what united Christians in their battle against the despiritualizing forces that presented themselves in his world. That said, it is clear that he saw the Eucharist as a sacrament instituted by Christ that thinned the separation between the natural and supernatural worlds and brought the worshiper evermore close to the threshold of the sacred. The Eucharist, for him, was a concrete, objective reality of God's ongoing presence with God's people, a reality that began with the mystery of the Incarnation and continued in the mystery of the breaking of the bread. The Eucharist, in his mind, was all about the mystery of God's love for humanity. It was not necessary to understand this mystery or explain it. All that was necessary was for the believer to take, eat, and allow the Spirit of the Lord to enter into one's mind and heart — and allow God to accomplish God's work.

Notes

[1] For a timeline of C. S. Lewis's life, see *C. S. Lewis Foundation: Living the Legacy of C. S. Lewis*, http://www.cslewis.org/resource/chronocsl/ .

[2] See Colin Duriez, *Tolkien and C.S. Lewis*: *The Gift of Friendship* (Mahwah, NJ: HiddenSpring, 2003), 50-55; see also, C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1970), 63-67.

[3] See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 140-45.

[4] See Duriez, *Tolkien and C.S. Lewis*, 45-46.

[5] For more on Lewis's ideas concerning worship, see Justin Taylor, "C. S. Lewis on the Theology and Practice of Worship," https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/c-s-lewis-on-the-theology-and-practice-of-worship/ .

[6] C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," http://www.wheelersburg.net/Downloads/Lewis%20Glory.pdf.

[7] C. S. Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1964).

[8] Ibid., 101.

[9] Ibid., 101-2.

[10] Ibid., 102.

[11] Ibid., 102

[12] Ibid., 102

[13] Ibid., 103.

[14] Ibid., 104.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Ibid., 103-4.

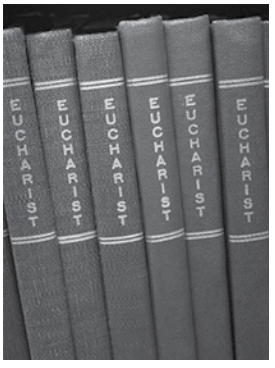
[17] Ibid., 103.

[18] C. S. Lewis, "The Weight of Glory," ," http://www.wheelersburg.net/Downloads/Lewis%20Glory.pdf.

[19] All Scripture references come from *The New American Bible* (New York: Catholic Book Publishing, 1979).

[20] Lewis, *Letters to Malcolm*, 104.

[21] See Joseph Pearce, "C. S. Lewis and the Catholic Church," in *Catholic New Agency*, *https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/column/c-s-lewis-and-the-catholic-church-3085*



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

The Call to Holiness From Glory to Glory: The Saints Below and the Saints Above

by Ernest Falardeau, SSS and Rev. Phil Hardt

How have Catholic and Methodists grown together in their understanding of holiness and the sacraments?

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS is past president of the National Association of Ecumenical Officers and the North American Academy of Ecumenists. He has written three books on eucharistic spirituality from an ecumenical perspective. Rev. Dr. Philip Hardt received a Ph.D. in Historical Theology from Fordham University. He has published several articles in both *Methodist History* and *Ashbury Theological Journal*. He is pastor at Glendale Maspeth United Methodist Church in Queens, NY.

Since January 1967 Methodists and Catholics have been engaged in an international dialogue on various questions which are shared and divide the two Christian communions. After the breakthrough on the question of justification by faith between the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church on October 31, 1999, the Methodists joined the other two communions in affirming their consensus with the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) in 2006 with appropriate indications of points of divergence. The present convergence document is one that is at the heart of the Christian faith, namely the universal call to holiness. This doctrine was particularly underscored by the Second Vatican Council's dogmatic affirmation on the nature and mission of the Church, *Lumen Gentium*.[1] It is a doctrine very dear to Methodists and the spirituality which they professed even as members of the Anglican Communion.

The Call to Holiness From Glory to Glory (TCHFGG) is the tenth such report which appears periodically after a few years of dialogue on a specific topic considered to be crucial on the road to full communion between Methodists and Catholics.[2] The status of the document is that it is the work of the international commission on behalf of the parent churches and is a convergence rather than a consensus between the two participants. Convergence designates a core of consensus, while also acknowledging some divergence, which is considered not to be Church dividing, but nevertheless recognizes obstacles needing further study leading to consensus.

Content

The Call to Holiness begins with a preface by the co-chairs of the

international commission. It describes previous studies and the gist of the topics treated by each document over the years. These are named and dated by the place and year that the document was officially released for study and evaluation by the participant churches and their theologians. When the documents have been officially agreed upon, they become part of the official teaching of the churches.

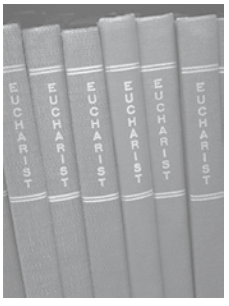
The Call to Holiness has five chapters and an introduction describing the titles and content of each of these chapters. Chapter one is entitled *The Mystery of Being Human: Created by God and Recreated in Christ for Being in Communion with God.* Chapter two is *God's Work of Recreating Humankind.* Chapter three is *God's Holy People: The Saints Below.* Chapter four is *God's Holy People: The Saints Above* (in #160 Mary: Life and Sign of Grace and Holiness is discussed.) Chapter five is *Growing in Holiness Together: Openings for Common Witness, Devotion and Service.* An appendix indicated as *Resources for Prayer and Meditation* is added to assist joint efforts to pray and reflect on the prayers and lives of Christians who have lived holy lives as Methodists and Catholics.

Issues

The document indicates that several key issues underlie the question of holiness and grace in the Christian life. Christian anthropology is the focus of the first and second chapters. What does it mean to be a human being, and what does the Christian faith contribute to human and spiritual maturity *in Christ?* The questions of grace and sin are raised. Freedom of conscience and faith are also discussed. Chapter two focuses on salvation (*soteriology)*. Both Methodists and Catholics believe that we are not saved only as individual persons. We are, by our baptism, members of the body of Christ which is the Church. Hence ecclesiology, described in chapter three, discusses how the Christian becomes a disciple of Jesus and lives in communion with other Christians. As the document states early on, holiness and unity are cognate realities and two sides of the same coin. Eschatology, treated in chapter four, is given an extended discussion. While admitting that we do not know a great deal about the afterlife, it is the goal of Christian living and of our human maturation. In chapter five, the "connectedness" of Christians in witness, devotion, and service are emphasized as nurturing and of great importance to the expression of the Christian life.[3]

1. The Saints Below: A Methodist Perspective

The very first gathering of the Catholic Church-World Methodist



Council International Theological Commission, just after the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council discovered that the most unifying aspect between the two communions was their common emphasis on holiness. Now, fifty years later, their joint report has been exclusively devoted to this topic! Chapter three, entitled, "The Saints Below," examines three ways in which the Church "nurtures" holiness in its members: through sacraments and rites, devotional life, and ministry at the time of death. Despite its relatively short existence (1939-present), Methodists are able to show convergence in these areas because of two significant factors: early Wesleyan emphasis and a more recent, renewed interest in spirituality.

John Wesley: Frequent Communion and Weekly Confession of Sins

Early Methodist practice reveals a close convergence with Catholic understandings of the Eucharist and penance. First, Wesley was insistent on the frequent reception of communion. For example, it is estimated that Wesley himself received communion twice a week on average. Of course, as an Anglican priest (in a mostly traveling ministry) in good standing, he could also preside at the Sunday eucharistic liturgy if asked. Moreover, Wesley published his sermon entitled, *The Means of Grace*, which mentioned communion as a primary means of grace.[4] Another published sermon, *The Duty of Constant Communion*, urged frequent reception of the sacrament and refuted various objections to the practice.[5] In an introduction to this sermon, the noted Wesley scholar, Albert Outler, has written: "Like Richard Hooker and Jeremy Taylor and Daniel Brevint before them, the Wesleys conceived of sacramental grace as God's love in action in the lives of faithful men at worship. The Lord's Supper is the paradigm of *all* "the means of grace" — the chief actual means of actual grace and, as such, literally indispensable in the Christian life."[6] Finally, both John and his brother Charles Wesley wrote numerous eucharistic hymns such as "*O Thou Who This Mysterious Bread*," "*Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast*," and "*O the Depth of Love Divine*," some of which speak unambiguously of eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood.

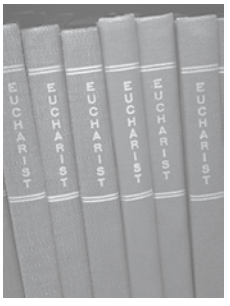
As a result, Methodist historians have referred to the Methodist movement as both an "evangelical" and "sacramental" revival. Unfortunately, the sacramental understandings were largely lost or deliberately ignored in early American Methodism (from the 1770s onwards) due to the shortage of preachers and the challenge of

evangelizing the population as it moved westward.

The "liturgical movement" of the past hundred years has moved present-day Methodism in a more liturgical and sacramental direction including, in some local churches, the practice of weekly communion! Another example of how the sacraments or rites give the grace needed to grow in holiness is found in both marriage and ordination. While it is common for Catholic weddings and normative for ordinations to include communion, Methodists are also moving in that direction. For example, Methodist ordinations often not only include the liturgy of the word and the ordination itself but also the liturgy of the Eucharist. Moreover, the most recently revised (U. S.) Methodist hymnal strongly suggests that communion be a part of every wedding (and funeral). Finally, several supplemental worship books (i.e. *United Methodist Book of Worship, Handbook of the Christian Year, and At the Lord's Table*) include specific "Great Thanksgiving" or Eucharistic Prayers for these occasions. While acknowledging "certain differences in belief," the authors of *The Call to Holiness* "affirm together that ongoing participation at the Eucharist renews the faithful for mission and holy living" (TCHFGG 107).

While acknowledging "certain differences in belief," they "affirm together that ongoing participation at the Eucharist renews the faithful for mission and holy living" (107).

Second, Wesley strongly emphasized the need to be accountable for one's actions and to confess one's sins to others. For example, numerous entries in his diary indicated that he used an "examination of conscience." Moreover, Wesley instituted the "band meeting" (either all men or all women) in which the members would answer a number of required questions such as "What sins have you committed since we last met" and "What temptations have you had?" In addition, each member had to be willing to receive admonishment and encouragement from the other members. Although early Methodism required attendance at the weekly class meeting (see below), band membership was voluntary and the total number of bands was much smaller. Wesley based the band meeting upon the passage in James chapter five, "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed" (Jas 5:16). It should come as no surprise, then, that this practice (and others) caused Wesley to



be called a "papist!" Finally, Wesley also instituted the weekly class meeting in 1742 which served as a catechumenate but also included an element of accountability since each member was asked, "How is it with your soul?"

Renewed Interest in Spirituality

The second reason for this close convergence between Methodists and Catholics has occurred because of renewed Methodist emphasis on spiritual disciplines. To be sure, the journals and diaries of Wesley and other early Methodists clearly indicate lives devoted to prayer, Scripture reading, and the regular sharing of Christian experience. Yet, the resurgence of interest in the spiritual disciplines seems to have more deeply cemented the connection to long established Catholic spiritual practices. This is illustrated in the increased number of materials for both personal and group Bible study and reflection. In addition to *The Upper Room* (published now for over 75 years!), other daily devotions include *Disciplines: 2020* (Which is published annually), Advent and Lenten devotional booklets and lectionary study books. Moreover, over thirty years ago, the United Methodist Church (UMC), started an "Academy for Spiritual Formation" which has trained spiritual directors and helped the laity deepen their walk with Christ. Again, in an effort to combat Biblical illiteracy, the UMC developed *Disciple Bible* studies which now cover the entire Bible in thirty-four-week-courses. The early Methodist class meeting (see above) has also been "recovered" and other small sharing groups such as "Covenant Discipleship Groups" have been started to assist people in growing in holiness. The Covenant Discipleship Groups require participants to write a covenant on what they plan to do each week in terms of personal piety, worship and service. This "rule" seems to somewhat resemble Catholic associations of lay people.

Yet, the "liturgical movement" of the past hundred years has moved present-day Methodism in a more liturgical and sacramental direction including, in some churches, the practice of weekly communion!

2. The Saints Above

From Glory to Glory, chapter four discusses the doctrine concerning the "saints above" who have died and are "with the Lord" awaiting

the resurrection of the dead, body and soul (TCHFGG 137). The first statement is that the culture of scientific thought for many people makes it difficult to understand the Christian mysteries that follow death. Hence, it is better to keep silent than to speak. However, the richness of God's revelation in the Scriptures provides the foundation for Christian teaching about the resurrection and eternal life (TCHFGG 138).

Catholics and Methodists believe God wills the salvation of all people.

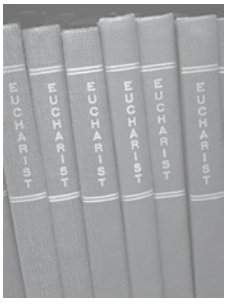
Pilgrims Toward Eternal Life

Friends and followers of Christ, Christians journey together as pilgrims toward the promise of eternal life with the saints "standing before the throne" (Rev 7:9) (TCHFGG 139). There are many things relating to "last things" which Christians explore because, as Saint Anselm famously observed, "faith seeks understanding." Together Catholics and Methodists profess the ecumenical creeds concerning the resurrection of the body and eternal life (TCHFGG 140). They also affirm that there is a communion between saints below and saints above. Like a family, where bonds of love continue to exist between the living and the departed, so it is with those who are "in Christ."

All Baptized in One Communion

All the baptized, living and dead, make up the communion of saints. Death brings people to the ultimate limits of human experience imposing a finality immersed in mystery. Human life is a life unto death. The rituals of dying are followed by rituals of death. Christian teaching holds intension and continuity of personal identity from this world to the next, and the discontinuity between life on earth and in heaven.

Catholics and Methodists together believe God wills the salvation of all people also believing salvation is attained exclusively through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). Both Catholics and Methodists affirm their trust in the mercy of God regarding infants and others who die without receiving the sacrament of baptism believing that they too, share the promise of eternal life. The Apostle's Creed affirms that Christ "will come to judge the living and the dead." They also affirm individual



judgment (TCHFGG 150). God's mercy is limitless, but neither Catholics nor Methodists believe in universalism.

Catholics believe in purgatory. Methodists, like the 16th century Reformers, do not. In recent times Catholic teaching has been refined and Pope Benedict XVI has written on the subject of prayer for the departed. Methodists and Catholics honor the saints above as witnesses of holiness. There are some differences between Catholics and Methodists about the relationship between the saints below and the saints above. Catholics have a more detailed teaching on this relationship.

Conclusion

The universal call to holiness is at the heart of our hope for eternal life and our salvation in Christ with God. Catholics and Methodists believe God wills the salvation of all people. It is attained exclusively through Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12). There is obviously much more about what we believe together than our differences and we desire to dialogue so that we can better understand our differences and how we can move toward greater Christian unity.

Notes

[1] Vatican II. *Lumen Gentium* chapter 5 The Call to Holiness. See also Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*: On the Call to Holiness in Today's World (Apostolic exhortation) 2018.

[2] *The Call to Holiness From Glory to Glory.* The Report of the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the World Methodist Council and the Roman Catholic Church (Houston, TX, August 2016. Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2018).

[3] From its inception, Methodism described itself as a "connection" centered in the regional "conference (i.e. diocese). This connection not only included the annual conference meeting of preachers but also various expressions of ministry and spiritual life on the local church and circuit levels. Cf. Russell E. Richey. *The Conference in America: A History.* (Nashville: Abington Press, 1996) 74.

[4] John Wesley, *The Means of Grace*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol 1, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 376-397.

[5] John Wesley, *The Duty of Constant Communion*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, vol 1, ed. Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984), 427-439.

[6] Albert C. Outler, *John Wesley* (New York: oxford University Press, 1964), 333.

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EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Preserving the Place and Practice of Eucharistic Prayer: An Ecumenical Survey of Christian Pastors

by Michael DeSanctis

What values do pastors of differing Christian traditions share when celebrating Eucharist in sacred spaces?

Introduction: Current Challenges to Eucharistic Place and Piety

For some thirty-five years I have served Roman Catholic parish communities throughout the United States as a liturgical educator, designer and consultant, a tripartite lay ministry, as I see it, inseparable from the responsibilities I carried during most of those years as a professor of theology and fine arts at Gannon University, a diocesan institution located in Erie, Pennsylvania. Working with Catholic pastors and their congregations to improve conditions for the Eucharist in places as far flung as Bethany Beach, Delaware; San Diego, California; Naples, Florida; or Great Falls, Montana, has helped me appreciate how diversified the Church's prayer is today, one parish to another. It has also made clear just how much remains to be done in the way of catechesis, more than a half-century after the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), to move lay Catholics beyond an elementary connection with eucharistic worship and the architectural settings that support it.

At the outset of my consulting career in the mid-1980s, after all, the aim of anyone in the business of implementing the council's directives on sacred liturgy was to encourage the typical lay population to adopt a more participatory role in the rites of the Church, especially the Mass, whose spiritual value never lay in doubt. Today, however, amidst a culture increasingly estranged from table rituals of any kind — let alone from speculation on the requirements of the spirit — the challenge to the liturgist lies less in helping committed church-goers modify their accustomed ways of praying than in convincing the marginal or more thoroughly secularized believer of the Eucharist's enduring significance in the Christian journey. Not only are fewer

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).

American Catholics than ever fulfilling their "Sunday obligation" of participation in the Liturgy of the Eucharist,[1] but an informal survey of those who generally *do* reveals the extent to which the shape of their weekends is determined by the allure of activities having little to do with religion. As one pastor with whom I have worked puts it: "Most of my parishioners still do their best to make it to Sunday Mass — but they're not hung up any longer on missing from time to time in order to make their kids' soccer tournaments or to skip town entirely to fulfill other plans for the weekend." The Eucharist, one might argue, no longer holds a place of unique importance in the minds of many American Catholics but stands alongside innumerable *other* options in a wide array of "Sabbath importances."

My experiences in the service of mainline Protestant congregations confirms that the same holds true for significant numbers of their members, drawn away from traditional, seat-in-the-pew participation in worship on Sunday mornings not only by the persistent distractions of the secular realm but by religious programming of one sort or another transmitted directly into the comfort of their homes by means of television and the internet. Those Protestant communities in which, under varying names and theologies, the Eucharist is held in high regard must likewise contend today with the outflux from their ranks of persons eager to escape denominational affiliation altogether and any form of public piety they deem too strictly "canonical."[2] In this rapidly-evolving scene, ironically enough, the liturgical practices of so-called "high church" Protestants — Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and many Methodists, for example — now bear greater similarity to what prevails on weekends in the average Roman Catholic parish than they do the casual, jeans-and-sneakers way with worship promoted by many independent and Evangelical congregations.

Official Teachings to Inspire and Guide

As a "professional guest" in churches throughout the country, I have been privileged to observe up-close the efforts of those Christian pastors committed to preserving some version of eucharistic worship within their churches, be it known as "the Lord's Supper," "the "Lord's Table" or simply "(Holy) Communion." The same has held true closer to home, where my long-standing relationships with the pastoral personnel of various faith communities have offered me a unique view on how the Christian minister today can function less as a custodian of some ancient, religious artifact, than as servant and server of a

living sacrament established by Christ to render God's transformative presence accessible to God's people. As the 2004 General Conference of the United Methodist Church asserted in *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion*, an official statement of that denomination's theology and practice, "[i]n the midst of the personal and systemic brokenness in which we live, "[the Christian Community] yearn[s] for everlasting fellowship with Christ and ultimate fulfillment of the divine plan." "Nourished by sacramental grace," the statement continues, "we strive to be formed into the image of Christ and to be made instruments for transformation in the world."[3]

Rev. Gregg D. Townsend says of his congregation, "…there is always an unmistakable connection between sermon and sacrament when we celebrate Communion, a point emphasized by the close proximity in our sanctuary of the pulpit and the Lord's table."

The incarnational character of liturgical action is similarly affirmed in *The Place Where We Worship*, a publication of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America designed to help ordained ministers and their flocks "think more pastorally, theologically and aesthetically"[4] about the nature of communal prayer. "We meet God in space and in time," the publication notes, in a world that is "created good." God yearns to communicate with God's creatures, it continues, and does so through the "materials of creation: water, bread, wine, flesh, word."[5] Nearly identical language is employed in the *Directory for Worship* of the Revised Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), which stresses the materiality of the sole sacraments — baptism and the Eucharist — upheld by the Reformed tradition from which it springs. "The Sacraments are both physical signs and spiritual gifts, including words and actions, surrounded by prayer, in the context of the Church's common worship, the directory notes: They employ ordinary things — the basic elements of water, bread, and wine — in proclaiming the extraordinary love of God."[6]

The *Catechism* of the Episcopal Church that complements the 1979 edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* likewise defines the Church's sacraments in classical, Augustinian language. They are, the document affirms, "outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace, given

by Christ as sure and certain means by which we receive that grace."[7] The *Catechism* places the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist squarely within the context of corporate worship, an aspect of believers' lives in which they are encouraged to participate "week by week."[8] Noteworthy is the catechism's treatment of the sacrificial dimension of eucharistic prayer, which it describes as the means by which the Church's oblation of praise and thanksgiving to the Father is united with the sacrifice of his Son, Jesus Christ.[9] The Roman Catholic faithful, too, are more formally required to participate "on Sundays and holy days of obligation"[10] in the celebration of the Eucharist, which they are instructed to regard "the foundation and confirmation of all Christian practice."[11] By doing so, the catechism of their own church insists, they share in a communal celebration that is "a testimony of belonging and of being faithful to Christ and to his church."[12] In the decades since Vatican II, many Catholics have come to regard the Eucharist as the "source and summit"[13] of the Christian life, an axiom authored by the council and appearing not only in their historic statement on the liturgy, *Sacrosanctiam concilium*, but in *Lumen gentium*, the council's dogmatic constitution on the nature of the Church. Both documents affirm that the Catholics are a eucharistic people — a community unified, nourished and made holy by regular participation in the sacrifice of the Mass — and a dwelling place of God in their own right. It is within *their own body* assembled for worship that God is tented and entempled, a supernatural reality rightly mirrored by physical settings distinguishable from merely utilitarian structures by their dignity and beauty.[14]

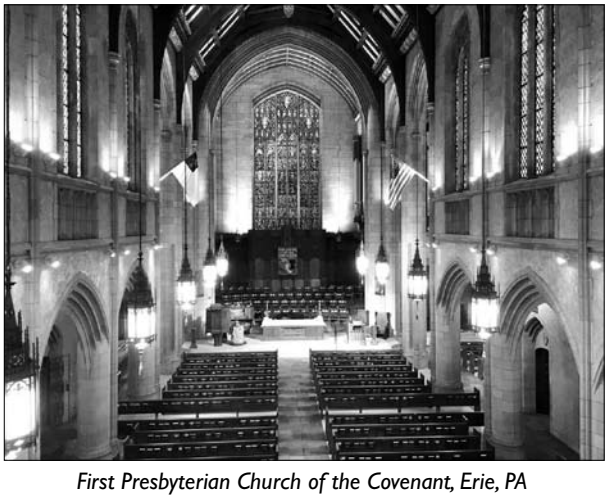
A View from the Pastor's Seat

First Presbyterian Church, North East, PA

Animated less by the office teachings of their respective churches perhaps, than by a personal love of worship that bears a eucharistic dimension, the pastors of local congregations with whom I have been blessed to maintain longstanding friendships have much to say about the theological and practical challenges facing them today. Rev. Gregg D. Townsend, for example, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in North East, Pennsylvania, the oldest religious congregation in Erie County, is quick to point out that, from

a strictly financial perspective, a church building is "a giant albatross around the neck of any faith community." "It can suck the life out of a community," he argues, referring to the costly upkeep of an older building, especially. Townsend and his congregants nevertheless share great pride in the 1885 Gothic Revival church where they worship, a structure recognized locally as much for its beauty as for its historical importance. "We don't do ugly here," he adds. "Every aspect of a Sunday service is done with care — in particular preaching and music, and there is always an unmistakable connection between sermon and sacrament when we celebrate Communion, a point emphasized by the close proximity in our sanctuary of the pulpit and the Lord's table."

On the matter of whether the sights and sounds associated with the place of one's communion with God is of any significance, the Very Rev. John P. Downey suggests that "[w]e can say that God is everywhere, but if we don't encounter God somewhere, we may not find God anywhere."

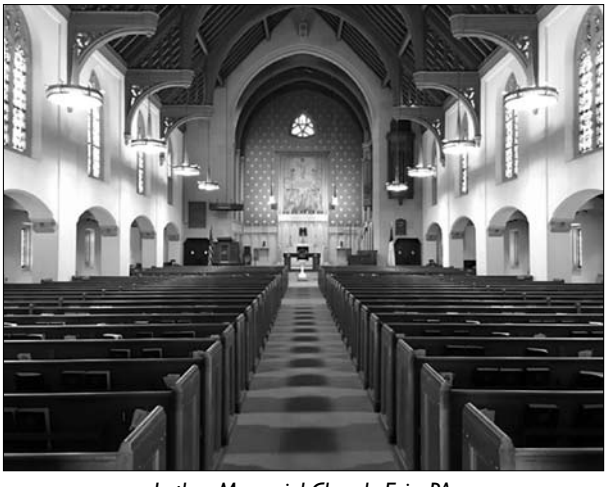


First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, Erie, PA

Rev. Britney L.V. Knight, Associate Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of the Covenant, which is located in downtown Erie, echoes Townsend's sentiments concerning the liability that an old and physically imposing building can pose to a congregation, not merely financially but by effectively silencing their voices during worship. "Some of my own congregants allow the church to speak *for* them," she notes, referring to the impressive, Neo-Gothic landmark dedicated in 1930 they call home. "Most, though," she notes, "know that the building is here to serve *us* and support what *we* do during our services." With undergraduate training in both dance and psychology, Knight is keenly aware of the church's spatial attributes and their emotional effect on visitors of all kinds. "Beautiful spaces change people," she argues, "which is why we're committed as an urban church to opening our doors to everyone." "Presbyterians define worship as the 'Word preached well

and heard, plus the sacraments [of baptism and Communion]'" she says: "Our bell tower can be seen and heard all over the downtown area, "and it calls people who need to be transformed by grace and beauty to join us for services that are designed with great care."

Pastor Bill Coleman of Luther Memorial Church in Erie likewise recognizes the sacramental value of the urban place of worship in the Neo-Gothic style that has served his congregation since 1926. "I'm not at all apologetic about our church when people talk about the popularity of the facilities being built [by independent congregations] outside of town," Coleman insists. "The beauty found in a building like ours is a 'subconscious trigger' of an experience of the holy," he insists. "I think people are longing today for something transcendent," he adds, "and in worship like ours, where Christ's presence resides in the 'Gathered Saints' as we break open the word, share in the meal and are sent forth, that transcendence comes through as much in our surroundings as in our actions."



Luther Memorial Church, Erie, PA

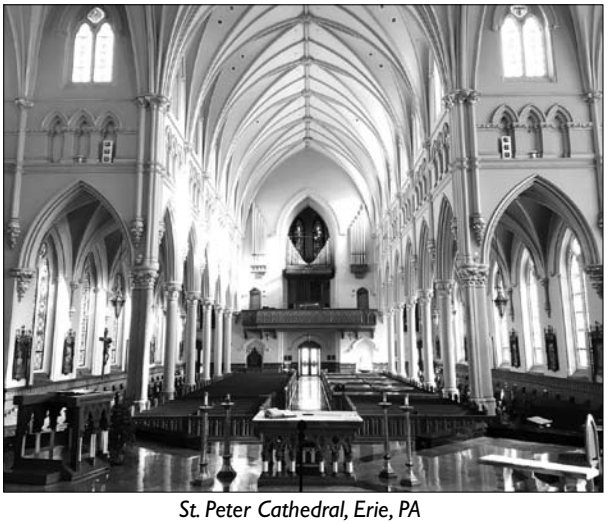
The Very Rev. John P. Downey, too, who served as dean of Erie's Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul from 1987 to 2019, embraces both the downtown location and history of his congregation's building, which, as a "people's church,"[15] he sought to make into a venue for a wide range of cultural and artistic activities. During a series of noontime musical performances open to the public he arranged one recent summer, in fact, Downey himself could be found in the cathedral's narthex dispensing hotdogs and drinks to guests as they proceeded into the nave. "There are the old concepts of 'high' or 'low' church," Downey notes, "but we try to be a '*broad* church' where sacred and 'secular' activities mingle in ways that make the beauty of God's presence very real to people." With the help of his wife, Sharon, an accomplished organist and the cathedral's canon musician, Downey has done much to celebrate the work of

Episcopal Cathedral of St. Paul, Erie, PA (1866)

African-American composer Harry T. Burliegh (1866-1949), a native son of the cathedral parish well-known for his many spirituals,[16] while maintaining through its adult and children's choir programs the tradition of English choral music. On the matter of whether the sights and sounds associated with the place of one's communion with God is of any significance, Downey suggests that "[w]e can say that God is everywhere, but if we don't encounter God *some*where, we may not find God *any*where."

First United Methodist Church, Erie, PA

The "somewhere" of preference for members of Erie's United Methodist Church is a mid-19th century hall-church that provides an acoustical environment supportive of music and the spoken word. Mr. Bruce Gingrich, pastoral musician and organist for the church, expresses little tolerance for what passes as preaching in many Christian circles today and laments the growing popularity of what has been called "7-eleven" music. "That's a church song built of seven words that are repeated eleven times," he explains, "which is nothing like the 'mini sermons' that composers like John and Charles Wesley once delivered in their hymns." Any description by Gingrich of the sanctuary in which he has ministered for twenty years quickly turns to the million-dollar pipe organ manufactured locally[17] that fills the room's forward section and forms a dramatic backdrop for its font, pulpit and table. The immense instrument anchors the presence of Christ residing in the space during a Sunday communion service, which Gingrich describes as a "spiritual, symbolic reality" that transforms the congregation.



St. Peter Cathedral, Erie, PA

The transformative power of the Eucharist is something to which Rev. Michael Ferrick, rector of St. Peter Cathedral, the mother church of the Catholic Diocese of Erie, attests. "I've seen in my seven years as rector here how our parishioners' outreach to the poor and hungry throughout the

city is directly related to what we do at our altar." "Every part of our ministry flows from the Eucharist," Ferrick explains, which is why he, too, makes much of the care and preparation that go into each celebration. Part of this care-taking certainly applies to the 1885, Gothic Revival cathedral building for which he is responsible, one of several hundred Catholic churches throughout the country designed by Brooklyn-based architect Patrick Charles Keeley (1816-96), which is currently in the midst of a multi-million dollar restoration. "The Eucharist must be done beautifully and intentionally — but it's not a magic show," Ferrick insists: "We're not like the people of Jesus' time who were seeking to be magically saved by eating. In scripture, Jesus talks about the act of *believing* before he does that of eating — and it's the decision to *believe* that is the real key to transformation by means of the Eucharist."

Conclusions

If this admittedly limited survey of Christian pastors across denominational boundaries suggests anything, it may simply be that commitment to eucharistic worship in its various forms and interpretations persists today, despite the significant challenges posed to it both from within and without the larger Body of Christ. The pastors cited here may well comprise a generation of ministers to whom time and circumstance have handed a "preservationist" role. More than their predecessors, perhaps, their energies must be spent "holding things together" in their respective churches, "patching things up," and otherwise preserving eucharistic piety and its related artforms, even as changes in both Christian and popular cultures in this country, at least, threaten to diminish them. None seems to underestimate the seriousness of the present dilemma nor to assume that its solution lies in retreating to the past. As a group, instead, they seem to share the attitude articulated by pastor Gregg Townsend, which is that Christians bodies still wed to table rituals they deem salvific must be "invitational." They must embrace the objective value of word and sacrament, sacred space and sound, "focus on what the *Lord* is up to [through them]," and invite those hungry for Christ to eat and drink with them in a way that will never disappoint (John 6:35).

Notes

[1] Gallup poling from 2014 to 2017 determined that only 39% of Catholics in the United States reported attending church on a weekly basis. This is down from an

average of 45% from roughly a decade earlier and some 36% from 1955, when three-quarters of Catholics identified as regular church-goers. (See,https://news.gallup.com/poll/232226/church-attendance-among-catholics-resumes-downward-slide.aspx)

[2] 2015 Data from the Pew Research Center reveal that "Mainline Protestants have declined at a faster rate than any other major Christian group, including Catholics and evangelical Protestants, and as a result also are shrinking as a share of all Protestants and Christians." (See, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/05/18/mainline-protestants-make-up-shrinking-number-of-u-s-adults/)

[3] General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, *This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion* (2004) 9.

[4] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *The Place Where We Worship* (rev.ed., 2010) 6.

[5] Op. cit., 8.

[6] Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Presbyterian Mission, *Directory for Worship* (2016) W-3.0401

[7] The Episcopal Church, *1979 Book of Common Prayer* (Church Publishing, Inc., 2007) 857.

[8] Op. cit., 856.

[9] Op. cit., 859.

[10] *Code of Canon Law*, 1247 (https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG1104/_INDEX.HTM)

[11] Op. cit., 2181.

[12] Op. cit., 2182.

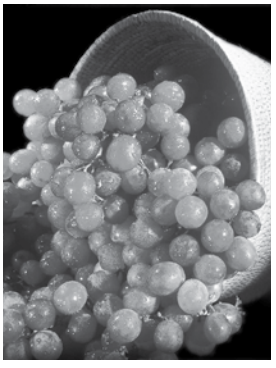
[13] See, *Sacrosanctum concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy) 10 (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html); *Lumen gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church) 11 (http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html).

[14] *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 122.

[15] See the dean's development of the Episcopal cathedral-building tradition in the United States in Downey, J. P., "The Smaller Cathedral in the Episcopal Church: A Place of Loss and Hope" (Anglican Theological Review, 100.4), 785-901

[16] Among Burleigh's better-known works for ecclesiastical use is the hymn, "In Christ There Is No East Or West" (1939), the melody of which is derived from a Negro spiritual.

[17] The instrument was built by Phelps and Associates in 1975, one of several dozen pipe organ manufacturers in Erie that gained the city an international reputation within the industry that persists today. See Fischer, P. E. (2015). *Making Music: The History of the Organ and Piano Industries in Erie, Pennsylvania, 1871-2013*. Erie, PA: Paul E. Fischer.



EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

"My Lord and My God" An Inquiry into Our Personal Prayers During the Consecration

by Jim Brown

What is your response during Mass at the moment of consecration?

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.

At the consecration during the eucharistic celebration of the Mass we witness and participate in the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is *the* mystery of faith that sums up in itself everything that God has done through Christ for our salvation. To most Catholics it is the highpoint of the Mass. For those of us of an age this moment was marked by the ringing of bells.

When I was preparing for my first holy communion in 1953, Sister Mary Magdalene, RSM, instructed me and my fellow students to see this moment as so sacred that we should look at the host raised high (and the cup), then bow our heads, strike our breasts three times and say "My Lord and my God." This was *my* practice for some 60 years.

Whereas there are numerous times during the Mass when we are instructed to make a response to an invocation by the celebrant, (e.g., And with your Spirit.), there is currently no instruction nor common understanding on what to say or do at this moment. This has been a fascination of mine for some time now. In fact, I have asked participants in recent years during workshops that I have conducted on the Eucharist, *"At the elevation of the host and at the elevation of the cup, what do you say and or do?"*

And so, I began an informal research project about five years ago.

Initial Responses

One 60 something stopped me after a workshop I conducted to talk about his experience. When he was preparing for his first holy communion, the religious sister insisted they not look at the host or

cup, but instead bow their heads at the sound of the bells, strike their breasts three times and say the words: "My Lord and my God." Then he added, with a smile on his face, "From that very early age I so wanted to look at Jesus. I did not look down." And every time he went to Mass, he felt that he "disobeyed his first-grade teacher." "And to this day," he chuckled, "I often think of her at that moment of the Mass."

At another workshop, a man I guessed to be in his 70's or older, raised his hand and whispered something I could not hear. I walked over to him and asked if he would repeat what he said. With a look of fright on his face, he said, looking down, "I am not worthy Lord. I am not worthy Lord!" And then looking up at me, he said, "I am not a good person." Somewhat taken aback by what he said, I looked at the people sitting with him who were clearly his adult children. They shook their heads "no!" and mouthed to me, "He's really a good person and a great dad!" I could only hope afterwards that he had heard my message that though the consecration means many things, one very important meaning was that the Mass and especially this transformative moment reflects the tender love of God and the comforting notion that we can spend time in a heart-to-heart intimacy with the risen Lord.

I have asked participants in recent years during workshops that I have conducted on the Eucharist, "At the elevation of the host and at the elevation of the cup, what do you say and or do?"

Another Baby Boomer like myself was taught to say: "I believe Lord, help my unbelief." She feared that if she didn't say those words with total conviction, she would face dire consequences. "I say the same words to this day," she said, quickly adding, "Over the years, the prayer of fear — help my unbelief — was replaced with a prayer of wonder."

Responses of Younger Generations

Over the last year I decided I needed to seek out and hear from people for whom the Second Vatican Council is a footnote in history. So, I asked a number of Millennials (ages 22-37) two questions: *"What were you taught to say and do at the consecration? What do you say and or do?"*

There was one common theme to the first question: "I wasn't taught anything." The answers to the second question varied: "I just shut up and let it be," said one. A primary school teacher responded, "I bow my head the whole time and talk to Jesus, saying 'I love you Lord Jesus.

I praise you Lord Jesus. I thank you Lord Jesus. I surrender all to you Lord Jesus. And please help _____."

A religious education director for a Catholic parish said this: "I try to be reverent, quiet, and open. I mostly want to be respectful of the moment. I don't say or think anything." To the question I asked about what he instructs his teachers to say he added: "I tell them to teach the children about observing a sacred silence at this moment and to simply be respectful of what is taking place."

I also asked a little boy I know – in the presence of his mother – what he said or did when the priest holds up the host and the cup. He looked at me as if I had asked him what caused the dinosaurs to go extinct and said, "I don't say anything."

I also asked a little boy I know — in the presence of his mother — what he said or did when the priest holds up the host and the cup. He had recently received his first communion. When I asked him this question, he looked at me as if I had asked him what caused the dinosaurs to go extinct and said, "I don't say anything." And looking at his mother he asked, "Am I supposed to?" Turning to his mother, a millennial, I asked the same question. She said, "I wasn't taught anything either, but I understand enough to be as reverent as I can at that moment."

At another workshop, a mother (a Generation X-er) of teenagers (who were present with her and her husband) shared with great emotion what she said at the consecration: "I love you Jesus. I love you Jesus. Help me be a good person and especially a good parent." She had tears in her eyes.

Responses of the Clergy

Over the last several years I have asked a number of priests what they teach people to say or do at the consecration. The common response has been a look of "What do you mean?" followed by an answer something to the effect, "I don't teach them anything. I assume they know it is a moment to be silent; to adore Christ; to be present to what's going on."

What I sensed in the varied responses of the priests with whom I talked was — like the young DRE above — that this is one of those few private moments at Mass when each person has her or his own unique response, their own personal encounter with the Lord. They believed that this needs to be respected and appreciated.

Perhaps this is the best answer. However, it does not satisfy me as I strive — as the Second Vatican Council document on the Sacred Liturgy taught — to be a fully active and fruitful participant in the Eucharistic celebration — and with Sister Mary Magdalene's words echoing in my ears, to say or do *something*.

My Response Today

About five years ago something changed for me as I leaned in at that special moment of transformation, and listened intently to the words of the celebrant in the first elevation: "Take this, all of you, and eat of it, for this is my body, which will be given up for you." To this gift of nourishment from God, something new welled up inside me. I responded, *"Thank you Lord. Thank you Lord."* (*Eucharisteo*)

What I sensed in the varied responses of the priests with whom I talked was that this is one of those few private moments at Mass when each person has her or his own unique response, their own personal encounter with the Lord.

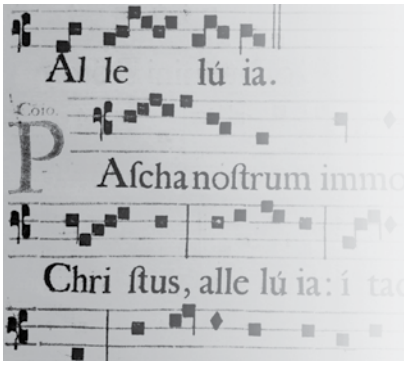
However, the words at the second elevation evokes a different response. For the words change and take on a different meaning — at least for me. The celebrant says as he lifts the cup: "Take this, all of you, and drink from it, for this is the chalice of my blood, the blood of the new and eternal covenant, which will be poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. *Do this in memory of me*."

"Do this in memory of me." I hear in those words the comforting notion that Christ has died for us — for me. *And* . . . if I want to follow Jesus, I must, as he did, die to self, give up my ego, *suffer*, as he did. That's a cup that requires more than a "thank you." I can only do that with Jesus' help or that of the Holy Spirit, as well as the help and support of the community with whom I am worshipping. So now at *those* words I bow my head, and silently mouth *"only with your help Lord can I do this*

in memory of you . . . be a better person: husband, father, grandfather, friend, neighbor, citizen, Christian disciple."

I confess that in the anecdotal research I did, I mostly focused on people for whom the Mass is a special moment in their week and in their spiritual lives. The common denominator though, whether the person sits in reverent silence, or strikes their breast, or says "My Lord and my God," or offers a long prayer, is that the transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a sacred moment, one to engage in — lean into if you will — with a simple respect and awe for what is taking place.

And what about you? As you heighten your awareness about this awe-inspiring moment of transformation during the Eucharist, what do you say or do — or teach others to say or do?



PASTORAL LITURGY

The Revised *Order of Baptism of Children* – Part 4

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

WE CONTINUE OUR PASTORAL COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND EDITION OF THE *ORDER of Baptism of Children* (OBC), implemented last year on the Feast of the Presentation of the LORD (February 2). We are now in Chapter IV of our review, which addresses a catechist presiding at the liturgy because there is no priest or deacon available.

Paragraph 132 begins the catechist's ritual with "a suitable psalm or hymn" (or song). As in the previous chapters of OBC, there is no "sign of the cross" in the rubrics. This is only written in the appendix version, when OBC is celebrated within Mass. Again, this is a curious omission, since the sign of the cross has been added to many revised rituals since *Liturgicum authenticum*. For those formed before the second edition, there was no signing due to the fact that scholars said that the important piece was the signing of the child for the first time by the presider, parents, and godparents. In some pastoral situations and cultures, it's also customary for all present to be able to "bless" or make the sign of the cross on the child during this introductory piece. The rest of paragraph 132 of the "rite of receiving the children" is the same for a catechist as it is for a cleric.

OBC repeats, as in the previous chapters, the Liturgy of the Word. Following, and of note, there is no "prayer of exorcism or anointing before baptism with the oil of catechumens." Anointing is a part of the role of the clergy. During the "celebration of baptism" and the "blessing of water…" the catechist is able to bless the water with a special invocation prayer at OBC 142. This blessing has the acclamation recommended, as in previous chapters, "Blessed be God," and is helpful for the active participation of the people. The catechist does not actually touch the water, but rather, in the last paragraph of the blessing says: "Be pleased now to bless this water, by which your servants are to be baptized, for you have called them to this cleansing water of rebirth in the faith of the Church, that they may have eternal life."

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 & Albuquerque, vocation minister, and a diocesan director of liturgy. His works have been in numerous publications, including LTP. For questions or workshops he could do for your parish, contact him at jtlanesss@gmail.com or (440) 442-3410.

One of the features of the offices of deacon, presbyter, and bishop is the role of blessing. However, as it has been pointed out by others, non-clerics may bless, such as in the beginning of this ritual or before putting children to bed. It's common in many cultures to bless one another before getting into a vehicle and other moments where people call upon God's assistance. Perhaps in certain cultures and pastoral situations, catechists would naturally sign the water. Canonists would likely say, "What's not specifically forbidden in a ritual, even in the OBC, is allowed."

If the water in the font is previously blessed, the catechist has a unique prayer at OBC 143, briefer than the prayers used by bishops, priests and deacons during the ritual and also found in the appendix. The ritual then continues as in previous chapters with the renunciation of sin, profession of faith, and baptismal formula.

In the "explanatory notes" the anointing with sacred chrism is omitted, due to the different role of the catechist. The prayer from the previous chapter is still recited, as OBC 151 says "on behalf of all the baptized." Others may argue that this text should be omitted if there is no anointing because anointing is normally accompanied by the words. The "ephphatha" is omitted as well. However, the acknowledgement and celebration of the white garment and handing on of a lighted candle is done.

The catechist's OBC ritual ends with the "LORD'S prayer" and a briefer "blessing and dismissal." The parents of the child are not blessed as when a cleric presides. And curiously, as in the previous chapters, in OBC 165 there is the rubric to have the baptized infants go to the altar of the Blessed Virgin Mary, if this is the custom in your area. Singing the magnificat is noted within the rubric of this optional custom.

Chapter V is a brief chapter. It is for those in danger of death when there is no cleric available to baptize. We hear of nurses and doctors performing emergency baptisms in hospitals. It would be a good idea to have OBC available to the health care professionals and pastoral care offices to assist them in the important ministry of an emergency baptism. Parents and godparents (or proxies when the chosen godparents are not available — as OBC 164 reminds us there should be one or two witnesses present) participate in this short ritual if they are present. Sadly, it is often the case that parents are not present. However, the health professionals or pastoral care ministers have

been informed of the parents' wishes for an emergency baptism.

The emergency ritual begins with the "prayer of the faithful." There is a special prayer at the end of the prayer of the faithful, if there is available time. Also, the profession of faith is made, with a question and answer form, or if all know the apostles' creed, this may be recited (159). Then the child is baptized with other rites omitted (161). There is a special prayer in situations where the pastoral care department of a hospital has a white garment to place on the child (161). In light of this, it would be helpful if local parishes could provide the white garments for any nearby health institution's emergency baptism. These often become very meaningful to the family members. The ritual then concludes with the LORD'S prayer.

With the increase of lay leaders in parishes, it serves us well to give proper catechesis and review of OBC to assist in their liturgical leadership and ministry. I hope that this column is shared with lay leaders to further guide their important ministry.

Organizing for January/February 2021

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

A few regular celebrations during these months:

- **Sunday, January 3:** Solemnity of the Epiphany. See CB 240 and Blessing of a Household on Epiphany (CHBP) –
  Many parishes offer blessed chalk and holy water for families to bless their home.
- **Monday, January 4:** Memorial of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, religious (American saint of Catholic schools)
- **Tuesday, January 5:** Memorial of Saint John Neumann, bishop
- **Wednesday, January 6:** Optional Memorial of Saint André Bessette, religious of the Congregation of the Holy Cross
- **Thursday, January 7**: Optional Memorial of Raymond of Peñafort, presbyter and religious
- **Sunday, January 10:** Feast of the Baptism of the LORD – Celebrate infant baptisms with the new OBC (See OBC 29).
- **Monday, January 18:** Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Prayer (CHBP) – This is good opportunity to pray for an end to the sin of racism. See Network, USCCB.ORG, or other websites for

prayer suggestions, or ask this author for a Taizé Eucharistic holy hour. The "Octave for Christian Unity" (January 18–25), also begins this day.

- **Friday, January 22**: Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children (USA)
- **Saturday, January 23**: Optional Memorial of Saint Vincent, deacon and martyr and Saint Marianne Cope, virgin and religious
- **Sunday, January 24**: The new Sunday for the Word of God (begun in 2020 from *Aperuit illis*) as an opportunity to reflect on how we are fed at the table of the Word of God.
- **Monday, January 25:** Feast of Conversion of Saint Paul (end of the Octave for Christian Unity)
- **Tuesday, January 26:** Feast of Saints Timothy and Titus, apostles
- **Wednesday, January 28:** Memorial of Saint Thomas Aquinas, presbyter and doctor (Catholic school patron)
- **Sunday, January 31:** Catholic Schools Week begins
- **Tuesday, February 2:** Feast of the Presentation of the LORD – Begin in a special location, either at the church entrance or baptismal font. This one of three unique occasions where the people process with the celebrant at a eucharistic liturgy (CB 241-248). See also Receiving Blessed Candles at Home in CHBP.
- **Wednesday February 3:** Optional Memorial of Saint Blase with Blessing of Throats (BB 1622-1655) – This may not be done this year or done differently due to COVID concerns.
- **Friday, February 5**: Baptism of Saint Peter Julian Eymard
- **Monday, February 8**: Optional Memorial of Saint Josephine Bakhita, Virgin
- **Thursday, February 11:** Optional Memorial of Our Lady of Lourdes (1858); Also World Day of the Sick – Consider these options: Anointing of the Sick (PCS 97-160), Blessing of Elderly People Confined to Homes (BB 344-375), Visits to the Sick (PCS 54-70), Communion of the Sick (PCS 54-70), Prayers during sickness (CHBP).
- **Monday, February 15:** Presidents' Day Prayer – See CHBP.
- **Wednesday, February 17:** Ash Wednesday (CB 253-259) – See Blessing and Distribution of Ashes (BB 1656-1678) and Blessing a Place of Prayer (CHBP).
- **Sunday, February 21:** First Sunday of Lent – See Litany of Saints/Penitential Gathering Procession (CB 261), Rite

of Sending (RCIA 106 - USA), Diocesan Rite of Election (RCIA 118-137), Blessing of Lenten Disciplines: Fasting and Almsgiving (CHBP).

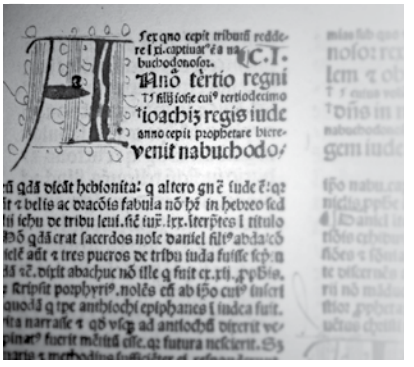
- **Sunday, February 28:** Second Sunday of Lent – See Penitential Rite for the Candidates (RCIA 464f).

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

- Wednesday, January 6: André Bessette
- Friday, January 22: Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- Saturday, January 23: Marianne Cope
- Monday, February 8: Josephine Bakhita 

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 A, B, C, D, and E are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during January and February.



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Lisa Frey, D.Min.

Lisa Frey has served in ministry at the Church of the Resurrection in Solon, Ohio since 1991. In addition to shared pastoral care, faith formation, and administration, her areas of responsibility include social justice, outreach, wellness and bereavement. She earned a Master of Arts in Theology at St. Mary Seminary in Wickliffe, Ohio and a Doctor of Ministry in Homiletics at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St. Louis.

January 1, 2021
Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God / New Year's Day

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

It's no longer the year 2020. For some, that might be the greatest blessing of all on this first day of January. We might try to wipe away the loss and grief of an entire year in the turn of a calendar page and hope for a better future under God's protection and providence.

What is the significance, for our feast today and for our future, of the Aaronic blessing in the reading from Numbers? The late Irish poet and priest John O'Donohue, in the book *To Bless the Space Between Us* (2008), notes that blessing is not a sentiment nor a question, but a kind of calling out from the depths of the human heart, pleading with the divine heart. In our present condition, that sense of urgency and energy might well characterize the tone of the first reading and psalm response on this New Year's Day.

A bedraggled and weary people who had seen enslavement then liberation then desert thirst is blessed, just as they are and right where they are. Aaron, the priest-as-mediator, names what they hardly dare to hope: that they are indeed God's covenanted people and a light to the nations, in spite of the chaos and suffering they have endured. *And* as their story is pondered and passed down through the generations, all those who hear may also know the blessing.

In essence, this is a blessing of belonging. Initiated for the covenanted people, and expanded, as Paul notes in the letter to the Galatians, to each of us in the new covenant through Christ. We are not rejected;

we are not losers or suckers. We are loved, we are accepted. Each of us, in spite of the chaos and suffering of our lives, is invited to know this blessing of belonging.

In my family every year on our birthdays we observe a unique ritual where my mother tells each of us six kids the story of how we were born. The circumstances of the day, the weather, who drove her to the hospital, whether my dad made it in time for the delivery, whether it was an easy or difficult labor. And she always ends with some expression of relief, delight or gratitude at the safe delivery of this precious new child. I don't know about my siblings, but I never tire of hearing the story. Because at some very deep level it's a story that reminds me and reassures me that I am beloved and that I belong. What a powerful protection and healing balm is this blessed assurance when chaos and suffering run rampant. How we long for it now.

I imagine Mary telling the story of Jesus' birth to him each year: the difficult circumstances of their travel and lodging, of his delivery, the astonishing visits by strangers and angels, and of shepherds foretelling his destiny. I imagine the stories and memories that his mother pondered and treasured and then passed on to her child. He was beloved and he belonged. No wonder he grew up to regard those he encountered as sisters and brothers, mothers and fathers, daughters and sons in the new kinship of a beloved community. No wonder he grew up to love and accept especially those who were lost, rejected, and weary.

How we long for a reminder that we are indeed members of a beloved community. O'Donohue offers us this blessing: "May you learn to see yourself with the same delight, pride, and expectation with which God sees you in every moment" (112). On this first day of a new year we might wonder how this year will be different. Let it be different from its very beginning with our offering a blessing of peace, of belonging, of hope to our day and to our world.

January 3, 2021
The Epiphany of the Lord

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

An early ministerial experience of mine involved making connections

between our parish volunteers and our sister parish in the city, the Church of the Epiphany. The primary means of connecting involved preparing and serving a hot meal there one Saturday afternoon a month. Volunteer energy for the project had a kind of cyclical habit of strengthening and weakening, and at that moment, it was waning badly. One of the coordinators complained, "You know, we knock ourselves out and nobody says 'thank you;' they crab that the lemonade is too watered down or the person in front got more meat. They trash the room where we serve, the kitchen is never clean for us, the serving utensils are locked up, and we have to beg for salt packets." The volunteer burnout was contagious, and we were fearful we might need to suspend our parish commitment to the ministry. It was clearly time for new people and new energy.

I took the Webster's Dictionary approach, and typed up a poster that looked something like this:

> **e·piph·a·ny** (i pif´ə nē), *n., pl.* **-nies. 1.** an appearance or manifestation. **2.** a sudden, intuitive perception of or insight into reality or the essential meaning of something, often initiated by some simple, commonplace occurrence.

The poster invited interested people to "come and see" the next hot meal, then consider working on an existing team or forming a new team. Something in the low-tech approach caught their attention. Perhaps it was spelling out the meaning of the word that somehow gave new dignity to a tired brick building and scuffed tile floors. Perhaps there was something wonderful to discover in an old familiar setting.

More than providing from our suburban abundance like Lady Bounty to the poorer folk, my "epiphany dream," as I called it, was that we might go so far as to discover ourselves in mutual relationship. We could start by looking for the gift that our neighbors in the city had for us. Those to whom we traveled afar, whom we sought out to offer our shining gifts, could it be that they were just waiting for us to arrive? Could we find ourselves on the receiving end of untold riches, if only we were open?

It's more than twenty-five years later, and while the parish named Epiphany was closed, the hot meal teams are still (with energy that waxes and wanes) providing monthly meals and making connections

at the community center that took its place. It seems that in the bigger picture, however, we are just as desperate for an epiphany. Racial injustice, economic disparity, unequal access to resources as basic as food, water, and housing trouble us still, perhaps more than ever. Polarizing voices divide us, lead us to hunker down into like-minded camps and keep us from seeing past the edge of our own shrinking horizons. Herod was so persuasive, the gospel narrates, that "all Jerusalem" was troubled, afraid, suspicious along with him. We can't escape the voice of Herod today — still actively, powerfully spreading mistrust, angrily lashing out at those who think differently, love differently, vote differently.

Yes, we need an epiphany that wakes us up and brings out once again the light that is in us so that we can recognize the goodness in the "other." We need to see, and to become, radiant light for the lost and weary in these days so strongly marked by fear and gloom.

We would do well to travel out from our comfort zones this year to search for the gift of "insight into the reality or the essential meaning" of who we are as a Church, as a nation, as a human family. It may require a journey of twenty miles into the city, or fifteen hundred miles to the southern border, or ten steps to our neighbor's side yard. Untold riches are awaiting. Let's follow the star.

January 10, 2021
The Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 55:1-11; Isaiah 12:2-3, 4bcd, 5-6; 1 John 5:1-9; Mark 1:7-11

Baptismal fonts were emptied in preparation for Lent last year and it seems we have been dying of thirst ever since. The litany of causes does not quit: A global pandemic that is decimating parish involvement and whose end is not clearly in sight. Demonstrations against racial injustice that call into question the sincerity of the Church to repent of our own sins of white preference and privilege. Losses of loved ones, losses of all kinds, with no opportunity for ritual or means for closure. We've seen wildfires out of control, storms and flooding. We hear about the extinction of species at rates of 150 per day, while some still question climate change.

A colleague remarked the other day that most of us are probably walking around with low-grade depression. I do know this: our spirits are parched. In 2008 the writer and Benedictine oblate Kathleen Norris penned a book with the title *Acedia & Me*. Acedia is an uncommon word with venerable roots in monastic spirituality. We might understand it better when we name it "indifference," just not caring any more. The list of catastrophes above can bring us there, numb. The bombardment of media calls us to care, demands that we care, but the shear unceasing volume renders us impervious to caring.

In this bleak midwinter of season and of spirit, we come to this feast of the baptism of Jesus. Meeting us here are scriptures abounding with images of water: life-giving, free, efficacious, and empowering water.

The joyful confidence bubbling up from Isaiah calls up memories of baptismal rituals at the eucharistic liturgy. The young parents and godparents in their Sunday best bring the little one carefully and with excitement to the worship space. They greet family and friends and half comprehend the last-minute instructions: this is what you say, this is when you move. The child is lifted up from the waters in the font to joyful songs of Alleluia! Alleluia! Wrapped in white and borne like royalty in the parent's arms they are processed around the worship space, surrounded by long applause and beaming faces. The congregation welcomes this beloved daughter or son, new member of the Church, new member of us all. And we grasp in the moment once again that we are all beloved daughters and sons, members of the body of Christ and of each other.

To know ourselves, really know ourselves, as beloved and worthy might be the project of our lifetime. There are so many voices that try to convince us otherwise, try to sap our spirits and leave us indifferent to what really matters. My annual retreat almost always begins with the director reminding me of the Ignatian invitation to "behold God beholding you and smiling." We forget so quickly what that gaze looks like and feels like. We need frequent reminders. Inspiration might come from art or nature. Perhaps it comes in prayer, in reading the scriptures, in engaging the rituals of the Church. Perhaps we can find the lesson and step back on the path to healing, today.

The responsorial canticle from Isaiah offers images that lift the spirit in joy. The passage from first John is a strong staff of confidence and courage to lean on in our weariness. And in an offbeat, marginal ritual

far from the center of religious tradition, John baptizes Jesus in the Jordan. Tearing open the heavens, a relationship of powerful love is birthed.

What is the empowering message for us in this feast? Certainly, we have trials, losses, and all sorts of small deaths along the way of life. Knowing ourselves as beloved, accepting the God-given gifts of our own goodness, skills, and abilities more than quenches our thirst. It aligns us and sets us in right relationship so that we too can live fully and achieve the end for which we are sent. The infant at baptism knows itself as beloved, so shall we.

January 17, 2021
Second Sunday of Ordinary Time

1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19; Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 6:13c-15a, 17-20; John 1:35-42

I still have the bookmark from my high school senior retreat tucked in my student Bible. Calligraphed in black and purple is the biblical phrase, "Speak Lord, your servant is listening." We senior girls developed a strong connection to the young Samuel. We stayed awake through the night of our retreat. In fact, our director scolded us to go back to sleep. I remember those heady days, longing to hear God's call with all the emotional fervor and tireless energy of teenagers.

Each of the scriptures for this Second Sunday in Ordinary Time linger in our memory. How long ago did we learn the musical settings of Psalm 40 by heart? "Here I am, Lord, here I am, I come to do your will." How often were we lectured that our angst-filled adolescent bodies are "temple[s] of the Holy Spirit"? How many of our vocation retreats took their theme from the invitation of Jesus to "come and see"?

The risk with these readings is to idle in nostalgic reflection on the days of our youth. The temptation is strong to instruct our own spirits and those in our assemblies to "Go back to sleep." It's comfortable there, after all. Wrestle with pressing issues of social justice? Critique a culture of over-consumption? Dissent from Church practices that marginalize because of race, gender and sexual orientation? Our faith assures us that God is still speaking. The question is, do we want to

wake from our slumber to listen and respond?

One hot summer Saturday last year, I drove to the local library and stood — at a safe social distance — with about two hundred people waiting for instructions on the route for a march for racial justice. It was a "come and see" experience for me, an introvert with a strong preference to avoid conflict at all costs. I was surprised to notice the mayor and other City Hall staff members as well as police, walking side by side with organizers who stopped the march at a few points for speakers and chants. We sang and clapped and laid down on the sidewalk for eight minutes and fifteen seconds of silence, feeling the hot, gritty concrete, and contemplating the last moments in the life of George Floyd.

We are invited not just in our youth, but over and over again through our lives, to listen for the voice of God, to respond to the question, "What are you looking for?" I think I'm still looking for the presence of God in my life. I'm still discerning God's will for me in the midst of today's circumstances. I'm still learning about history and the privilege that comes with my race, education, and socio-economic level. I am still a novice following the path of the Teacher.

In her book *Songs of the Heart: Reflections on the Psalms* (Twenty-Third Publications, 2019) Sister Joan Chittister, OSB tells this story about how it feels these days, still searching for the path of the Teacher.

> Once there was a student who was apprenticed to a teacher for many years. And when the teacher felt he was going to die he wanted to make even his death a lesson. That night, the teacher took a torch, called his student, and set off with her through the forest. When they reached the middle of the dark woods, the teacher extinguished the torch, without explanation. "What is the matter?" asked the student. "The torch has gone out," the teacher answered, and walked on. "But," shouted the student, "will you leave me here in the dark?""No! I will not leave you in the dark," returned the teacher's voice from the surrounding blackness. "I will leave you searching for the light!"

We pray that the invitation to "come and see" will always allure us onto

new paths towards the horizons of our understanding, towards new insights into the depth and breadth of who and what God loves. Here I am, I come to do your will.

January 24, 2021
Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Psalm 25:4-9; 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Mark 1:14-20

August 28 last year was the fifty-seventh anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech at the 1963 march on Washington. More than two hundred thousand people gathered in DC for the anniversary. One activist walked seven hundred-fifty miles from Milwaukee. Another said, "I hope my son doesn't have to be out here in another fifty years protesting the same thing."

On this Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Jonah's call for change is met with an immediate response of repentance in Nineveh. Paul pressures the Corinthian community that time is running out. Jesus' call of the disciples is also met with an immediate response in the gospel narrative. We might protest at all this breathless activity, "What's the rush?" And then we remember the comment from the activist at the anniversary of the March on Washington, "I hope my son doesn't have to be out here in another fifty years."

John Shea, in his series *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers*, Year B*, Eating with the Bridegroom*, says this about the rapid-paced call and response of the disciples: "Real life accounts would demand conversation, argument, hand wringing, and that greatest of human pastimes — the weighing of options" (45). Over this last year, and probably for decades before that, I have been invited to listen to experts on racial justice. I have been asked to form dialogue groups on white privilege and the role of the Church. I have gotten notices of workshops on becoming allies to those on the margins of our nation's economic, educational, justice, and health care systems. We keep covering the same ground. Why?

It appears that most of us in positions of privilege are as reluctant as Jonah, the reluctant prophet, to move off of square one. Perhaps the crew at their fishing nets did leave their way of life the moment they

accepted the invitation from Jesus, but us? If we keep talking, keep attending workshops, keep weighing our options, maybe we won't ever have to actually make a change.

But God is as persistent with us now as in the days of Jonah. We are met with signs as unmistakable as pandemic, flood, and fire to remind us that "the world in its present form is passing away." And if we are paying attention, we are also given signs of the good, of inspiring responses to inclusion, and care for the vulnerable. Signs that the "present form" of hatred and fear is also passing away.

The alliance of interfaith leaders in my community put the word out for an evening to pray for racial justice at the city gazebo last summer. Looking out at the sizeable crowd, the diversity of age and race was great cause for hope. And for three years prior to the pandemic, a group of Turkish American women came to our parish hall every month to teach us how to make delicious ethnic dishes and shared customs of fashion and family life from their Muslim culture. We organized shared Iftar dinners during the month of Ramadan. One person at a time, one program at a time, we built relationships of mutual respect and trust.

Moving to the edges of our horizon of understanding, and traveling beyond, is never without resistance. Few of us respond so simply and quickly as the disciples to leaving behind what we know and love. But respond we must. The reign of God will not take a pause until we are all in, one family of humanity, together.

January 31, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Deuteronomy 18:15-20; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Mark 1:21-28

How is it that Jesus teaches with authority, while the teaching authorities miss the mark? The people who witness the event in the synagogue recounted in Mark's gospel passage today are amazed at the power and the force of conviction that comes from this nobody… who, by the end of the story, is clearly becoming a somebody.

We want to ask in sympathy, what was the matter with the scribes, poor things? Is this event in fact, a lesson in what it means to teach

with the authority of charism, versus the authority of office? Charism, the gift that comes from the Spirit of God, delivers an authority the likes of which the passage from Deuteronomy describes: "I will raise up for them a prophet from their own kin, and I will put my words into his mouth…." Night and day difference between that legitimating source and the authority one is afforded just by walking through the office door with the shiny new nameplate, isn't it?

Jesus exercises the powerful charisms of teaching and healing in the synagogue on the Sabbath. In the narrative we hear today, his authority is well-regarded, but just as often the "prophet raised from among their own kin" is rejected because, after all, he is only "the carpenter's son" from a backwater town. He has no faculty to preach from a religious office, no license to practice from the medical board.

Women in the Church know painfully well the rejection of our charisms. From the earliest centuries of its existence, the Church has wielded the force of its authority to deny women a role in its official preaching ministry. But the Spirit finds ways to escape the confines of regulations and resists a dividing opposition between charism and office. And so, women who experience the call to preach claim other legitimating sources of authority to support our vocation. Historically, women claimed mystical visions or other types of intimate experience with God. They called it testimony or prophecy, conversion or teaching, writing or even singing. In every case though the authority of office was denied them, the authority which flows from openness to the Holy Spirit impelled them. However we name it, women's preaching is legitimated when it is born out of our baptismal call and accepted with understanding by those who encounter us.

In terms of reception, the Church or an individual preacher only has as much authority as those who encounter their message are willing to give it. What was it that got the Capernaum folk excited enough to spread the news of Jesus far and wide? Perhaps in part it was that Jesus' teaching was his own, not merely parroting teachers of the past. Anyone can look up what the experts have to say… but we claim authorship for our own message when we trust the validity of our experience and the ability to speak of it.

And perhaps what stirred their spirits was the encounter with the charismatic person, the Spirit-filled Jesus. John Shea describes Jesus as not a philosopher or conveyor of information but an "interpersonal

event" who dialogues with people of varying levels of openness to receive him. "He is an encounter… that is bent on opening whomever he meets to the indwelling Spirit" (*Eating with the Bridegroom,* 6). In the synagogue encounter of today's gospel, Jesus liberates minds, bodies, and hearts, not by conveying information about freedom, but by engaging with people in such a way as to free them from all that kept them bound. In our encounters, wherever they take place, we are called to do the same.

February 7, 2021
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Job 7:1-4, 6-7; Psalm 147:1-6; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19, 22-23; Mark 1:29-39

"Dear Job," I want to advise, "there's an app for that." There's a self-help blog you can subscribe to. After all, isn't that what so many of us do during tough times? Last September's New York Times carried a story about the plethora of advertisements targeting peace of mind in the midst of pandemic, racial unrest, unemployment, home schooling, and other major stressors in our lives ("In Hard Times, A Barrage of Ads Promises Peace of Mind," Tiffany Hsu, September 1, 2020). An ad for a subscription wine service says, "We're going to need a lot of wine this year." A Coors Light commercial offers, "If history has taught us anything, it's that we can get through anything — and that beer sometimes helps." There are gummy chewables for stress relief and soft toy animals for comforting kids. There are meditation apps that feature music or sounds from nature or works of art to help settle our minds. There are public service messages about the impact of isolation on mental health and agencies that offer counseling online, over the phone and via text-messaging.

We are going through tough times, and I for one am grateful to avail myself of a few of the coping methods above. I am also grateful for every moment that I am awakened to the presence of God in my life, through prayer, friends, and walks with my dogs down to the lake. As Job comes to realize, as Simon's mother-in-law experiences, the presence of God is mysterious and powerful, bringing healing and restoration. Meditation app and glass of wine yes, but there also comes a time to notice the bigger picture. We need the providence

of God, and we are surrounded by it. The question is, can we keep our wits about us, stay alert in the midst of the whirlwind to recognize that God is with us even in our darkest days?

Paula D'Arcy, author and former psychotherapist, spoke about her book *Waking Up to This Day*. "One thing I know," she said, "you can live your life from birth to death, and never really have awakened." It's very different to just "live life" than to really awaken to the story of our life. We see that in the image of Jesus grasping Peter's mother-in-law by the hand, helping her up, in a sense, helping her to wake up to her life. She reclaims it fully, and then comes along a whole tsunami of people who awaken to the presence of the divine in their midst, right in their back yard.

D'Arcy observes that we tend to split God from our daily life, as though there is a realm of the sacred that is somehow separate from the ordinary. As it was dawning on us that the Covid-19 pandemic was going to profoundly impact life worldwide for an extended period of time, some began to ask, "what is the lesson for us in this?" If there is no return to "the way it used to be," then how do we want to live differently, as individuals, as a Church, as a human community? What is our "new normal?"

The lesson may well begin with the acknowledgement that "God comes to us disguised as our lives," as D'Arcy is often quoted. That, in the heart of our day to day, in our interactions with people, in the way we develop compassion for the most vulnerable among us and the most vulnerable parts of our own selves, that we begin to discover again the God who dwells with us.

February 14, 2021
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leviticus 13:1-2, 44-46; Psalm 32:1-2, 5, 11; 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1; Mark 1:40-45

When the 56-year old schoolteacher was diagnosed with the novel coronavirus he wanted the doctors and hospital staff to throw everything — experimental treatments and more — at him to cure the effects of the virus. His students and his family were depending on him.

When the 56-year old attorney got the news of her young adult son's advanced cancer diagnosis, she stepped in to help him through hospital stays and the whirlwind of tests and treatments. She helped him end his employment and moved him back home with her. His cancer was not curable. But he was depending on his mother for healing.

The scriptures today offer us an opportunity to explore the distinction between curing (restoring our bodies to their former state of health) and healing.

The spiritual teacher and psychologist Ram Dass experienced a near-fatal stroke. Some years later he wrote: "Healing uses what is present to move us more deeply to soul awareness. [A]lthough I have not been cured of the effects of my stroke, I have certainly undergone profound healings of mind and heart" (*Still Here: Embracing Aging, Changing, and Dying*, [NY: Riverhead Books, 2007] 67).

The mother of the young man with cancer told me how independent her son had been, moving away and starting a life very separate from hers, and how all that changed so dramatically. In the days of his terminal illness she rediscovered how precious his life was to her from its very beginning and became even more so in the midst of such struggle and sadness. She became vibrantly aware of the gift of every moment she had with him. She opened to the deep "soul awareness" Ram Dass writes of. She and her son both experienced profound healing in the midst of his terrible and terminal illness.

The excerpt we hear from Leviticus may not sound like a recipe for compassion. The entirety of Chapter 13 gives detailed instruction for examining and removing a contagious person from the community. Interesting that the initial diagnosis involves a fourteen-day quarantine, identical to what's required in the contemporary pandemic. A year ago, we may have rendered judgment at the instruction to isolate the contagious person. Now we understand the need for such extreme measures. Sending the leper outside the camp is a sensible move for the protection of the community.

But the stigma that attaches itself to a sick person, a stigma born of fear or intolerance that renders someone less than human and less than worthy of our compassion — that stigma needs healing. The contagious person is put outside the community, but as the gospel

narrative makes clear, the person is not alienated from the presence of God. Jesus stretches out his hand and touches the leper, who is cured and restored to the community. In an ironic twist, by publicizing the cure, the leper renders Jesus an outcast, sends Jesus "outside in deserted places." Where, no doubt, more outcasts are to be found.

On this Valentine's Day we might consider how wide is the circle of our compassion. Yes, it is a day for the young and in love, but perhaps we can stretch ourselves to reach out to the isolated and unlovely in nursing homes, detention centers, soup kitchens or homeless shelters. There may be no cure to restore the body to a former state of health, there may be no way to restore homes and families. But what healing might we be able to offer in our gestures of compassionate outreach? There is profound healing in moving ourselves and others to that deep "soul awareness" that is the love of God.

February 21, 2021
First Sunday of Lent

Genesis 9:8-15; Ps 25:4-9; 1 Peter 3:18-22; Mark 1:12-15

On this First Sunday in Lent, we stand with Jesus at the threshold between his baptism (Mk 1:9-11) and his public ministry (Mk 1:14-15). The desert serves as the gateway between the two. As John Shea notes in *Eating with the Bridegroom*, Jesus' baptism isn't followed by photos and a fête but a sojourn in the wilderness with wild beasts and winged messengers. Glossing over the desert (just two verses, after all) risks minimizing the critical tasks of "leaving and learning," as Richard Rohr describes liminal, or threshold time.

In the middle of a worldwide pandemic, we have been driven into a reality we would never have chosen. For most of us, it feels a lot like a desert time of testing and conflict. Mark's desert is where "Satan" dwells, not just a convenient character to further the gospel narrative, but a powerful symbol of division and alienation. "Satan is the inner, invisible energy of people, groups, and social and political structures that inflict suffering on people" (Shea, 80). What we are facing in today's wilderness is not so much the suffering caused by a virus, as painful as that is, but the cataclysmic suffering perpetuated by

political, religious, and economic systems that alienate us from God, from the earth, and from one another.

Jesus was driven into the desert by the Spirit to contend with forces of division and alienation. Who is the victor at the end of forty days? The story doesn't give us a scorecard tally, but we sense the power of darkness evident in verse 14: "After John had been arrested…." Jesus walks out of the desert right into the darkness and says, "This is the time of fulfillment" (v. 15). The fulfillment of what? We could be forgiven if we took his words to mean that any hope of justice, peace, and reconciliation is gone. It appears, after all, that Herod has the upper hand. But no, Jesus is speaking of the fulfillment of God's realm, of union with divine love. He is the incarnation of that realm and offers it to us. It is "at hand." It awaits our reception when we can turn away from division and turn towards one another in love.

On this First Sunday in Lent we are standing at the threshold between the promise of the realm of God and its fulfillment in our lives. We are invited to leave behind what we were sure of: our privilege and status owing to our race, education, social and economic caste. The Spirit has driven us to the threshold of the desert now. What are we learning here in this wilderness of uncertainty?

Economist John Perkins writes in *Yes Magazine* ("Out With Predatory Capitalism, In With a 'Life Economy'," September 16, 2020) that we are learning that the heart-wrenching events of our day are offering us an opportunity to do business differently. We have a choice either to perpetuate a system of predatory capitalism, what he calls a "death economy," or to confront our fear of change in favor of a "living economy" that regenerates damaged environments and systems. We are at a critical threshold of awareness of melting icecaps, racial and economic inequality, extinction of species, polemics in our political and social spheres, not to mention a global pandemic. "We will either change our ideas, values, and actions and accept new ways of relating to other people, resources, countries, governments, and cultures, or we will propel ourselves into extinction," Perkins writes. Pope John Paul II has similarly challenged economies that don't prioritize the human person and Pope Francis issues warnings about our unhealthy relationships with the earth and its inhabitants.

This is our contemporary sojourn into the wilderness to wrestle with demons and receive the sustenance of angels. This is the offer of good

news, and we can "repent and believe" it, or continue in fear to reject it. This liminal moment is about systemic change, yes, and for each of us, about inner transition from living at the surface to the deep levels of the soul.

February 28, 2021
Second Sunday of Lent

Genesis 22:1-2, 9a, 10-13, 15-18; Psalm 116:10, 15, 16-19; Romans 8:31b-34; **Mark 9:2-10**

Is the *Akedah*, the binding of Isaac, a story about deep unquestioning faith? Is it a story that repudiates child sacrifice? Is Abraham a hero? Like the disciples coming down from Mount Tabor, I am asking questions. Perhaps the first should be, "Where is Sarah?" The action in Genesis 22:1-18 involves Abraham, Isaac, a couple of servants, and God, of course. But Sarah is neither seen nor heard in this near-death of her only son.

What God asks of Abraham is torturous. The process of sacrifice involves not only binding and killing Isaac with the knife, but then completely immolating his body with fire. What is Abraham thinking as they walk for three days, as Isaac questions him when he sees they have brought no animal for sacrifice? We only have Abraham's words. Three times in the story he replies, "Here I am" when his name is called; and to Isaac's question he responds, "God will provide." Is this obedience or evasion?

The sequence of events plays out: the altar is built, the wood is laid, the boy is bound and laid on the wood, the knife is drawn. Then the voice comes, "Do not lay your hand on the boy…for now I know that you fear God." Another question: is it not a bit too late for, "Do not lay your hand on the boy"? How does a man on death row respond whose pant legs are cut, whose hair is shaved, who is fitted with a diaper, who is led down the hallway, seated in the chair and strapped in when the call comes with a stay of execution? And just suppose the hand on the switch was his father's?

What clarity do parents and children come to when they discuss this story? As a youngster I recall asking my mother about it, and her

response was, "Never. I would never let this happen. I would ask to be taken myself before letting anything happen to one of my children." Which again leads me to ask, where is Sarah? Does her femaleness render her irrelevant to the covenant story? Or powerless? I am challenged to take a second and third and maybe even a fourth look at the characters, and I have to admit that none of them are really heroes or models for me, not even God who cannot seem to recognize Abraham's faith without this abhorrent request. I'm coming down from Mount Moriah, and I find myself questioning this story as a foundation for my faith.

Is the walk down from Mount Tabor any clearer? Jesus is revealed again as the beloved of God, as at his baptism. The disciples are dazzled by the overwhelming mystery. Is it meant to sustain them when the darkness and terror of his arrest, torture, and execution come? In what way?

Are these stories set on mountaintops meant to help us to see from a different perspective, to change our point of view rather than to give us definitive answers? I know someone who climbed three of the seven highest mountains in the world. From the top, everything was clear: no clouds or pollution, no boundaries, just the curve of the earth. The climber's mind had to stay clear and focused on breathing, on every step and every small movement. And of course, the climber didn't hike alone. Each member was critical to the other, with the guide most essential to all. When the guide failed the group, they were in trouble for their lives, terrified, lost and disoriented in the dark.

Perhaps on this second Sunday in Lent the mountaintop experiences are for us both clarifying and confounding, as the presence of God is in our lives. There is fear and pain all around us and there is the glory of God as well. Not alone, whether in clarity or confusion, we will continue to walk, searching for the light.

Art Review

There's a hammered-metal facsimile of a dove I know of, a so-called *peristerium* to be exact (from the Greek περιστέρι—"peristéri"), that serves as a stationary ciborium in a chapel belonging to a religious congregation whose very name invokes the mystery housed within its delicate frame. To the casual observer, or anyone unfamiliar with its special purpose, the object might be mistaken for an antique toy of some sort, possibly a mechanical bird with moving parts enough to delight a small child or a full-grown adult with childlike fondness for such things. When lifted a little, its hinged wings and back feathers, worn from repeated opening and closing, reveal an interior cavity large enough to receive a pyx filled with the host-borne presence of Christ beckoned to the chapel with every action at its altar.

EUCHARISTIC DOVE (tabernacle) Stamped, champlevé, engraved, chiseled, enameled copper in sky blue and lavender blue and gilded with 23.5-carat gold leaf. Collection, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Herein lies an irony — one of several, in fact — that the more astute beholder might draw from this *divina columbae*. Within its entirely make-believe belly, the product of some handy metal-smithing, resides the most *real* of realities any person with eucharistic sense can hope to encounter in this life. An artful stand-in for the third person of the Holy Trinity, the dove serves as a dwelling place for the second. And both, the believer assumes, lie within the ever-present grasp and gaze of the first.

The animal's gilded-copper frame, enriched with colorful touches of what's known as champlevé enamelware, bears the unmistakable mark of human ingenuity. But so does its edible contents, "fruit of the earth and work of the human hands." One springs from the glass furnace, the other a bread-baker's hearth — at least metaphorically. The former is made with sturdiness, permanence, and unviability in mind. The latter, in its principle function as sacramental food, yearns to be fractured, dispersed, and consumed beyond recognition by those who, in switching roles with the dove, make of themselves living tabernacles of God's presence on earth (1 Peter 2:5).

Michael DeSanctis

Like countless other ritual objects the Church has called upon its artists to furnish over the centuries, this ciborium strikes us as a thing of beauty. One can't help but delight in the obvious care with which its parts were fashioned and assembled. Similarly charming is its diminutive size, which poses yet another irony to the beholder. We might estimate the little bird to be "smaller than a bread box," never recognizing the humor that lies in it also *being* a bread box or a repository, at least, for breadstuff altogether other than what it seems to our senses. We can grasp it with our hands or cradle it in our arms without rendering the altar-mystery that lingers within it any more measurable.

This French dove tabernacle was inspired by one of fifty or so manufactured in the 13th-century workshops of Limoges, France, that can still be found in art museums, religious houses, and some parish churches throughout the world. Some of these were originally suspended above an altar and raised and lowered by means of a pulley, as was typical with such visual reminders of the "epiclesial" component of the Mass, a mode of presentation more in keeping with the Spirit's presumed ability to descend into the realm of mortal affairs with dove-like agility. This tabernacle, perched unmoving on a metal wall-bracket in the form of a leafy branch, succeeds in conveying the image of a divine presence called to the scene by priestly invocation. "Like the dewfall" the Church's liturgical poetry affirms, the Spirit descends from heaven to coax flour and water into doubling as true flesh and blood. Heaven and earth commingle, and love that is otherwise boundless concedes to the limits of shape and texture and taste, to the "thingness" that the eucharistic Christ endures on our behalf, and to the fate even of lesser treasures locked away for safekeeping.

Poetry

A Metaphysical Query

Two hearts beat in separate worlds –
my own in this mortal body,
the other, God's in his eternity.

In our quest for unity, which heart longs deeper?
Is it God who yearns to dwell in my life?
Or is it I who longs for God to be God in my life?

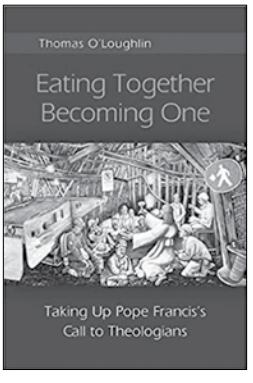
My days are restless seeking a fuller being,
the sound of God's groaning haunts me,
His dreams for me so large and inviting.

Let me be that robin who needs not ask if he can fly,
much less why, or for what purpose,
but busy himself giving praise for his life.

What matters at the dawn of another day
is the heart of my God whose delight is
my presence in his arms, and I,
held in the wonder of belonging.

Joe LaCroix

Book Reviews



EATING TOGETHER BECOMING ONE: TAKING UP POPE FRANCIS' CALL TO THEOLOGIANS.
Thomas O'Loughlin
Liturgical Press Academic
Collegeville, MN
2019

On November 15, 2015 Anke de Bernadinis, a Lutheran woman married to a Catholic, asked Pope Francis a question about sharing Eucharist. She said she and her husband, "… have been living happily together for many years, sharing joys and sorrows. And, therefore, it's quite painful to be divided in the faith and to be unable to take part together in the Lord's Supper. What can we do on this point to finally attain communion?" The Pope's answer was: "I don't know how to answer, but I make your question my own — I wonder: Is the sharing of the Lord's Supper *the end* of a journey or the *viaticum* to

journey together? I leave the question to the theologians, to those who understand."

This book is O'Louglin's response. In doing so O'Louglin shows much courage in taking up the issue of eucharistic sharing across Christian churches, traditions, academic positions, and polarized spiritualities. A historian, liturgist with expertise, professor of Nottingham University, England, and past president of the Catholic Theological Association of Great Britain, O'Loughlin makes a good case for eucharistic sharing.

Eating meals is a human sharing. We usually do not eat alone; we share our food. We take time and care in preparing meals. It is an art and part of our culture. We invite people to share meals. Some meals have special meaning and mark special events: births, baptisms, weddings, celebrations, anniversaries, funerals, and more. Some meals are ritual and religious. We give thanks to God and recognize God's gifts as we sit down to eat together. The Eucharist is a banquet shared with Jesus Christ.

O'Loughlin in the last paragraph of chapter four, summarizes his rationale for eucharistic sharing with an anthropology of meals, the example of Jesus, "a new story to fulfill a basic longing of the Eucharist, that we might be one with the Lord at his table, then that story may lead us to thinking about the Spirit in our life in a new way that might repair a gap in our thinking of the Eucharist — and then might show us another way to think about intercommunion…" (*Eating* Together, p. 57.)

He speaks of the ecumenical meal of mission. He believes the decision about eucharistic sharing should be made by the Catholic Church based on the nature of the Eucharist as "a *viaticum*, not a reward" and those receiving the Eucharist on a one-by-case should be allowed to follow their conscience. The Eucharist is not something to be stared at, but the living Lord with whom we are to live, die, and rise forever. The Eucharist is a communion that nourishes the eternal life that builds on baptism. This is the fundamental principle for eucharistic sharing. Looking at the Eucharist as *viaticum* rather than reward provides a *necessity* for baptized Christians and a gift that is not to be refused or denied. Jesus gave us the example and told us to remember him when we share his memorial. In this light it is helpful to recall Pope John Paul II's observation:

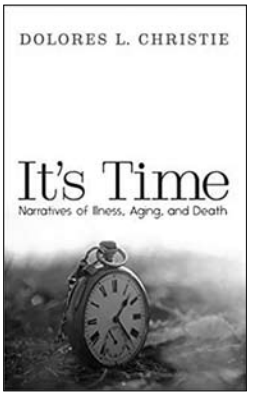
> "It is a source of joy to note that Catholic ministers are able, in certain particular cases to administer the sacraments of the Eucharist, Penance and Anointing of the sick to Christians who are not in full communion with the Catholic Church but who greatly desire to receive these sacraments, freely request them and manifest the faith which the Catholic Church professes with regard to these sacraments. Conversely, in special cases and in particular circumstances, Catholics too can request these same sacraments from ministers of Churches in which their ministers of churches in which these sacraments are valid." [John Paul II. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 46 (2003)]

Finally, O'Loughlin reminds us that the risen Lord welcomes the communicant. Christ creates and renews and makes all things new. We are an Easter people who know that to live is to change. To live is not to defend the past, but to welcome the Lord and the Spirit who give life and the Father whose glory we praise. As O'Loughlin concludes,

> So, will non-Catholic Christians have a full share in the heavenly banquet? If your answer is no, then that solves the problem: they should be excluded now. If you reply yes, then it is that heavenly table that we should aim to imitate at the gathering next Sunday. Moreover, such an approach would enhance our mission to show that the Good News creates a space of gracious welcome. It would remind us that in the liturgy we perform the unified world that we want to see; we do not simply reinforce the fractured world that we have inherited. *"In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy…toward which we journey as pilgrims." (Sacrosanctum concilium, 8).* (*Eating Together,* 157)

Ernest Falardeau, SSS, STD
New York, NY

There are some of life's experiences that we tend to avoid thinking about until, well, it's time — until we are actually confronted by them, either personally or through close or distant others. Serious illness,



IT'S TIME: NARRATIVES OF ILLNESS, AGING, AND DEATH
Dolores L. Christie
Cascade Books: Eugene, Oregon
2019

aging and dying are among those experiences. Given their profound gravity, it's not surprising that we prefer to avoid contemplating them in advance, but, unfortunately, thinking about them only when they are upon us in one way or another often is not the most fruitful time to reflect on them. It's true that we don't know what we will do or how we will react until we are actually in a situation, but it is possible to do some advance reflecting that might help better prepare us. And that's precisely what *It's Time: Narratives of Illness, Aging, and Death* can do. As the author states in her Introduction, "This book turns a bright, sometimes painful, light on serious life situations that in time invade everyone's life. Each piece poses practical and moral questions for patients, for families, for professionals that accompany those in distress. . . . [T]hey provide an opportunity to heal the past, think about future possibilities (perhaps the better word is *probabilities*), and how we might adjust to them" (xii).

As the title suggests, this volume consists primarily in rather robust stories of individuals, whether patients, family members, friends, or health professionals, confronting the challenges — mostly ethical, but also emotional, psychological and spiritual — that arise when facing illness, aging and dying. There are seventeen narratives in all, grouped under the three headings in the sub-title of the book, some true, most fictional although based on the author's many years of experience serving as an ethicist in clinical settings. The poignant narratives deal with such issues as deciding for aggressive treatment, choosing to end one's life, palliative sedation, making treatment decisions for another, challenges in caring for an ill or dying family member, dealing with diminishing abilities, disengaging from life's activities, recognizing the increasing immanence of one's own death and the implications of that, romantic and sexual relationships between persons with dementia, and a host of other issues. Two appendices follow upon the narratives. One outlines a decision-making process that can assist in thinking about the various issues that arise in the stories themselves or in one's own experience whether past, present, or future. The other provides questions for reflection/discussion for each of the narratives. They enable a further mining of the richness of the stories by serving as prompts for one's own reflection either individually or in a group.

This volume should have very broad appeal. Stories appeal. They draw us in and, in many cases, mirror our own experiences, affording us a different and, hopefully illuminating perspective. Individuals encountering illness, aging, or dying either themselves, with loved

ones, or as caregivers will likely find the narratives clarifying and contributing to important and helpful insights, especially when used in conjunction with the reflection/discussion questions. This can occur on an individual basis, but might most profitably occur in a group setting where multiple perspectives can be heard and appreciated. Mixed groups — young and old, healthy and ill, patient and family member or caregiver — might well provide the greatest insights and benefits for all involved. These can occur as part of parish adult education programs, discussion groups in long-term care and other facilities serving seniors, and in health care settings. The volume would also be very useful in various educational settings — undergraduate and graduate classrooms, medical schools, seminaries, and pastoral ministry programs. In whatever setting, given the heavy ethical emphasis of the narratives and the reflection questions, as well as the emotionally laden nature of the narratives, it would be wise for a group leader to have some facility with ethics/moral theology, especially health care ethics, and counseling.

Dolores Christie's book reflects a lifetime of experience in the college classroom and clinical settings, together with the knowledge and insights gained from these experiences. As she states in the Introduction, the volume "uses the salient salvage from forty years of cases discussed in undergraduate and graduate classes, in tense meetings with distraught families, or in hastily called conferences in institutional settings" (xiii). Through these experiences, she writes, "I have been afforded a privileged window into others' journeys" (xiii). And through this volume, Christie shares with her readers this privileged window into the lives, challenges, and struggles of her characters facing illness, aging, and dying. She expresses the hope that her collection of narratives "will be instructive and troubling in a good way, one that will help anyone who reads it to grow in compassion, understanding of self and others, and better at making decisions" (xv). Her hope is most likely to be realized.

Ronald P. Hamel, PhD
Senior Ethicist for the Catholic Health Association (retired)
St. Louis, MO

EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

Patrick J. Riley, D. Min.

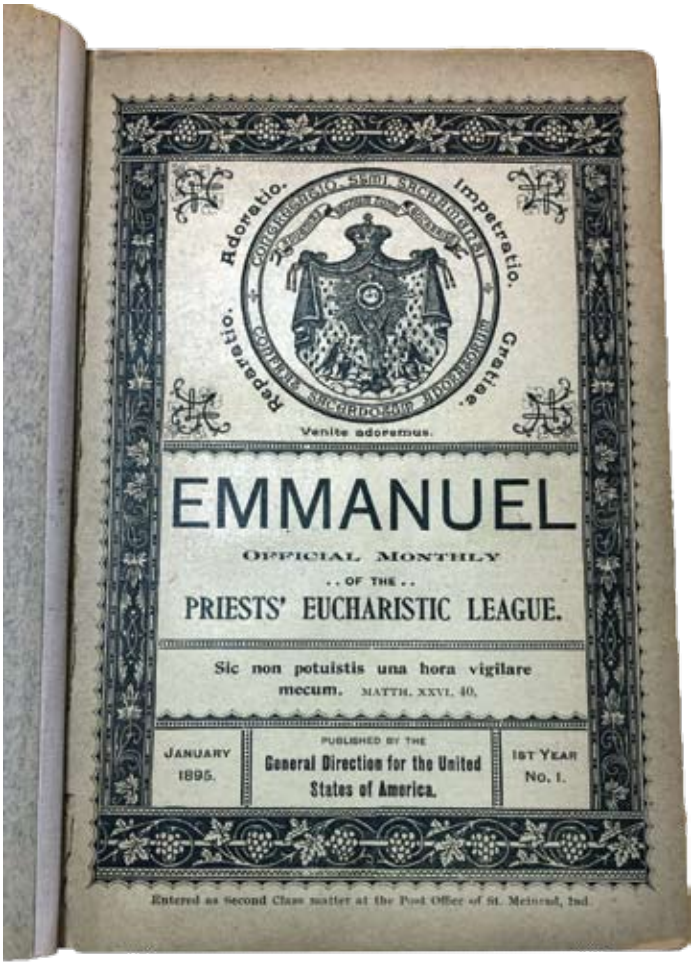
Cleveland Heights, Ohio

In September 1961, I entered the minor seminary of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. I knew nothing about this Congregation, but I felt called to the priesthood and I was "recruited" to this seminary out of eighth grade. For the next 13 years, I was formed in the charism of this religious community founded by Saint Peter Julian Eymard, who was canonized the second year I was in the seminary. I lived in five Blessed Sacrament communities: as a high school student, a college student, a novice, a scholastic and a perpetually professed member. At 26, no longer feeling called to the priesthood, I made the difficult decision to leave the Congregation.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-65) changed the whole Church in significant ways. We Blessed Sacrament religious were challenged to re-think and adapt our apostolic works, our semi-monastic lifestyle and prayer lives, our sense of authority, and our community life. It was a tumultuous time in the Church and in the Congregation. I experienced first-hand the stresses and divisions that occurred inside the Congregation as we moved through this *aggiornamento*. Central to the life of this Congregation was devotion to the Eucharist. But the Council's Constitution on the Liturgy re-oriented the focus from the Eucharist as object of adoration to the celebration of God's presence in the community as food for apostolic work. It was a difficult process. And yet, I found the members of the Congregation were totally dedicated to the Eucharist. They were men of prayer whose lives were shaped by the Eucharist. The evening before I left three of the older men of the community took me out to dinner. One looked me straight in the eyes and said, "Pat, much has been given to you by the SSS, don't waste it. Make it always part of who you are and what you do." I was struck by his urging.

I married and had three children and began a life-long career in Catholic secondary and higher education, writing, and parish ministry. Into each of these environments, I brought a sense of the centrality of the Eucharist whether in well-planned and inspirational liturgies, praying of Vespers, Eucharistic Holy Hours and Benediction. In each I tried to convey that the Eucharist is best expressed in the words of Jesus, "This is my Body given up for you. This is my Blood poured out for you. Do this in memory of me." We are commissioned, urged, charged with the mission to be broken and poured out in the service of others, especially the poor. I owe this Eucharistic spirituality to the men of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament who witnessed to it so clearly to me.

From the Archives



In January of 1895 the very first issue of *Emmanuel* arrived in rectories around the country. Initially *Emmanuel* was the "Official Monthly of the Priests' Eucharistic League." They had a love for the Eucharist and sought to promote frequent communion, nurture eucharistic adoration, and support each other in their vocations. With the arrival of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in the United States, editorship of *Emmanuel* was passed on to this religious order in 1905. Since that time the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament has embraced *Emmanuel's* enduring goal to foster love for the Eucharist among the Church's ministers and members. In order to celebrate and share these wonderful insights gathered from 125 years of publishing excellence *Emmanuel* now offers a free online column "From the Archives" on the *Emmanuel* website: emmanuelpublishing.org. Each new digital issue of Emmanuel now includes a salient article from the *Emmanuel* archives that speaks to issues relevant today. Here we will feature articles by theologians who have long since become leaders in their field as well as pastoral insights from beloved ministers. This column is free to everyone as part of *Emmanuel's* mission to stir greater love for the Eucharist around the world. Visit emmanuelpublishing.org today and see all of the exciting material available to nurture your eucharistic spirituality!

Mission of Unity

Our celebration of the Eucharist,
sign of the Covenant
between God and the human race,
remains, in a sense, incomplete
as long as we who are baptized
are divided by hate
or separated from one another.

The celebration leads us
to promote unity in all our activities:
within our Christian communities,
among all confessions
that share the same baptism
and among all those
who are working to unify the world.

Rule of Life, 38
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament