

# Emmanuel



*Eucharistic Spirituality*

March/April 2018



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Fra Angelico: THE MOCKING OF CHRIST (detail). Fresco, Convent of San Marco, Florence, Italy  
Fra Angelico and Assistants: THE HOLY WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHER. Fresco, Convent of San Marco, Florence, Italy

BACK COVER

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



# Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 124 Number 2



## EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

My “Death Metal” Kids:  
Closet Sacramentalists  
by Michael E. DeSanctis

72

## EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

G. E. M. Anscombe on the Eucharist  
by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

78

To Pray Is to Become What God Is  
by Peter J. Riga

90

## EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Living As Jesus Lived  
by Anthony Schueller, SSS

95

Pondering the Parables:  
The Parable of the Fig Tree  
by Bernard Camiré, SSS

101

Fly the Flag of Joy!  
by Jeanette Martino Land

103

Annie and the Butterfly: A Child’s Parable  
of Transformation and New Life

105

Counsels for Spiritual Life

108

## EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art, Music, Film, Poetry, and Books

125

## COLUMNS

From the Editor

70

Pastoral Liturgy

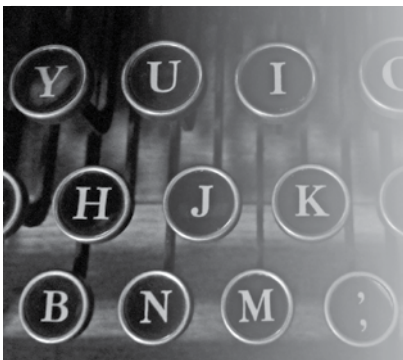
109

Breaking the Word

112

Eucharistic Witness

136



## FROM THE EDITOR

In the last half of 2017, I had the pleasure of traveling to two Asian countries where our Congregation is experiencing phenomenal growth. The Philippines and Vietnam, along with India and Sri Lanka, are generating a very high proportion of our vocations worldwide.

I came away from these trips filled with a profound sense of the vibrancy of the Church in these lands. The Philippines, of course, is in a category all by itself, being the only majority-Christian (Catholic) nation in all of Asia.

The Catholic Church in Vietnam is growing steadily: estimates are as high as ten-million Catholics. Seminaries and religious houses of formation are full and the number of parishes is growing. Having been to both countries, I can testify that the churches are packed with committed, joyful followers of Jesus Christ who love Catholicism's history, tradition, liturgy, and engagement. Don't we all. . . .

It is commonly acknowledged that Western and Eastern peoples view history and life quite differently. I describe it in this way. Those of us in the West approach history *episodically*, as a series of discrete moments and experiences. And so we pass from one event to the next to the next with little or no apprehension of how they might be related. Moreover, anything out of our immediate "world" and experience holds little interest for us.

Those in the East, on the other hand, see the *whole picture*. Their cultures are generally older and often have a semi-continuous history dating back millennia. Instead of fixating on an event, they have the capacity to look at history in terms of epochs, trends, and trajectories.

How does this relate to the Church? And what does the Church have to say to both East and West?

Because of our faith and our rich liturgical tradition over 2,000 years, we offer the world and our contemporaries the idea of *redemptive* history. Redemptive history arises from the conviction that God is at work in human history and events, and is ultimately in charge. Those with “eyes to see and ears to hear” (cf. Ez 12:2; Mt 13:15; Acts 28:27) discern the subtle movement of grace in all things. Redemptive history looks to the deeper, transformative meaning of events across the ages from the perspective of faith.

Liturgy contributes greatly to our Catholic sense of redemptive history. The saving events commemorated in the Church’s public worship and sacraments (especially the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord, Pentecost, etc.) are re-presented not repeated. Thus, we can live in the power of what God has brought about by them and be sanctified and inspired to contribute to the great redemptive work of God as it continues to unfold in human history.

### **In This Issue**

This issue offers diverse perspectives on the mysteries of Lent and Easter and on our efforts to live and proclaim them. You’ll find everything from Redemptorist Dennis Billy’s careful analysis of the very intentional Catholic philosophizing of G. E. M. Amscombe to Michael DeSanctis’ gentle musings on the existential journey of his oldest son and daughter, from Peter Riga’s essay on prayer to a few of my own thoughts on Eucharistic spirituality as “living as Jesus lived.” Enjoy, too, the beautiful seasonal scriptural reflections of John Barker, OFM. God bless you!



Anthony Schueller, SSS



## *EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING*

# My “Death Metal” Kids: Closet Sacramentalists

by Michael E. DeSanctis

*A father muses on the musical and existential journey of his eldest son and daughter. Could Easter and new life be at the end of their fascination with the grave and death?*

Michael E. DeSanctis is Professor of Fine Arts and Theology at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, as well as the director of its honors program. He serves as a design consultant to Catholic parishes involved in the construction or renovation of places of worship and has written for a number of publications, including *Emmanuel*.

I CONFESS TO TAKING A PERVERSE PLEASURE FROM WALKING THROUGH supermarkets, restaurants, and other public places with the eldest of my four children, an inseparable brother-sister pair in their mid-20s whose pleasant disposition and wide-ranging talents could win them the admiration of complete strangers. Instead, they attract mostly disapproving stares.

My kids, you see, are Death Metal musicians of the sort who thrash about the stages of bars and dance clubs most weekends enveloped in a sonic equivalent of street graffiti or Guerilla Theater just this side of cacophony. Even when the thrashing stops, they bear the unmistakable marks of affiliation with the DM scene — real head-turners in most settings and suggestive in no obvious way of their upbringing in a Catholic household big on domestic rituals designed to enliven the soul.

Nowadays, however, a vaguely funereal air ensconces my kids, the result of wardrobes virtually bereft of color but stockpiled with loose-fitting T-shirts, tank tops, and cargo pants draped in layers over their frames like the black crepe of which the Victorians were so fond for public mourning. Recycled Victorianisms figure prominently into their outward appearance, in fact, though they would be the last to recognize them as such.

Like their counterparts in the loosely-related Punk and Goth scenes, they revel in the most maudlin aspects of late-nineteenth century culture and claim *thanatos* itself the focus of their creative output, despite the earthy, kick-drum eroticism that pulses through their

bodies as it has the bodies of popular entertainers since the time of Swing. (Was it really the chaste embraces of the love-struck that Gene Krupa's tribal pounding and the raspy braying of trumpets were supposed to evoke with every performance of the Glenn Miller 1935 classic "Sing, Sing, Sing," for example, as primal an arrangement of sounds in its own way as Part I of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, premiered for a stuffier crowd two decades earlier?)

Consequently, the dark tees and tops are almost always emblazoned with screen-printed images of decomposing corpses, fetid vegetable matter, ciliated insect parts, miscreants of nature, or the ghoulish "undead" and just about anything else bound to repulse residents of the cheerier world of sunlight and color that thrives above ground.

The exaggerated contours of my daughter's makeup, at times inspired, some might guess, by the vintage TV faces of Morticia Addams or Lilly Munster, heighten the effect, as do the vine-like tattoos favoring the macabre that seem gradually to have overtaken her brother's exposed parts. ("Kultic Kudzu," I've taken to calling it.)

It's their ear lobes, though, that are the real attention-getters. Stretched like slivers of undercooked calamari over rings the size of hula-hoops, they are an endless source of fascination among the young children and persnickety old ladies ever-present in checkout lines and dumbfounded by the sheer elasticity of human flesh that makes it possible to peer *through* part of another person's head, keyhole-style, instead of around it.

For reasons known only to them, my children have rejected the comfort and predictability of their middle-class upbringing for a murkier realm of self-discovery hidden amid the shadows. Their fascination lies in all things subterranean, a less sanitized version of the infatuation with zombies and vampires that has seized the country's youth culture recently, with a liberal admixture of Norse mythology and post-adolescent rebellion thrown in for good measure.

They seem as much at home "among the tombs" (*cata tumbas*) as were those bands of early Christians who slipped beneath the streets of Rome to sing their dead into eternal bliss by the flickering light of torches. This is fitting, somehow, given the incensed-infused surname with which they've been saddled since birth, a patronym straight out of the old *Missale Romanum* and its lovely texts for the feast of All Saints (*Proprium Missarum de Sanctis*).



### “Closet Sacramentalists”

My children are as catholic as they come — and “Catholic,” too, in the way the late Andrew Greeley, SJ, was fond of using the term. They inhabit a world that is nothing if not “enchanted,” one suffused with symbolic meaning and revelatory of some hidden truth that lies just beneath, just beyond, just outside the immediate face of things.

To my way of thinking, they are “closet sacramentalists,” custodians of an array of objects and rites and indelible markings borrowed more or less from the outward form of the religion to which they were exposed through years of Catholic education and countless turns at lighting the family Advent candle, marking the front door at Epiphany, or stoking the parking lot bonfire that announced Easter’s yearly arrival in the parish where they were baptized.

Their music — overtly dirge-like at times and almost always in the minor mode — is the hymnody of a perpetual celebration of the Eve of All Hallows, as legitimate an artistic confrontation with human mortality as any concert-hall performance of a Requiem Mass that masks death for the sake of aesthetics. It makes sense that mask-wearing of one kind or another should appeal to them, a convention mostly associated in this country with the gleeful Trick-or-Treating of children, but borne of an ancient and serious desire to transform the self while scaring away the more menacing agents of the Underworld.

To see them perform on stage amid the dark silhouettes of amplifiers, mic stands, and instrument racks, a throng of onlookers before them holding cell phones aloft like lighted tapers, is to be transported to the burial-place settings of the *Día de los Muertos* celebrated annually in Latin American countries or the *Samhain* handed down in Celtic regions to welcome the “darker half” of the lunar calendar.

One can imagine them pouring out the remains of the beers and soft drinks that multiply at their feet as libations for the invisible Muse they serve or fidgeting with the carved figure of a *santos* or two, the decorative details of some *nicho* or *retablo* or the glowing, round form of a Jack-O-Lantern in place of the soundboard dials and faders that bring their performing to life.

Swept up in their music, my kids experience the “liminality” known throughout history by the creative and the pious alike, the dervish-



like passage through “thin” places and times that makes it possible to transcend the self and self-satisfied in one’s quest for some Other.

In classic sacramental fashion, they experience the reciprocity of which the media scholar John Culkin, SJ (1928-1993) was speaking when, echoing Saint Augustine, he observed: “We become what we behold. We build our tools and thereafter they build us.”

The energizing *quid-pro-quo* at the center of my kids’ lives consists in them giving away great swaths of sound to their frenzied admirers with little thought of recompense, only to find themselves enriched by the exchange. It’s a Fraction Rite they perform nightly to the crackling choir of amps. Something deeply personal and life-out-of-death-giving is torn asunder in their hands to be shared with friends and later tokenized in an array of “merch” objects that, despite being their chief means of revenue, mimic the sacramentals and devotional items available in the Church’s great pilgrimage sites for ages.

*They inhabit a world that is nothing if not “enchanted,” one suffused with symbolic meaning and revelatory of some hidden truth that lies just beneath.*

There are those within the Catholic fold, I am sure, who would be quick to exclude my children from any proper celebration of the Church’s rites for fear the very “edginess” of their appearance might vitiate the proceeding. It’s true, they straddle the edge of society, stand at its outskirts, cling to its outermost valences in a way that seems to have been the special prerogative of young people in modern Western cultures for decades now.

Like many in their peer group, they are suspicious of those institutions by which older generations have succeeded in making a regular mess of the world. This includes the Church, of course, whose fundamental explanation of the human experience seems so at odds with their own.

### **An Underlying Openness**

Nevertheless, they remain perfect candidates for the kind of gentle re-evangelization of the baptized Pope Francis has made a hallmark of his pontificate, especially given their attraction to modes of personal expression rich in myth and metaphor and more closely aligned with poetry than with prose.



In fact, those tempted to consign my kids to some lesser corner of the Church for failing to conform to a more standard version of external packaging might want to revisit the now-famous Holy Thursday photographs of Francis bending low to kiss the tattooed feet of a dozen inmates of Rome's Rebibbia Prison. (Looking carefully at these pictures, one is struck by how the pope treats the young law-breakers less as bit players in a novel, media-friendly reenactment of the Lord's Supper than potential evangelists *themselves* induced to proclaim the Good News by virtue of their brush with authentic tenderness.)

They might also acknowledge the considerable latitude the Church has always extended its beloved saints on the matter of public hygiene, not to mention its seeming fascination with the goriest details of how many achieved martyrdom. (No Death Metal band with which I'm familiar has ever taken stage carrying plates of their own eyeballs or breasts, their severed heads, as plaster likenesses of Saints Lucy and Agatha and Denis do respectively in many parish settings. Neither, I'm guessing, would any Death Mettler refuse a hot bath or a trip to the showers after a night of hardy body-slamming — though saints like the Egyptian Anthony the Abbot are reputed to have forgone bathing for a lifetime.)

Industrious, addiction-free, and clean of any criminal record, my son and daughter have never known the dehumanizing effects of real imprisonment. They are prisoners, nonetheless, of the myopia of youth and a simplistic view of religion that leads many today to dismiss as meaningless an entity as complex and richly appointed as the Church.

I am encouraged, nevertheless, by the fact that my son recently posted a note of thanks on his Facebook page for having been raised in a household where movies like *The Mission* or *Romero* were stable fare and that my daughter, for all her misgivings about the Catholic hierarchy's treatment of women, still delights in the name Clare Frances, if not the biographies of the saints from which it was drawn.

I am only their natural father after all. And while I pride myself for having gifted them through the mystery of genetics with my own largely right-brained view of things, I know that the creative impulse running beneath even the "deathy-est" of their Death Metal tunes originates in the eternal Word that is life itself (Jn 14:6).

They are really *God’s* children after all (Gal 3:26), no matter how far they’ve strayed like good prodigals from that portion of the heavenly estate decked out in explicitly Catholic fashion. Who knows? In the end, it may be precisely by means of their artistic fascination with the grave that God will lure them back to the “the land of the living,” if only by revealing the eternal inertia that death demands for all its seeming exoticism.

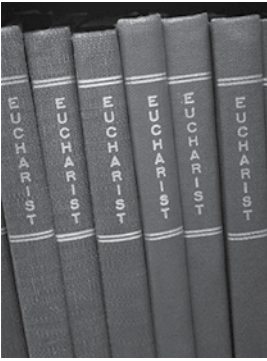
*In the end, it may be precisely by means of their artistic fascination with the grave that God will lure them back to the “the land of the living.”*

Already, there are signs of color creeping back into my daughter’s wardrobe, her long Lententide is giving way to Easter, and my son has taken to wearing shirts and ties for special occasions. The kids are frequenting the gym more often to shed sweat in a perfectly middle-class way, cheery pop songs by Miley and Kesha streaming through their earbuds like nobody’s business. Soon there’ll be no need for masks and makeup, experience tells me, no fantasy role-playing or switch-on-stage presence to incite the Mosh Pit crowd.

Even the least attentive parent of Death Metal stars sees the genre for what it is, a colossal boast and parade of false bravado as old as humankind itself and born of that fear of extinction that dogs all mortal beings. As for me and my riotous, thoroughly postmodern household, belief in the transformative power of love and sacrament and art will endure, along with a place for the God in whom each originates, no matter how mysteriously.

Death Metal will go on rattling the walls as much as my nerves on rehearsal nights, but never so loudly as to drown out the inexorable hum of Life that echoes through this place.





## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# G. E. M. Anscombe on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

*G. E. M. Anscombe's Catholic faith informed her reasoned search for truth and enabled her to remain true to the highest standards of her profession.*

Redemptorist Father Dennis J. Billy, a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*, has authored or edited more than 30 books and 300 articles in a number of scholarly and popular journals and taught in Rome and at the archdiocesan seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

G. E. M. ANSCOMBE (1919-2001) WAS A BRITISH ANALYTICAL PHILOSOPHER AND a staunch defender of the Catholic faith. She was born in Limerick, Ireland, in 1919, graduated from Sydenham High School in 1937, and went on to study at Saint Hugh's College, Oxford, where she graduated with First Honors in 1941. She converted to Catholicism during her undergraduate years and married philosopher Peter Geach in 1941. She pursued postgraduate studies at Newnham College, Cambridge from 1942-1945, studied under Ludwig Wittgenstein, the father of analytical philosophy, and eventually became the editor, translator, and publisher of his writings. She taught at Somerville College, Oxford, from 1946-1970 and at Cambridge University from 1970-1986.

Anscombe's major philosophical works include *Intention* (1957) and *Modern Moral Philosophy* (1958). She is most remembered for her criticism of the state of modern philosophy, her work on intention, and her reintroduction of virtue ethics into the philosophical discussions of the day. A devout Catholic and a critical thinker, she was a strong advocate of the Catholic stance against abortion and birth control, and was arrested several times for protesting in front of abortion clinics. Although she was primarily a Catholic philosopher, she did, at times, discuss more strictly theological matters. Her teaching on the Eucharist offers one such instance.<sup>1</sup>

### **Anscombe's Spiritual Outlook**

Anscombe would be the first to point out that Catholic thought had an enormous influence on her life. During her high school years, she was known to have been an avid reader of theological works and was

particularly influenced by the writings of G. K. Chesterton. Her curiosity about matters of faith and her spiritual and intellectual dissatisfaction with Anglicanism led to inquiries with the Dominicans of Blackfriars College, Oxford, who facilitated her conversion to Catholicism in 1938.

It was at Blackfriars College, moreover, where she met Peter Geach, a fellow philosopher and convert, whom she married and together raised a family of seven children. It is also significant that she collaborated on a number of occasions with her husband, whose specialty was logic and the history of philosophy and who was an influential figure in what later came to be known as Analytical Thomism.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to note that Anscombe, who wrote what is arguably the most important work on human intention of the twentieth century (*Intention*), was for all practical purposes what we might call an “intentional Catholic.” A disciple of Ludwig Wittgenstein who succeeded him in his chair at Cambridge and who was, as his translator and one of his literary executors, probably most responsible for making him known in the English-speaking world, Anscombe was a serious and devout convert to the Catholic faith.

Her conversion, her vocation to the lay state, specifically to married and family life, and her profession as a philosopher were deeply intertwined with the Catholic intellectual tradition. This was a tradition that touched her deeply, shaped her convictions about the nature of truth, and to which she was intensely loyal. It gave her a unique vantage point from which to survey the philosophical problems of her day and served as the backdrop against which she lived out her vocation and conducted her philosophical research. It also propelled her to live out her moral convictions in the public square even when those convictions ran against the tide of public opinion and got her into trouble with legal authorities, as in the case of her arrests for anti-abortion protests in the 1970s.

Like many other well-known converts — John Henry Newman, G. K. Chesterton, Frederick Copleston, Ronald Knox, Jacques Maritain, Dietrich von Hildebrand, Avery Dulles, and Alasdair MacIntyre (to name but a few) — her journey to Catholicism involved a carefully reasoned search for truth which brought her to belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God and Redeemer of the human race. It also involved a journey of the mind that led to a deep understanding and conviction that the Catholic Church was established by Christ to safeguard the deposit of faith and promulgate the gospel message throughout history.



As a philosopher, she understood the limitations of human reason and did her best to insure that its conclusions were well argued, based on solid evidence, and to the point. She had little patience with poorly constructed arguments (whether for or against the faith) and took them apart with precise reasoning that both went to the core of the problem and pointed the way to a possible resolution. Her famous debate with C. S. Lewis at the Oxford Socratic Club in 1948 about his assertion in the book *Miracles* (1947) that “Naturalism” is self-refuting is a case in point, as was her active and lively participation in Catholic philosophical discussions at the Spode House Conference Center, Staffordshire, from 1942-1972.<sup>3</sup>

We cannot speak of the influence of the Catholic intellectual tradition on Anscombe without adverting at some point to her understanding of the lay vocation and its role in the Church’s life and mission. The theology of the various states of life within the Church — priestly, religious, and lay — forms a part of this rich intellectual tradition, and we would be remiss to think that Anscombe was unaware of its general contours and how it impacted her vocation within the Church and her profession as a Catholic philosopher. Indeed, it goes without saying that, as an intentional convert who took her faith seriously, she saw her primary responsibility before God as working out her salvation as a married Catholic lay woman by participating in the sacramental life of the Church, being faithful to her duties to her husband and family, and bringing the Gospel into the marketplace of the temporal sphere of life.

She understood that the specific vocation of the laity was “to make the Church present and fruitful in those places and circumstances where only through them can it become the salt of the earth.”<sup>4</sup> To this end, she used her skills as an analytical philosopher to seek the truth about some of the most basic (and controversial) issues of her day — the purpose of modern moral philosophy, the role of intention in the moral act, the proper use of the principle of double effect, the dignity of the person, the place of spirituality, the role of the state, the use of contraception, abortion, euthanasia, the just war, to name but a few. In examining these issues, she sought the truth of the matter at hand and, in serving the truth, believed she was breaking open the Wisdom of God and thus participating in the mission of the Church. Her teaching on the Eucharist is a specific instance where she employs it in the service of theology.<sup>5</sup>

### Anscombe's Teaching on the Eucharist

In 1974, Anscombe published a pamphlet with the Catholic Truth Society entitled *On Transubstantiation*.<sup>6</sup> In it, she discusses this Eucharistic doctrine from the perspective of what it means (and does not mean) and how it can be taught.

She begins with these words, "It is easiest to tell what transubstantiation is by saying this: little children should be taught about it as early as possible."<sup>7</sup> By this statement, she does not mean to imply that a child can understand the word *transubstantiation* itself, but only that he or she can comprehend that something mysterious is taking place at Mass. "All that is necessary is for the parent to whisper in the child's ear at the moment of consecration: 'Look! Look what the priest is doing. . . . He is saying Jesus' words that change the bread into Jesus' body. Now he's lifting it up. Look! Now bow your head and say, 'My Lord and my God,' and then 'Look, now he's taken hold of the cup. He's saying the words that change the wine into Jesus' blood. Look up at the cup. Now bow your head and say, 'We believe, we adore your precious blood, O Christ of God.'"<sup>8</sup>

*The Catholic intellectual tradition influenced Anscombe in her personal life, her lay vocation, and her profession.*

She goes on to say that the worship we render God at the moment of the consecration contains an implicit belief in the death and resurrection of the Christ. "Thus, by this sort of instruction," Anscombe claims, "the little child learns a great deal of the faith. And it learns in the best possible way: as part of an action; as concerning something going on before it; as actually unifying and connecting beliefs, which is clearer and more vivifying than being taught only later, in a classroom perhaps, that we have thee beliefs."<sup>9</sup> She speaks of teaching little children "both because it is important in itself and because it is the clearest way of bringing out what 'transubstantiation' means."<sup>10</sup>

The word *transubstantiation*, she says, was developed first in Greek and later in Latin translation to convey the idea "that there is a change of what is there, totally into something else. A conversion of one physical reality into another *which already exists*."<sup>11</sup> It does not refer to a new substance coming out of an already existing one, nor is it



like digestion where a person becomes what he or she eats. These are changes in matter, but the word refers to something else: "When one says 'transubstantiation' one is saying exactly what one teaches the child, in teaching it that Christ's words, by the divine power given to the priest who uses them in his place, have changed the bread so that it isn't there any more (nor the stuff of which it is made) but instead there is the body of Christ."<sup>12</sup>

Anscombe says that the doctrine does not refer to a "dimensional" way of being in a place (as if the physical dimensions of Christ's body could occupy those of the bread or wine), but in a "non-dimensional" way. She says there are other ways of being in a place and uses the example of a thousand pieces of mirror, "each of which reflects one whole body, itself much bigger than any of them and itself not dimensionally displaced."<sup>13</sup> When applied to the Eucharist, she states: "That which the bread has become, the place where we are looking has become (though not dimensional) the place where it is: a place in heaven."<sup>14</sup>

Even so, Anscombe says that it would be a mistake to think that the doctrine of transubstantiation could ever be fully understood: "It was perhaps a fault of the old exposition in terms of a distinction between the substance of a thing (supposed to be unascertainable) and its accidents, that this exposition was sometimes offered as if it were supposed to make everything intelligible."<sup>15</sup> An element of mystery will always remain: "When we call something a mystery, we mean that we cannot iron out the difficulties about understanding it and demonstrate once for all that it is perfectly possible."<sup>16</sup>

Anscombe goes on to offer three reasons why we celebrate the Eucharist: 1. Christ tells us to do so; 2. it is his way of being with us until he comes again; and 3. he wants to nourish us with himself.<sup>17</sup> The first, she claims, is reason enough; the second concerns the doctrine of transubstantiation; the third "is the greatest mystery of all about the Eucharistic sacrifice, a greater mystery than transubstantiation itself, though it must be an essential part of the significance of transubstantiation."<sup>18</sup>

She spends the remainder of her pamphlet exploring this mystery of mysteries. At his Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus was celebrating a Passover meal and, in addition to the traditional Jewish grace, then added the words over the bread, "This is my body," and over the cup of wine, "This is my blood." Anscombe points out that, of the two types of



Jewish sacrifice — the holocaust, in which the whole of the sacrificial victim is destroyed, and the other, in which the people eat the sacrificial victim — Jesus at the Last Supper is enacting the latter: “His first command in his gracesaying was to *eat*; it subsequently emerges that he is making a sacrificial offering and that he is superseding the paschal lamb, assuming its place.”<sup>19</sup> Jesus gives his flesh and blood to us as food.

On one level, Anscombe claims that what Jesus is doing is clearly symbolic: “. . . we are not physically nourished by Christ’s flesh and blood as the Jews were by the paschal lamb.”<sup>20</sup> On another level, however, she says that taking part in Holy Communion is more than just a symbolic action (a typically Protestant notion), but that we actually are consuming Jesus, that is to say “*eating him*.”<sup>21</sup>

*Anscombe’s writing on the Eucharist focuses on transubstantiation. She believed it was important to teach children about it, to help them understand that something mysterious is taking place.*

In reflecting on why anyone would want to eat someone’s flesh and drink his blood, Anscombe points out that Christians are not like savages who were known to eat the flesh of a brave adversary to acquire his virtue. The eating and drinking of Christ’s flesh and blood is a symbol of something deeper, but is unlike other symbolic gestures with clear meanings such as “kissing the feet of the Savior” or “binding oneself to him.”

She delineates the difference in this way: “Certainly this eating and drinking are themselves symbolic. I mean that, whether this is itself literal or is a purely symbolic eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood, that is in turn symbolical of something else. So, if we only symbolically (and not really) eat his flesh, our action is the symbol of a symbol. If we literally eat his flesh, our action is a direct symbol. The reason why the action is in any case strange and arcane is this: it is not a natural or easily intelligible symbol. How, and what, it symbolizes — that is deeply mysterious.”<sup>22</sup>

Anscombe then deals with the concept of “transsignification,” a concept which holds that the “substance” of a thing is the meaning it has in life. Some theologians say this is a better term than



transubstantiation, since bread and wine are not single substances and it would therefore be misleading to speak of a change in substance.

She defends transubstantiation in this way: “. . . the bread and wine that are fit to use at Eucharist are defined by the natural kinds they are made from, by wheat and grape.”<sup>23</sup> Her main criticism of this transsignification, however, is this: “. . . the odd thing, which apparently is not noticed, is that what gets transsignified in the Eucharist is not the bread and wine, but the body and blood of the Lord, which are transsignified into food and drink. And that is the mystery.”<sup>24</sup>

When we receive Holy Communion, we eat the body and drink of the blood of Christ and share in the life of God himself. She ends her treatment of the Eucharist with a quotation from Saint Augustine: “He gives us his body to make us into his body.”<sup>25</sup> The sacrament, for him as well as for her, “affects the unity of the people who join together to celebrate the Eucharist and to receive Communion.”<sup>26</sup> It is “the mystery of the faith which is the same for the simple and the learned. For they believe the same, and what is grasped by the simple is not better understood by the learned: their service is to clear away the rubbish which the human reason so often throws in the way to create obstacles.”<sup>27</sup>

### Observations

Although much more could be said, the above presentation highlights many of the main contours of Anscombe’s spiritual outlook and teaching on the Eucharist. If nothing else, it demonstrates that her reflections on the Eucharist are critical, creative, and concise. What follows are some remarks concerning the depth of her insights and their relevance for believers today.

1. To begin with, Anscombe claims that even a small child is capable of understanding what the Church is teaching through the doctrine of transubstantiation. She employs her analytical method to uncover what we might call the “teaching behind the teaching:” a change of one concrete reality (the bread and wine) into another that already exists (the flesh and blood of the risen Lord). The doctrine, she maintains, unifies and connects beliefs, since it implies belief in the divinity and resurrection of Christ. She reminds us that no formulation of the faith will ever fully be able to explain what takes place.

2. Anscombe refuses to separate her work as an analytical philosopher from her Catholic belief system. She uses the analytical method to probe many of the doctrinal and moral teachings of the faith in order deal with the intellectual obstacles the believing community may be facing and so arrive at a deeper understanding of the issue at hand. In the case of the Church's teaching on the Eucharist, she points out both the strengths and weaknesses of terms such as *transubstantiation* and *transsignification* and goes to the very heart of what takes place at the Eucharist: the change of bread of wine into the body and blood of the risen Lord.

*We celebrate the Eucharist because Christ tells us to do so; it is his way of being with us until he comes again; and he wants to nourish us. The last is the greatest mystery.*

3. Anscombe says that one of the weaknesses in the traditional doctrine of transubstantiation is that it sometimes gives the impression of being a comprehensive explanation with no room for development. Although she points out that even classical Aristotelian would not consider the notion of transubstantiation tenable, she says that the way the doctrine is sometimes presented deprives the sacrament of its sense of mystery. As a philosopher, she has a very good sense of what human reason can and cannot do. In the case of the Eucharist, she underscores the point that no theological formulation will ever exhaust the mystery of the change that takes place during Mass.

4. In her analysis of transsignification, the idea that what takes place at the consecration is not a change of "substance," but a change in "meaning," she recognizes the difficulty with using the term "substance" since the bread and wine are multiple rather than single substances. At the same time, she says that the bread and wine fit to be used at Eucharist (there can be no additives) are *defined* by what they are made from: wheat and grape. More importantly, she identifies a weakness in applying the notion of transsignification to the Eucharist, since the transformation of meaning is not that in the bread and wine, but in the body and blood of Christ himself.

5. Anscombe recognizes that the Eucharist is both a symbol and yet more than a symbol. She points out the weakness in some Protestant understandings of the Eucharist being merely a symbolic



eating of the body and blood of Christ. The difficulty with such positions, she maintains, is that the eating and drinking are themselves symbolic, and those who hold this position run the risk of turning the Eucharist into a “symbol of a symbol.” For this reason, the Catholic position that communicants consume the *real* flesh of their Savior, Jesus Christ, is more tenable since it preserves both the mystery and the authentic symbolism of what takes place at Mass.

6. The purpose of the Eucharist, for Anscombe, is to make us into the body of Christ. While the image of the “body,” she maintains, is a metaphor, the unity of life to which the metaphor points is no metaphor, but very much a reality. At Eucharist, Christ gives us his flesh and blood so that we might become one with him by sharing in his very life. When seen in this light, the Eucharist is an expression of our real and authentic union with him and one another. The sacrament, in other words, both symbolizes and effects the unity with Christ of all who gather around the table of the Lord and celebrate the Lord’s redeeming love.

7. Finally, as a Catholic philosopher Anscombe uses reason to explore the meaning of the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation and come to a deeper understanding of the mystery of the sacrament. She uses reason to explain this teaching in a way that is intelligible and easy to understand and yet also preserves its sense of mystery. In doing so, she is not engaging in apologetics, nor attempting to exhaust the meaning of the sacrament, but simply demonstrating the reasonableness of the Catholic faith, while at the same time emphasizing that what takes place at the consecration must always be open to further possible formulations. In the end, she recognizes that the sacrament is one of the great mysteries of the faith that belongs to both the simple and the learned.

## Conclusion

In a piece for *The New York Times* marking the tenth anniversary of her death, Mark Oppenheimer described G. E. M. Anscombe as an “outspoken Catholic philosopher,” considered by some “the greatest postwar English philosopher, and the greatest female philosopher ever (a superlative she would loathe),” whose “fearless thinking and uncompromising Christian writing” was “enjoying a renaissance.” He further asserts that her views “are inseparable from her biography.”<sup>28</sup> She was not a philosopher who simply happened to be a Catholic

and whose faith had little (if anything) to do with her program of philosophical inquiry. On the contrary, her faith informed her reasoned search for truth, while at the same time enabling her to remain true to the strictest standards of her profession. She herself saw no contradiction between her Catholic faith and analytic philosophy's careful examination of language as a preferred method for doing philosophy.

Anscombe's teaching on the Eucharist is a clear example of her willingness to apply the analytical method to the tenets of her Catholic faith. "Analytical philosophy," she once wrote, "is more characterized by styles of argument and investigation than by doctrinal content. It is thus possible for people of widely different beliefs to be practitioners of this sort of philosophy. It ought not to surprise anyone that a seriously believing Catholic Christian should also be an analytical philosopher."<sup>29</sup>

Rather than being a hindrance to her philosophical endeavors, Anscombe's Catholicism gave her a unique vantage point from which to view the issues at hand, see them in perspective, and identify angles that many of her contemporaries either overlooked or simply could not see. Her explanation of the doctrine of transubstantiation, for example, combines critical analysis and an openness to mystery. It points out the doctrine's strengths and weaknesses, examines critically the alternative explanation of transsignification, and focuses on the underlying teaching that the Church is trying to convey: that at the words of consecration the bread and wine become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Anscombe viewed her role as a Catholic philosopher as clearing away the debris that human reason had often put in the way. She anticipated John Paul II's challenge in *Fides et Ratio* "to trust in the power of human reason and not to set themselves goals that are too modest in their philosophizing."<sup>30</sup> She also recognized, as John Paul himself asserts, that "philosophical thought is often the only ground for understanding and dialogue with those who do not share our faith."<sup>31</sup> She did, in other words, what she knew how to do best: philosophize!

She did not see any contradiction between her Catholic faith and her analytical approach to philosophy, but saw them as mutually enriching. If nothing else, her teaching on the Eucharist reminds



today's believers of the reasonableness of the Catholic faith and its capacity to withstand the critical gaze of careful philosophical analysis. It also highlights the limitations of human reason and its inability to fully articulate (let alone exhaust) the sacramental mysteries that touch the very the foundations of the Catholic theological tradition.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Alan Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy: The Twentieth Century* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2011), 184; Luke Gormally, "Introduction," in *Moral Truth and Moral Tradition: Essays in Honor of Peter Geach and Elizabeth Anscombe*, ed. Luke Gormally (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 1-5. For a complete Anscombe bibliography, see L. Gormally, C. Kietzmann, and J. M. Torralba, "Bibliography of Works by G. E. M. Anscombe (7th version, June 2012), [http://www.unav.es/filosofia/jmtorralba/anscombe/G.\\_E.\\_M.\\_Anscombe\\_Bibliography.htm](http://www.unav.es/filosofia/jmtorralba/anscombe/G._E._M._Anscombe_Bibliography.htm).

<sup>2</sup> For an example of a collaborative effort by Anscombe and Geach, see G. E. M. Anscombe and Peter Geach, *Three Philosophers* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> See G. E. M. Anscombe, "A Reply to Mr. C. S. Lewis's Argument that 'Naturalism' is Self-Refuting," in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, vol. 2, *Metaphysics and the Philosophy of Mind* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 224-232. See also Alister McGrath, *C. S. Lewis: A Life* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2013), 250-259; Vincelette, *Recent Catholic Philosophy*, 184.

<sup>4</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, November 21, 1964), n. 33. For an expanded treatment of the vocation of the laity, see John Paul II, *Christifideles Laici* (Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation on the Vocation and the Mission of the Lay Faithful in the Church and in the World, December 30, 1988). All Vatican documents cited in this paper are available at "The Holy See," [http://www.vatican.va/phome\\_en.htm](http://www.vatican.va/phome_en.htm).

<sup>5</sup> For an expanded treatment of Anscombe's contribution to the Catholic intellectual tradition, see Dennis J. Billy, "G. E. M. Anscombe and Catholic Moral Thought," in *G. E. M. Anscombe and the Catholic Intellectual Tradition*, eds., John Mizzone, Philip Pegan, and Geoffrey Karabin (Aston, PA: Neumann University Press, 2016), 25-48.

<sup>6</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, "On Transubstantiation," in *The Collected Philosophical Papers of G. E. M. Anscombe*, 3:107-12.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:107.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:108.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:108-109.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:109.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:109-110.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

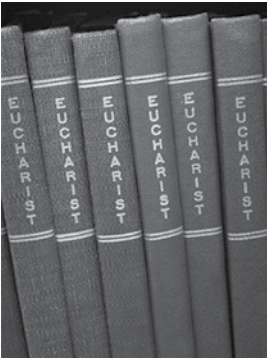
<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:110.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:110-111.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:111.

- <sup>24</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 3:111-112.  
<sup>26</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3:112.  
<sup>28</sup> Mark Oppenheimer, "Renaissance for Outspoken Catholic Philosopher," *The New York Times*, January 7, 2011.  
<sup>29</sup> G. E. M. Anscombe, "Twenty Opinions Common among Modern Anglo-American Philosophers," in *Faith in a Hard Ground: Essays in Religion, Philosophy, and Ethics* by G. E. M. Anscombe, eds. Mary Geach and Luke Gormally (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2008), 66.  
<sup>30</sup> John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*, n. 56.  
<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 104.

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## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# To Pray Is to Become What God Is

by Peter J. Riga

*Prayer is essential to a vital relationship with God. All religious traditions teach this. But what is prayer, and how can we deepen a life of prayer and contemplation?*

Peter J. Riga is an attorney who resides in Houston, Texas. In addition to practicing law, he has written extensively on religious topics and has authored several articles in *Emmanuel*.

IN ANY RELIGION, NOTHING IS MORE FUNDAMENTAL THAN PRAYER OR communication with the transcendent, at least for those religions which posit a personal, intelligent Supreme Being. (Even Buddhists pray.)

Prayer is that vital, essential communication or relationship between God and the human person. It is the point of entry into the hidden mystery which is the divine, God. It is conversation, engagement, between the incomprehensible and the creature.

In truth, there really is no other way of understanding God except in and through prayer because God is beyond all rational dialogue. In prayer, we come to know who God is and we surrender ourselves to the mystery of one who is without beginning or end. This is entirely God's initiative, for unless God chooses to relate to his creation there is no communication. In this brief reflection, I hope to explore this relationship in question form.

### **Does Prayer Help Us to Understand God?**

Clearly, this is not a purely intellectual knowledge. It cannot be because God is beyond all human reasoning. Prayer is a personal encounter with the transcendent, the unknowable. It is done in faith and is founded upon what God reveals and tells us about himself. Prayer is a response to the word God addresses to us first.

In prayer, we come to understand God just as in those relationships that most define us humanly there is self-communication, reciprocity,



and love. However, there is a basic difference. God does not let himself be known and understood as we normally do, for God cannot be mastered or controlled. The more we know about God, the more we understand how little we know.

Knowledge of God comes from a source other than the rational. We must put aside rational discourse and enter into the realm of mystical experience where God takes charge. No matter how much we study and learn about God, God reveals himself in the intimacy of the heart, beyond reason and rationality.

### **Must We Really Have an Attentive Soul to Know God?**

The answer is of course! We do not know God as we know material things or observable reality. God is “nothing” — *no-thing* that we know! Things are finite and need repetition because they are finite. There is “knowledge” beyond human knowledge.

Saint Thomas Aquinas said that the highest and greatest knowledge of God that we can attain is to recognize that God is unknowable in any customary human way. This is frightening to rational beings because it requires surrendering to the unknowable so that what is beyond our reason can be encountered. If God is beyond reason, a mystical relationship alone is what God reveals to us. Only an attentive soul can know and surrender to this reality, which is finally love itself.

### **Isn't It Discouraging to Say That God is Unknowable? In Prayer, Do We Not Address a Person?**

It is not because one says that God is unknowable that God does not allow himself to be known in our world. His presence in our lives is experienced as action. In prayer, God gives himself to be revealed and to be touched. He gives peace, joy, and fervor which are human sentiments, often at the beginning.

But to understand God well, it is necessary to commit to and deepen this relationship constantly. Pray always! “Then Jesus told them a parable about the necessity for them to pray always without becoming weary” (Lk 18:1). In that way, we approach God or, rather, God approaches us. It is only in prayer that we experience this approach of God beyond all reason. We are drawn close to the God who is “no-thing.”



### **Must We Therefore Hold Ourselves to Fidelity in Prayer?**

If we pray only infrequently, say once a month, it is doubtful that we will truly know God. The more we seek to encounter God in prayer, the more God reveals himself to us. It is a question of love. Love is eternal, beyond all the finite realities of our human existence.

Scripture tells us that God is love. That is all we need to know. If we love someone, the more we want to see and be with that person; and the more we see and are with the one we love, the more we know of him or her. The same is true of God. And the more we love, the more we become like God because God is love (cf. 1 Jn 4:7-16). God is infinite love beyond our comprehension. The mystics related this truth but never exhausted it.

*Prayer is the point of entry into the hidden mystery which is the divine, God.*

### **What Can We Understand of God?**

God is a mystery not to be mastered or encapsulated. Anything else is idolatry. Only in prayer can the true God be revealed to us. It is God who seizes us, not the opposite. God possesses us; we do not possess God. For Christians, God's communication is his eternal Word, Jesus Christ.

At the profoundest depths of our souls, there is only silence. It takes time to understand God because it is God who takes the initiative. We wait and are open. We can only wait for God to speak, to be with us. We thus enter into a more profound form of prayer — contemplation — where God possesses us completely. Contemplation goes beyond words as we enter into the embrace of God who reveals himself to us as absolute love. And because God is love, this embrace is one of love not reason.

### **Is It Then That We Touch the Divine?**

John of the Cross speaks of a "delicate touch" with reference to the actions of the Holy Spirit in the soul. We are touched by mercy, compassion, and tenderness. God thus transforms us, "divinizes us," in the words of the Greek fathers. All the great religions are in quest

of this, of a face-to-face relationship with the divine in the interior of the soul. Mystics of various traditions have come to this conclusion: that it is only through contemplation that we enter most fully into the mystery of God.

### **Can We One Day Have the Fullness of the Knowledge of God?**

We cannot have it in this life. God can only reveal himself as the fullness of love after death: from birth to life, from death to the absolute love, God. In the words of Jesus, we must be born again by the Spirit who inhabits our hearts where the love of God embraces us. On earth, we can only catch a glimpse of that which God will reveal to us in love. After death, we will know and be known and what has not yet been revealed to us will be made known.

John of the Cross says that God, known and seen fully in the beyond and already grasped by faith on earth, is one. God is present to us and reveals as much to us as we can grasp. What faith understands and believes will only fully be revealed after death in the transformation which we will experience as we enter into God's eternal presence.

*John of the Cross speaks of a "delicate touch" with reference to the actions of the Holy Spirit in the soul.*

The Trinity is present to us in this life, at work in creation, redemption, and in the mystery of our sanctification. This is always God's work. The more we open ourselves to God by his grace and by our own freedom, the more we know of God. This is an infinite endeavor until eternity, where time is no more. The only thing that remains is the relationship of love.

### **Is to Know God in Prayer a Whole Journey to Traverse?**

In the spiritual life, there is a continual progression because God is infinite love, a mystery we can never exhaust. God leads us in and through prayer. We can have moments of weakness. Teresa of Avila, the great Carmelite reformer and mystic, ceased real prayer for a whole year which was the most difficult period in her life. We can even be in a state of infidelity, but the progression is still unending because God is infinite. God never abandons us; it is we who abandon God when we cease to pray.



To pray is to enter into the mystery and infinity of God, into the infinity of compassion, love, and mercy because God is infinitely compassionate, loving, and merciful. *To pray is to become what God is*, and since God is love, the more we open ourselves to God, the more we love. The more we love, the more we become like God. This is the heart of the reality of prayer.

### Can We Measure This Progression?

Perhaps the most tangible measure of our progression in a relationship with God is the compassion we have for others, the capacity to forgive, to understand, and to be benevolent toward our brothers and sisters. If we do not love in this life, we will only be left to ourselves, which is the definition of hell.

*The more we love, the more we become like God. This is the heart of the reality of prayer.*

Prayer is at the heart of all faith. Prayer is the place where God manifests himself and where we are met by God in loving encounter and intimacy. There is ultimately only one place where we can grow in the knowledge of God. That is in prayer.

“Oh, living flame of love,  
as you wound me with tenderness  
in the most profound center of my soul,  
since you no longer cause me sorrow,  
perfect your work, if you wish,  
tear down the veil  
which opposes our sweet encounter.”

John of the Cross, *The Living Flame of Love*





## EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# Living As Jesus Lived

by Anthony Schueller, SSS

*Spirituality is born of discovering and living in the power of that which moves us most deeply. It is a lifelong pursuit.*

“WHAT DO YOU TREASURE THE MOST? HOW DO YOU IMAGINE THE WORLD? PETER Feldmeier says that if you are willing to ask yourself these questions, then you’re on the way to defining your own spirituality.”

These words introduce an interview with Feldmeier, Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Toledo, in the May 2016 issue of *U.S. Catholic*. “Building a relationship with God,” he states, “is a lifelong process of transformation. The key is first figuring out where your heart lies.”

Feldmeier defines *spirituality* as “the overriding term that describes engagement in things transcendental. Ultimate aims. Ultimate goals. It has to do with one’s connection with and commitment to ways of engaging transcendence. All adherents of religions, Christians or not, have a sense of transcendence or a sense of intimacy that drives how they try to live their lives, their piety, and their virtues and values.”

Feldmeier’s comments evoke Richard McBrien’s definition of being “spiritual” in his monumental work *Catholicism* (1976): “To be ‘spiritual’ means to know, and to live according to the knowledge that there is more to life than meets the eye. To be ‘spiritual’ means, beyond that, to know, and to live according to the knowledge that God is present to us in grace as the principle of personal, interpersonal, social, and even cosmic transformation. To be ‘open to the Spirit’ is to accept explicitly who we are and who we are always to become, and to direct our lives accordingly, in response to God’s grace within us.”

Father Anthony Schueller is the Provincial Superior of the Province of Saint Ann of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and the editor of *Emmanuel*.



## Getting Started

The answer to the questions “What do you treasure the most?” and “How do you imagine the world?” comes easy to me.

What I treasure most in my life of faith as a Catholic, a religious, and a priest is the Eucharist, the memorial of the Lord’s death and resurrection and the place of encounter and intimacy with the risen Lord.

It is also the mystery that feeds my religious imagination. The iconic meals Jesus hosted and shared with others along the way of his journey to Jerusalem stir my hope for my own salvation and that of the world and its people. The experience of dining with the Lord at the table of the Eucharist is the foundation of my spirituality and the inspiration of my ministry. It is *where my heart lies*.

I believe that a Eucharistic spirituality flows both from what Jesus *said* at table on the night before he died and from what he *did*.

The groundbreaking research of German Lutheran author and New Testament scholar Joachim Jeremias, in *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1966) and in other writings, has contributed greatly to our understanding of the many layers of tradition and meaning (Passover, sacrifice, memorial, Messianic banquet, etc.) beneath the words of Jesus as he shared the Last Supper with his disciples in the Upper Room.

The new Exodus, undertaken in the breaking of his body and the outpouring of his blood on the cross on Calvary the following day, is for the remission of sin in the atoning power of the Lord’s sufferings. Rejoicing in this truth, none of us can ever hear or recite the words of consecration as we did before we came to know it.

The actions of Jesus at table that night — *taking, blessing, breaking, and giving* the bread and the cup of the Eucharist — witness just as eloquently, I believe, to what the Lord Jesus intended and to what he asks us to do in memory of his self-offering until the day of his return. Here, I hope to probe each of these actions briefly as a way of understanding how we can integrate and live a dynamic, transformative Eucharistic spirituality.

Emphasis on practical faith and action was a consistent theme in the preaching of Jesus, who praised those who hear the word of God and

put it into practice (cf. Lk 11:28) and said that it was by their love for one for one another, not by creedal statements, that the world would know his disciples (cf. Jn 13:35). Most tellingly, in my estimation, is his admonition to his disciples after he had washed their feet that night and explained its meaning to them: "If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it" (Jn 13:17). Jesus seems to have stressed orthopraxy (right acting) over orthodoxy (right thinking).

### Fourfold Action

Our text is from the Gospel of Matthew 26:26-29: "While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, 'Take and eat; this is my body.' Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, from now on I shall not drink this fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of my Father.' Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

*Eucharistic spirituality flows both from what Jesus said at table on the night before he died and from what he did.*

### Taking

Bread (*matzo*) is integral to the Passover meal, intended to recall the unleavened bread the Hebrews ate in their homes in Egypt along with the roasted flesh of a sacrificial lamb and other ritual elements. Bread is eaten at various points in the meal, its use both nutritive and symbolic.

In most cultures, there is nothing more basic to the maintenance of human life than bread. Along with water, bread nourishes our bodies, promotes good health, and fosters growth. "Taking bread," therefore, is embracing the life that God has given us for our happiness and wellbeing.

Jesus' act of taking bread symbolizes the mystery of the incarnation by which God inaugurated the great work of redeeming and reclaiming his creation. The eternal Word assumed our humanity precisely to redeem us from within, not from above or apart. As the magnificent Christological hymn of Philippians 2 attests, "... Christ Jesus, though he



was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance . . ." (5-7).

A Eucharistic spirituality arises out of the life which is God's gift to us and which we offer to the Father in union with Jesus. Bread is the medium of the offering. Liturgical theologians like Theodore E. Dobson, author of *Say But the Word: How the Lord's Supper Can Transform Your Life* (1984), have long stated that this offering is key to the transformative power of the rite. We offer ourselves and every aspect of our lives with the bread to God.

### Blessing

In times like our own generally characterized by a higher degree of informality and the loss of a sense of rituals in life, prayers of blessing nonetheless remain part of sitting at table for many if not most people.

In the Jewish tradition, benedictions (*berakah*) — expressions of praise or thanks directed to God — were recited at specific points in the synagogue liturgy, on feast days and special occasions, and at table.

The benediction Jesus voiced in the Upper Room on the eve of his death would have followed a prescribed format and exalted the God of Israel for the blessings of deliverance, the covenant, the law, the Promised Land, and the mighty deeds that accompanied the Hebrew's Exodus from bondage and enslavement at the hands of their Egyptian oppressors. It is a timeless story still repeated in observant Jewish homes today during the Passover Seder each spring.

A Eucharistic spirituality arises from hearts which recognize the utter giftedness of life and appreciate that every blessing and grace come from a benevolent Creator, the author of life and the sustainer of all who live. It is a prayer of humble thanksgiving and praise.

### Breaking

Bread is broken, torn into pieces, *to be shared* among those seated at table; the cup is passed from one person to another that all *might partake of it*. There is certain "violence" to it: what was one is now many, "for the many" (Mt 26:28). In the very act of sharing what has



been broken or passed, communion occurs.

The “violence” done to the integrity of the bread and the cup pales in comparison to the violence visited upon the innocent Lamb of God. Betrayal. Arrest. Denial. Scourging. Crowning with thorns. Public denunciation and a sentence of crucifixion. Derision. Death. Abandonment. Burial in a borrowed tomb.

Against the specter of such overwhelming violence and evil, which Jesus foreknew and which caused him such agony in the Garden of Gethsemane to become as lifeblood oozing from his pores, he nevertheless submits. He remains a center of peace for his followers whose faith is waning, convinced that the Father will bring him safely through trial to victory. “He humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even to death on a cross” (Phil 2:8).

*In the very act of sharing what has been broken or passed, communion occurs.*

A prominent American churchman once commented that we grow more through adversity than we do through success and accomplishment. I believe this is true.

A Eucharistic spirituality recognizes our fundamental dependence as human beings on God for courage, vision, and the grace of perseverance. We are weak; God alone is strong.

## **Giving**

The Gospels portray Jesus as someone who was wholly available to others. A clear image emerges of a person who gave of himself without limit. He and his disciples were constantly on the move, responding to the masses who came to be healed and comforted and encouraged in their relationship with God, and who were moved by the powerful preaching of the charismatic rabbi from Nazareth.

In the quiet of early morning or day’s end, Jesus would retreat from the crowds with his disciples to deserted places for moments of prayerful communion with the Father. On occasion, they would find rest in the company of cherished friends Martha, Mary, and Lazarus at Bethany. But Jesus’ life was one of selfless giving in loving obedience to the will



of his Father and in service to others. The ultimate act of that giving was his death on the cross for the life of the world.

A Eucharistic spirituality impels us to give our lives to God and to others as completely as Jesus did. Having participated in the holy table of the Eucharist, we move out from the sanctuary to the world around us to share the love of God.

### Conclusion

In a homily on August 16, 2015, Pope Francis said: “The Eucharist is Jesus who gives himself entirely to us. To nourish ourselves with him and abide in him through Holy Communion, if we do it with faith, transforms our life into a gift to God and to our brothers and sisters. To let ourselves be nourished by the Bread of Life means to be in tune with the heart of Christ, to assimilate his choices, thoughts, behaviors. It also means that we enter into dynamism of sacrificial love and become persons of peace, forgiveness, reconciliation, and sharing in solidarity.”

The apostle Paul exhorted the church at Philippi two millennia ago: “Have among yourselves the same attitude that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). The Lord’s actions at table with his followers on the night before he died — *taking, blessing, breaking, and giving* — form the basis of a Eucharistic spirituality that fulfills his command to “do this in memory of me” (Lk 22:19).

This is more than reenacting a ritual or taking part in a sacrament of the Church. It is a call *to live as Jesus lived*: fully alive, profoundly thankful, willing to be broken, and open to being given over to God and to others without reserve.





## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Fig Tree

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

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

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE (Mk 13:28, 29) AND THE PARABLE OF THE Doorkeeper (Mk 13:33-37) conclude Jesus' discourse concerning his return at the end of the world. The discourse is a final testament of Jesus before his passion and death.

The illustration in the parable that concerns us here is the budding fig tree. In Palestine, the fig tree is distinguished from other trees by completely shedding its leaves in winter, so that its first budding is a sign of the return of summer which comes quickly after a short spring. The significance of the example chosen by Jesus, the fig tree, is due to its *predictability*.

In contrast to the fig tree, the almond tree may often flower prematurely and have its flowers withered by a late frost. In recording this parable of Jesus, the evangelist Mark is exhorting his community, a community expecting the final and even imminent coming of Jesus, to be watchful, observant, and persevering in faith.

The discourse of Jesus, that concluded with the parables of the Fig Tree and the Doorkeeper, began with a prediction that the temple in Jerusalem would be destroyed (13:2), a prediction that precipitated a double question by the disciples: "When will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are to be accomplished?" (13:4).

In the first major section of Jesus' discourse, traditional "end of time" motifs — wars, earthquakes, plagues, and famines — are taken up. These motifs are meant to signal the end of history; and that time is to be characterized by persecution as well as the profanation and

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destruction of the temple (13:9-23), after which there will be cosmic disturbances preceding the return of the Son of Man in order to gather the elect from the ends of the earth (13:24-27).

Mark narrates this discourse of Jesus in view of problems that were alive in his community. Mark does not want his community to view the wars, civil disturbances, and persecutions that preceded the destruction of the temple in 70 AD as the sign of the return of Jesus, as some claimed. These things, as Jesus himself foretold, are only the antecedents to the end (13:7, 8). The end will come only “after that tribulation” (13:24).

*Mark uses the concluding parables to convey a proper understanding of the “end of time.”*

Mark counters those in his community, or individuals known by his community, who interpreted the destruction of the temple as the final days and claimed that in some way Jesus had returned and that his power and authority were being manifested (13:21, 22). Mark uses the concluding parables to counter such claims with a proper understanding of the “end of time” and a perspective on life in community prior to the return of Jesus.

With the scripture passages that we have just cited, Mark wishes to present a balanced understanding of the end of time and of the Lord’s return. He simply declares that the consummation of time and history, when the Son of Man will return, is as near as the summer after the budding of the fig tree — and no more than that. In contrast to an enthusiasm that would claim that the “end time” has arrived and that Christ has returned, Mark says that the words of Jesus cannot be invoked to determine the precise day and the hour of his return (13:32). The precise day and hour must remain unknown to us. That the Lord Jesus will return, however, is as certain as the return of summer after the budding of the fig tree.

Christians, then, must believe that history, under God’s sovereignty, has direction and purpose. The time and manner of its consummation must remain unknown. We have only to await the Lord’s return with great assurance and faithful vigilance.





## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# Fly the Flag of Joy!

by Jeanette Martino Land

*Joy is the infallible sign of the Spirit's presence in the mind and heart of the believer.*

IT IS SAID THAT LAZARUS LAUGHED HEARTILY FOR YEARS AFTER JESUS RAISED HIM from the dead. Hence, Lazarus' home in Bethany is called "The House of Laughter." Is your rectory, your parish, your office, your home a place of laughter and joy in the Lord?

Jesus said, "Be of good cheer!" He practiced what he preached. He laughed. He smiled. He was warm. He was and is the Good News! One of the ways we can spread the Good News is by our joy. As Saint Teresa of Calcutta put it, "One filled with joy preaches without preaching."

As an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion for the past 30-plus years, I have seen a lot of sad, vacant, troubled faces. I wonder, "Where is the joy?" People are approaching the Lord's Table to receive Jesus Eucharistic with blank faces! Some even leave right after receiving Communion. There is indifference and not much evident joy that the Lord of Lords and the King of Kings has come to them!

My dear priests, let your joy be evident when you preside at Mass and break the bread of the Eucharist with God's people! When you distribute Holy Communion, take time to make eye contact with each communicant, saying "The Body of Christ," slowly, reverently, with deep conviction and great joy.

Isaiah 56:7 states: "... those who obey the covenant I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer." Make this joy evident in your parish. The joy of the Lord in you will bear much fruit.

The word *joy* appears in the Scriptures 205 times. Psalm 66:1-3

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exhorts, “Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth; sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise. Say to God, ‘How awesome are your deeds!’” Five other psalms echo this refrain, as well as verses in Judith (14:9, 16). When you make a joyful noise, you make sounds of joy — you shout for joy! The gladness of your heart bursts forth in you in joyful praise of God.

Laughter is not just good for the soul. Holy humor is meant to be a powerful healing agent in all areas of life — mental, physical, financial, social, as well as the spiritual.

### *The joy of the Lord is the source of our strength.*

Smile more and put the laughter back into your life! I read somewhere that it takes fewer muscles to smile than it does to frown, so put a smile on your face and conserve energy.

In these turbulent and troubled times, happiness is fleeting. As Abraham-Hicks writes, “Success is only measured in terms of joy.” Praise is the gateway to the joy that only the Lord can give in all circumstances. This joy of the Lord will be the source of your strength.

There is a song that goes, “Joy is the flag flown high from the castle of my heart . . . when the King is in residence there!” Invite the King of Kings into your heart and experience his joy — the joy that is your strength!

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord and let it be heard among his people! That is Good News indeed, especially in tough times. Let your joy be evident as you minister to your people!





## *EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY*

# Annie and the Butterfly: A Child's Parable of Transformation and New Life

ANNIE WAS EXCITED! SHE LOVED GOING TO HER GRANDMOTHER AND GRANDFATHER'S house in the country. Her mom and dad were leaving for a long weekend with friends out of town, and Annie would spend the four days at the farm not far from where her family lived.

She and grandma would have time to talk and play games together. She also liked helping grandma with chores around the house. And grandpa would let Annie feed the animals and ride on the tractor with him through the fields.

They would go to church on Sunday and Annie would see some of the children who had become her friends during other visits. They would run and play outside while the adults stayed inside after Mass to talk about grown-up things.

After lunch, which included a generous piece of grandma's homemade apple pie and a scoop of vanilla ice cream, grandpa took Annie for a slow drive on the road that ran along the edges of the cornfield, just to see how the corn was growing. It was a warm, sunny day, and grandpa stopped the tractor and they walked together along the wire fence hand-in-hand.

At one point, Annie looked down and saw something strange. It was barely noticeable. Some caterpillars were crawling along the high grass and eating the leaves and the blades of grass. Then grandpa showed her one particular caterpillar which was turning into a chrysalis, wrapping itself all up in the sticky thread it was weaving around its body.

Grandpa explained that this was a very special time for the caterpillar and that when it eventually came out, it would be a beautiful butterfly.



They continued looking and then found a chrysalis that was all finished and hanging delicately on a leaf. Grandpa gently removed the chrysalis and the leaf and handed it to Annie. She held it very carefully in her hand. Once home, grandma placed the chrysalis and the leaf and some grass inside a clear glass jar so that Annie could watch it turn into a butterfly.

Annie was amazed that the caterpillar, the chrysalis, and the butterfly were the same thing. How could this be when they looked so very different? She thought that the chrysalis was dead. It looked all dried up.

The next morning, Annie noticed that the chrysalis was moving. She wondered what was happening. She leaned in very close and saw something slowly breaking through the brown walls. After a while, a butterfly stretched out its wet, crumpled wings.

Within a few hours, the wings were completely dry and the butterfly spread them out fully. To Annie's amazement, the wings were now brightly colored . . . like a rainbow! It was a miracle how something so ordinary and even a little ugly . . . had now become something so beautiful.

Within each of us there is beauty, goodness, and new life waiting to come out, if only we let it happen. God sees it even before we do!

"Whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come" (2 Cor 5:17).





*Each day, O God,  
you surround us with gifts of love and grace,  
and you guide our growth.  
Help us to understand your purpose in our lives.*

*In moments of sacrifice and self-giving especially,  
may we see how you are changing us and making  
us new.*

*May the Eucharist we celebrate  
proclaim our dying and rising with Jesus, your  
Son.*

*And, with him, may we come to new life.*

*We ask this through Christ our Lord.*

*Amen.*





## *EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY*

# Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

### **It is No Longer I Who Live; It is Jesus Christ Who Lives in Me**

The Apostle of the Eucharist was also a guide to the interior life and to Eucharistic spirituality for many. Here, on returning to Lyons in early April 1865 following his long retreat in Rome during which he made the Gift of Self, Father Eymard touches on the life of union which is to bring about in each of us a more complete configuring to Jesus Christ. Is this not the goal of our Lenten journey to Easter?

“Human beings can do nothing of themselves. They are inclined to evil and can commit any offense unless God sustains them. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself without remaining attached to [the] vine, so we cannot bear fruit unless we remain attached to Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 15:4).

“Oh, if we could understand these words of Saint Paul: ‘It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20), and this other: ‘Jesus Christ must grow in us until we reach full maturity’ (Eph 4:13). Yes, Jesus Christ has a spiritual birth and development in each person. He wants to glorify his Father in each one of us. Let us then say like John the Baptist: ‘He must increase and I must decrease’ (Jn 3:30). In order for him to dwell in us, we must dwell in him; we must respond to his call. . . .

“How can we attain such divine union, you must say. You have complete freedom on the choice of means . . . use everything to attain it! Let everything speak to you about God, and [you] yourself speak to all those with whom you are in contact, pray to him for those who do not know him. . . .

“Don’t let the thought of God remain abstract. Always bring your heart into it. Remain especially in praise and thanksgiving. Be constantly happy to repeat, ‘How good God is! He alone is good.’

“Make positive resolutions. During two or three weeks, concentrate on the same fault to be corrected, the same virtue to practice.”





## PASTORAL LITURGY

# Liturgies with Children: The Directory at 45 and the Lectionary at 25

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

*The Church provides rich resources for celebrating Masses with the youngest members of our assemblies and their parents.*

TWENTY YEARS AGO, I BEGAN A JOURNEY WITH YOU TO REFLECT ON THE PASTORAL liturgy of the Church. We continue our “anniversary year” focus in this column on liturgical practices and rituals by reviewing two key liturgical tomes regarding the importance of celebrating the Eucharist with children.

Several of my liturgy professors, both in the seminary and in graduate studies, commented on the hope of Blessed Pope Paul VI to have two forms for Mass — one for Sundays and another for weekdays. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* really only addresses one form — the dominical (Sunday) liturgy, with minimal commentary for weekday celebrations. Pope Paul was able to fulfill a wish and create a “secondary” or weekday version of the Eucharist by producing the *Directory for Masses with Children* (DMC) and the special praenotanda and ritual elements for these special celebrations. Let’s review a few of the key pieces of the DMC.

First, it is extraordinary and the first time in the history of the Church that a “directory” was created for children. In the 1960s and 1970s, catechists, liturgists, and bishops strove to make the Mass understandable to young people, to catechize through the act of worship, and to provide Eucharistic Prayers that “uncover” the theology of the Mass. Since *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, made “active participation the aim above all else,” why not do all we can to engage children as they prepare for First Communion and the later years of their formation in the faith? Formation was the key, then as it is now, in empowering children to be practicing Catholic Christians, who, grounded in sound Eucharistic theology, live the Eucharist.

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Second, the DMC shortened parts of the liturgy, akin to making a “second version” of the Mass that helps participants (children and adults) become engaged in the Word of God. The DMC recommends a shortened Introductory Rite, with just the Gloria or the Penitential Act, depending on the season, and perhaps just the Gloria to begin the liturgy as the opening song on a feast day or solemnity with children. This was part of the wish of the 1990s Sacramentary produced by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) that never came to fruition in the United States: engage the congregation by using only one part of the many Introductory Rites so as to spend more time with the Liturgy of the Word.

Third, the DMC called for a specific Lectionary for children. While currently critics of the DMC and the Lectionary for children do all in their power to displace or say that this 1973 document is not part of the Roman Rite, it is worth noting that the third edition of the *Roman Missal* does not abolish the DMC or the Lectionary for children. The norms are still valid.

While there are legitimate concerns raised by critics of these, the DMC and the Lectionary are to be used in the pastoral care of children. Moreover, while the revised Lectionary for children is in limbo, with no action as yet taken by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, the 1993 Lectionary may be used, is in “full force,” and may be purchased by the only publisher still making it available, Catholic Book Publishing.

Within the Lectionary, the DMC purposefully did not choose all the readings for the Liturgy of the Word. This fourth key piece to the DMC reminds us that less is more, something to keep in mind especially when preaching to children. It is not necessary to make every point there is to make concerning the Scriptures; limit your words so that your listeners may truly absorb the readings.

The aim of the DMC and the Lectionary is to engage children and elicit their participation. Having a Liturgy of the Word for Children during your Sunday Masses and/or using the Eucharistic Prayers for Children when most of the members of the assembly are children (i.e., school or religious education Masses, one of your Christmas or Easter Masses, etc.) supports the overall goal of active and conscious participation of children — and adults. May we continue to support the DMC and renew our efforts to engage the children whom Christ always welcomes to his table!

## Reminders for March and April

- **Focus Amid the Busyness of Lent, the Triduum, and Eastertime.**

Set aside time and take a day to be alone and review the *Roman Missal*, the *RCIA*, and the *Circular Letter Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* to start praying and readying the most sacred season of the year. We are stressed with many things this time of year, especially penance services; enrich yourself with a day of quiet meditation and prayer on the paschal mystery.

- **Sunday, March 11**

Daylight Saving Time starts. Encourage coming to Mass and not sacrificing a Sunday Eucharist because “I’m so tired”!

- **Sunday, March 25 — Palm Sunday of the Lord’s Passion**

The beginning of Holy Week. The summit of the Church’s liturgical year is the Sacred Paschal Triduum from the evening of Holy Thursday (March 29) to the evening of Easter Sunday (April 1).

- **Sunday, April 1 — The Resurrection of the Lord (Easter Sunday)**


- **April 2-7 — Octave of Easter**

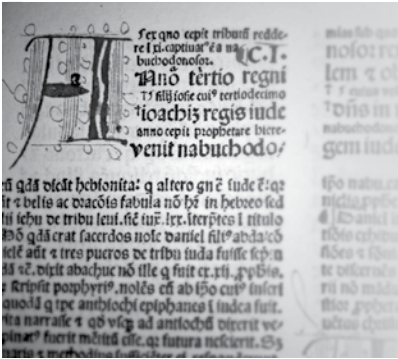
Remember that Funeral Masses use the readings of the day (and they are lovely ones at that). Each day of the Octave is a solemnity.

- **Sunday, April 22 — Fourth Sunday of Easter**

Good Shepherd Sunday and the 55th World Day of Prayer for Vocations. The purpose of this day is to publically fulfill the Lord’s instruction to “Pray the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest” (Mt 9:38; Lk 10:2). Pray that young men and women hear and respond generously to the Lord’s call to the priesthood, diaconate, consecrated life, and societies of apostolic life or secular institutes. Many resources to promote a culture of vocations are available on the USCCB website.

- **Wednesday, April 25 — Administrative Professionals’ Day**

Bless those who partner with us in mission and ministry in the Church and the world, See the *Book of Blessings* for appropriate texts and blessings. Consider anticipating this day on the Fourth Sunday of Easter as a way of affirming those who collaborate with us in ministry. 



## BREAKING THE WORD

# Scriptural Reflections - Homiletics

by John R. Barker, OFM

Brother John R. Barker, OFM, is a Franciscan friar of the Province of Saint John the Baptist (Cincinnati, Ohio) and Assistant Professor of Old Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. His main areas of research relate to the formation and function of biblical texts, particularly the prophetic literature.

March 4, 2018  
Third Sunday of Lent

**Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:22-25; John 2:13-25**

The first readings for Lent this year highlight a fundamental feature of the Old Testament witness to God, which is that God likes to make covenants. We've already been reminded of the covenant God made with Noah and "every living creature" after the flood, and of the covenant God made with Abraham (captured in the reiteration of the promise of land, descendants, and blessing at the end of the episode on Mount Moriah). This week, we hear of the Ten Commandments, which represent the covenant at Sinai. In the next two weeks, we will ponder God's response to a broken covenant and his promise of a "new covenant."

This will lead us right into Holy Week. This sustained attention to covenants suggests it will be worth briefly considering God's predilection for making covenants, and what this might offer us for reflection as we continue through Lent.

It has been said that the difference between a contract and a covenant is that a contract is intended to protect the interests of individual parties to the contract, whereas a covenant is intended to protect the relationship shared by the parties. Marriage, for example, is a covenant intended to nurture the relationship between spouses; a pre-nuptial agreement is intended to protect one spouse from the other should the marriage fall apart.

In the Bible, God makes covenants for the simple reason that God likes to form and protect relationships. The Ten Commandments set out the

expectations God has of Israel as his covenant partner, expectations that might be summarized simply as “love of God and love of neighbor.” This covenant is the culmination of the grand deliverance from Egypt, which was motivated in the first place by God’s covenant relationship with Israel’s ancestors. In the end, the Exodus is about God’s fidelity to his promises and his commitment to a people he forms on the basis of those promises. So the Ten Commandments represent not a list of rules to follow but a summary of the fundamental contours of the relationship God seeks to form and maintain with his people. They capture both God’s fidelity and the divine hope for human fidelity in the context of a dynamic relationship that is intended to give life to Israel.

Once God forms a relationship and formalizes it with a covenant, God is firmly, completely, and enduringly committed to that relationship. One of the most persistent claims of the Bible is that God is faithful to those to whom God has made a commitment. This in itself is a remarkable claim — that God delights in forming relationships with us humans and is unswerving in his commitment to them. It is even more remarkable when we consider that God is well aware how difficult it will be for the frail and faulty human partners to be faithful to the relationship.

It is within the dynamic of divine fidelity and human infidelity that lie the seeds of what Paul calls in our second reading the “foolishness of God.” For the Bible gives witness repeatedly to the lengths to which God will go to maintain his relationships and, when they are broken, to repair them.

I once had a student ask me, as we considered this notable feature of God in the Bible, why God doesn’t just walk away. The question makes sense from a human point of view — we sometimes decide that certain relationships are so toxic or dysfunctional or simply “unprofitable” that it is “wiser” to walk away from them, however reluctantly. But Paul reminds us that divine foolishness is wiser than human wisdom.

The foolishness of God is such that God never — ever — abandons those with whom God has formed a relationship. The focus on covenants this Lent invites us to consider the nature of our relationship with God and to ponder the depths of mercy and fidelity captured in the “foolishness of God,” the supreme manifestation of which we will celebrate with solemnity in a few weeks.

March 11, 2018  
Fourth Sunday of Lent

**2 Chronicles 26:14-16, 19-23; Psalm 137; Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:14-21**

All committed relationships are risky because they carry within them the possibility of betrayal, infidelity, and pain. This is especially true when the relationship is between the holy and faithful God of Israel and fragile, sinful human beings. God's fidelity to Israel is tested almost from the moment of the covenant's inception at Mount Sinai. The scene of the Golden Calf (Exodus 32) exemplifies both the human propensity to turn away from God — frequently out of fear, confusion, or ignorance — and the divine capacity to stay the course in the face of human infidelity and ingratitude.

This paradigmatic dynamic, which is replayed over and over in the Bible, is captured again in this week's first reading. The historical reference is to the final destruction of the kingdom of Judah and the burning of Jerusalem, God's holy "dwelling place." The summary report reminds the reader of the years of struggle that preceded the fateful moment, a history of repeated human infidelity met with insistent, even desperate, divine pleas to turn back to the relationship. But in the end, it was to no avail and God had to resort to the unthinkable — the destruction of his beloved city and the exile of his beloved people — with the hope that this drastic measure would lead to a reformation. With the advent of Cyrus, the time of restoration was thought to be beginning. God had turned his face once more toward his people and was showing them mercy.

In a real sense, Israel experienced the exile as a form of death. Certainly in fact many people did die from war, disease, and famine during and after the Babylonians came through the area. But on a more significant level, the exile represented, however temporarily, a rupture in the relationship between Israel and her God.

This rupture was experienced as a real death, for the God who created and sustained Israel was the source of her life. Without her God, Israel could not really be said to exist, certainly not to "live." And so, when God does extend his mercy to Israel in the form of the restoration in



the years after the exile, God is bringing Israel back to life. From the death of infidelity, sin, and judgment comes new life through the mercy and fidelity of God.

So the gift of life that Paul and Jesus speak of this week is the continuation of an ancient pattern of divine behavior. The idea that “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” is fundamentally consistent with all of God’s previous dealings with his covenant partners, whose death God cannot in the end tolerate, for it means the end of a relationship that God cherishes to a degree that is incomprehensible to his human partners. It was the same “immeasurable riches of his grace” that led God both to bring Israel back from the death of exile and to bring all of God’s children — dead in our sins — to life “in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.”

All three readings, then, highlight this foundational quality of God, witnessed to over and over in both Testaments: God is rich in mercy, both in creating and in bringing back to life those who have died by walking away from the source of life.

## March 18, 2018 Fifth Sunday of Lent

**Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 12:20-33**

The first reading this week takes us back to the time just after the destruction of Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah. Although many remained in the devastated land, others had been exiled to Babylon or become war refugees in Egypt and elsewhere. Wherever they were, the people experienced the loss not only of home, family, and familiar institutions, but especially a keen sense that they lay under God’s judgment for serious and persistent infidelity to the covenant relationship.

In such a situation, the temptation to despair of the relationship was strong, and so a word of comfort and assurance came to Israel. The time of judgment will come eventually to an end, Jeremiah proclaims, and God will repair the broken relationship by establishing a new

covenant. This in itself is good news, because it is only in covenant relationship with her God that Israel can be said to truly live.

But the news is even better, because this new covenant is intended to move the relationship forward by making Israel more capable of being faithful to her God. Now God will place his law within the hearts of each individual Israelite, which is to say, that everyone will be able to “know” God and thus be faithful and obedient to God in the context of relationship. The foundation of this new covenant is, once again, the character of God, who shows himself capable of forgiving evildoing and remembering sin no more.

It’s helpful to recognize that the prophets do not consider the time of judgment as anything other than a regrettable but necessary stage in the ongoing plan of God to nourish and sustain Israel as a holy people. The time of judgment, then, is not intended to be simply punishment, as if this would satisfy some need in God to exact payment (or worse, revenge) for sin. Rather, it is intended to prepare God’s people for a renewed relationship in which every Israelite, “from the least to the greatest,” will draw closer to God.

The experience of Israel suggests that there are times when serious interventions — whatever they may look like — are required for God’s human partners to recognize the ways they have been unfaithful to the relationship so that they can allow God to correct course and get back on track. Those who are in recovery from serious addiction know this as “hitting rock bottom.” And they will tell you that hitting rock bottom is a form of death.

One could say that Israel had to hit rock bottom, to die to its former life in order to gain true life through this new covenant. The death of the former Israel was a necessary prelude to its rebirth through God’s renewing and creative power, which is capable even of transforming the human heart.

We can see how the Bible points to a consistent pattern in which sin leads to death and judgment, but this judgment is used by God to lead from death to new life. (“Judgment,” after all, is related to “justice,” which has to do with setting things right.) So it was for Israel and so it was for Jesus, who as representative of the human family, underwent death in order to produce the fruit of life not only for himself but for all who follow him.

The readings of the past few weeks have consistently suggested one approach to the Lenten season is to consider our own relationship with God within the context of God's fidelity and commitment to life, which we can find only in that relationship. The divine dissatisfaction with death paradoxically means that sometimes God must guide us through one form of death in order to bring us out safely on the other side into a new and better life, with a new heart.

## March 25, 2018 Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion

**Isaiah 50:4-7; Psalm 22; Philippians 2:6-11; Mark 14:1-15:47**

The first reading for Passion Sunday is one of the "Servant Songs" from Isaiah. In these songs, the servant is called by God to serve God by serving God's people. It is the mission of the servant to call God's people back to fidelity and life-giving relationship with him. In the song we hear today, and especially in the one we will hear on Good Friday, the servant suffers greatly for his service, but in the end — because he is faithful despite the pain and degradation — the servant serves both God and God's people precisely through his suffering.

Very early in the Christian tradition, these songs were seen to reflect the mission of Christ and the meaning of his death on the cross. In his self-sacrifice, Christ the Servant manifests both the ultimate human fidelity to God and the depth of God's commitment to his people.

Saints and sinners through the ages have been astounded that God so loved the world as to become not only part of it through the incarnation, but then in this human nature to suffer such a terrifying and painful death for the sake of the very creatures who inflicted that death. This profound divine humility is captured in the hymn from Philippians, which speaks of the Christ taking the form of a "slave."

Our eyes and ears can pass too quickly over this word, but it should give us pause as a remarkable expression of the meaning of Christ's death. Not only do slaves exist (in a sense) for others rather than for themselves, but slavery today is rightly understood to be a denial of the inherent dignity of a fellow human being, made in the image of

God. Yet here we have God himself, in his human nature, willingly setting aside not only his divine but also even his human dignity for our sake. “Incomprehensible” is perhaps too trite a word to capture the nature of this mystery and the depth of God’s fidelity and love manifested in Christ’s passion.

Yet this Sunday, and throughout the coming week, we are invited to stop and ponder this mystery, which is always in danger of becoming stale and domesticated for us who see and make the sign of the cross daily. Holy Week gives us the opportunity to meditate on the fact that the God who calls us to repent, to live in fidelity and obedience, is the same God who became flesh and in that flesh set aside absolutely all divine and human dignity to bring us back with him from death into life.

This is not a God who simply makes demands, requires us to live up to them, and expects us to be sorry when we don’t. This is a God who, in the person of Christ, became a slave to set us free.

April 1, 2018  
The Resurrection of the Lord  
Easter Sunday

**Acts 10:34a, 37-43; Psalm 118; Colossians 3:1-4; John 20:1-9**

Although the gospel reading for the Easter Vigil has the disciples encountering the risen Christ, the reading for the Mass of Easter Day has them still wondering what has happened. Mary of Magdala arrives only to discover that the tomb has been disturbed and that the Lord is no longer in it. She assumes he has been taken away. Simon Peter and “the other disciples” also encounter the empty tomb, and although the unnamed disciple (and author of John’s Gospel) “saw and believed,” we are told of all of them that “they did not yet understand the Scripture that he had to rise from the dead.”

There is the reality, which they see before them, and there is the comprehension of the reality, which takes a little longer. It will only be when they actually encounter the risen Lord that they will begin — begin, mind you — to comprehend what has happened, what God has done in Christ. As the gospel readings in the next couple of weeks

will remind us, it took time and patience for understanding to come.

The same is true for us who have walked the Lenten journey and have arrived at the empty tomb. Perhaps some of us can say we have encountered the risen Lord and have come to believe. We know what Paul means when he reminds the Colossians that they have been “raised with Christ.” We have seen the power of Christ to raise us up from whatever death formerly ruled our lives and the fresh air of Easter morning still fills our lungs.

But for some of us, perhaps, the smell of the tomb still lingers. For some of us, the reality of the resurrection has not “hit,” and like Mary of Magdala, we are still standing at an empty tomb wondering what has happened and what it is all supposed to mean. We know we are supposed to be overjoyed on Easter morning, but it all seems so abstract and theoretical, a theological construct that makes no contact with our own lives. We are still waiting for “Christ your life” to appear to us, too.

The Gospel reminds us that Easter is both a joyous time and a liminal space, where the promise of new life in Christ that we proclaim is ours if we will only accept it still takes time to unfold. For the moment, our lives are still “hidden with Christ in God”: safe, to be sure, but still hidden. Just as it took time — and faith — for those first disciples to realize and accept what God had done in Christ, so, too, for us. We rejoice in what we have received, and we wait in hopeful expectation to see what comes next.

April 8, 2018  
Second Sunday of Easter  
Sunday of Divine Mercy

**Acts 4:32-35; Psalm 118; 1 John 5:1-6; John 20:19-31**

There’s an interesting feature of the first reading, from the Acts of the Apostles, that bears some consideration. We are told first that the “community of believers was of one heart and mind,” and that they held all their possessions in common. And then later we are told that “there was no needy person among them,” precisely because they held

all their possessions in common. But between these two notices, we are told that the apostles “bore witness to the resurrection” with great power. It seems as if we are meant to understand that the common life being developed has something to do with bearing witness to the resurrection, as if it were itself an expression of the resurrection, or of the meaning of the resurrection.

Bearing witness to the resurrection is not simply a matter of proclaiming in words what God has done in Christ, as if bearing witness simply meant giving speeches (although it does mean that, too; Peter and others give plenty of them in the Acts of the Apostles). The power of the resurrection is seen first of all in the effect it has on the lives of those who believe.

In the joy of the Easter season, our readings throw down a challenge to us by reminding us that the reality of Christ’s resurrection led the early Christians to completely reconsider how they lived their lives, and the first thing they did was to start living their lives for others. The community of believers was of one heart and one mind; they shared their lives and even their worldly possessions with each other as an expression of the new life they had received in Christ. The greatest and most divine expression of life in Christ is generous, sacrificial charity, because it is an expression of Christ himself.

The author of the First Letter of John says as much when he tells us that “we know we love the children of God when we love God and obey his commandments.” In other words, when we are of one heart and mind with God (when Christ lives in us), then we inevitably love God’s children — because God does. The power of the resurrection is the power to “conquer the world,” every power and voice that pulls us away from love of God and God’s children. “Who indeed is the victor over the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”

The power to love the children of God comes from Christ, who bestows on us the same Spirit he breathed upon the scared disciples locked away on that first Easter night. It comes from the gift of peace which only God can give and from the ability to forgive, which is perhaps the most eloquent and meaningful expression of the divine heart and mind. Peace, charity, forgiveness: these are the gifts and the effects of the resurrection to which each one of us is called to bear witness.

April 15, 2018  
Third Sunday of Easter

**Acts 3:13-15, 17-19; Psalm 4; 1 John 2:1-5a; Luke 24:35-48**

The readings this week draw our attention to a topic that we may have thought we had left behind in Lent: repentance. The structure and emphases of the liturgical year might lead us to think (if only implicitly) that repentance belongs to Lent and to Easter belongs . . . well, something else.

But we are reminded this week that repentance is also a part of Easter because it is a response to the proclamation of the resurrection of Christ. Just as Israel entered into the covenant relationship with God at Mount Sinai in joyful gratitude for what God had done for them in the Exodus, so Christians come to see the call to repentance as a response to what God has done for us in Christ.

In his speech to the people, Peter announces that although the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had called for the death of Jesus, they had done so out of ignorance (we are reminded here of what Jesus says from the cross in Luke: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do" [23:34]). But now they know better, because they have heard the proclamation that Jesus was the Christ, who has been vindicated and raised from the dead. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be wiped away." Yes, the people "denied the holy and righteous One" and put to the death "the author of life." But God has done something with this, and now the power of the resurrection is brought to bear on God's mercy — the past is the past, and now is the time to repent of the past and move into the future converted and forgiven.

In the same way, the resurrected Christ tells that what happened to him was in accordance with the Scriptures, a work of God, who can make the most glorious gifts out of the worst human crimes. Now that Christ is raised from the dead, forgiveness of sins is available "to all the nations." The author of the First Letter of John says much the same thing: ". . . if anyone does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one," who is "expiation for our sins, and not for our sins only but for those of the whole world."

As the Easter season unfolds, we continue to explore the implications of what God has done for us in Christ. The power of the risen Lord is the power to change lives by bringing us peace and the ability to set aside our own needs to reach out to others so that there will be no needy person among us (as we heard last week). And we are called to receive forgiveness as well as to offer it for the sake of Christ for others.

The Easter proclamation is not only that we have been raised from the dead along with Christ; it is a call to fully live that new life by “being converted” so that the love of God may be truly perfected in us.

## April 22, 2018 Fourth Sunday of Easter

**Acts 4:8-12; Psalm 118; 1 John 3:1-2; John 10:11-18**

As we move into the second half of Easter, the gospel readings turn from the resurrection narratives to a consideration of the relationship between Christ and his people, who are now being formed as a church. The metaphor that comes to the fore this week is Jesus as the Good Shepherd.

There are two essential points that come out here. The first is that Jesus as the Good Shepherd has been sent by the Father to answer a pressing need for God’s people. For a little background, we might turn to Ezekiel 34. In this chapter, God tells the prophet to prophesy against “the shepherds of Israel,” which in this context means both the political and religious leaders. The shepherds are accused of pasturing themselves rather than the flock, God’s people. They use the flock for their own advantage instead of looking after their needs: “You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the stray or seek the lost but ruled them harshly and brutally” (34:4).

In response, God promises to act as shepherd himself: “I myself will pasture my sheep; I myself will give them rest. . . . The lost I will search out, the strays I will bring back, the injured I will bind up, and the sick I will heal . . .” (34:15, 16). In Christ, God has made good on this promise. Now, in Christ, the Father is assured that his sheep will be well taken care of because the one taking care of them is no hired hand, but the



one sent by the Father.

This brings us to the second point, which is that the shepherd is so devoted to the sheep that he is willing to lay down his life for them. This is mentioned four times. Once again, we are confronted with the sacrificial quality of God's commitment to his people.

In Ezekiel, God the Shepherd also tends to the physical wellbeing of his people, binding up the injured and healing the sick. Just so, we have in the first reading an example of the power of Christ the Good Shepherd to heal his flock, now exercised through the ministrations of the church. Salvation, whether it comes in the form of physical or spiritual healing, comes from God in Christ, the chosen Shepherd who gives everything, even his own life, to save his flock and bring them safely home to the Father.


## April 29, 2018 Fifth Sunday of Easter

**Acts 9:26-31; Psalm 22; 1 John 3:18-24; John 15:1-8**

A key idea in the readings this week is the building up of the church. With the arrival of Saul, who will soon become Paul, the missionary impetus of the church will kick into high gear and the church will spread far and wide, growing in numbers. But more importantly, the church is built up through the strength of each member's relationship with Christ, which the readings speak of as "remaining in Christ," a favorite phrase in the Johannine literature, represented this week by both the epistle and the Gospel.

The image of the vine dominates the gospel reading. In the Old Testament, Israel is often spoken of as a vine planted by the Lord (Psalm 80, for example). Only when it is carefully tended by God can the vine flourish; apart from God the vine languishes, falling prey to drought or depredation. Now the church is likened to a vine, grown by the Father, luxuriant with branches all connected and receiving life from the "true vine." Just as God has entrusted his flock to the Good Shepherd, so he has entrusted his vine to Christ.

The key to keeping the vine healthy and fruitful is regular pruning and especially by remaining in Christ. There is here a mutual indwelling between each member of the church and Christ: "Remain in me, as I remain in you." Only those members of the church who remain in Christ — closely attached to him — can themselves live and also bear fruit. There is a dark side to the metaphor, which acknowledges that not every member of the church will choose to remain in Christ, and these will have to be removed. But those who stay are assured that they give glory to God by bearing much fruit.

The epistle also alludes to the necessity of remaining in Christ, making it clear that this means keeping his commandments, or we should say, his one all-encompassing commandment which is to love one another. The members of the church that remain in Christ bear fruit in the form of mutual love, seen not only in material care, but in also abundant forgiveness and spiritual support. This is the fruit that is meant to be seen by the rest of the world, a fruit bursting out of the vibrant, fertile vine that is the church. Fruit that, in the end, will draw others to the vine so that they, too, may have life. All for the glory of God, the one who has remained with his people from the beginning. 

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## In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with F, G, H, and I are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during March and April.



## EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •  
Poetry • Books

The spiritual journey of Saint Peter Julian Eymard is a remarkable one. As a young boy growing up in the small mountain village of La Mure d'Isère, France, he was heavily imbued with the Jansenist spirituality of his day. On a steep hill behind the family home were three crosses representing Calvary. Young Peter Julian would often walk the incline barefoot in an act of penitence and prayer. Such was his sense of the fallen state of humanity. Later in life, he would become a powerful preacher extolling God's unfathomably abundant love and mercy available especially through the gift of the Eucharist. It was a remarkable lifelong conversion.

For those seeking his counsel, it may be easy to focus in upon the mature spiritual insights of his adulthood and dismiss the lessons of his youth. However, Saint Peter Julian Eymard never downplayed the importance of the cross, but integrated it into a fuller view of God, salvation, grace, and love. He once said, "To be able to bear the crucified Jesus, we must see the risen Jesus." This, of course, means that the reality of Jesus' crucifixion was still a very present and disturbing reality for him.

When art historians and critics speak of harrowing images of Christ, Matthias Grünewald's bloody and gruesome crucifixion scene from the Isenheim Altarpiece often takes pride of place. Jesus is wracked with pain, his fingers curled in agony, his bones and muscles wrenched beyond limits. It is indeed a disturbing painting to behold.

However, though more subtle and restrained, Fra Angelico's fresco *The Mocking of Christ* is perhaps more psychologically challenging and unnerving a viewing experience. It is, after all, easy to become desensitized to the image of the crucifixion due to the great preponderance of crucifixes in Catholic places of worship and in Catholic homes. We are less frequently confronted with the scene of

## Art Review



Fra Angelico:  
THE MOCKING  
OF CHRIST  
(detail)  
Fresco, Convent  
of San Marco,  
Florence, Italy

John Christman,  
SSS

Christ being mocked before he was crucified. In Fra Angelico's hands, it is disturbing indeed.

Fra Angelico isn't content to have the viewer ponder the mocking of Jesus as a bystander. Instead, the viewer is subtly directed to empathize with Jesus on a deeper level, the level of our shared humanity. Fra Angelico accomplishes this with an ingenious device.

Instead of depicting a menacing crowd surrounding Jesus and ridiculing him, Fra Angelico paints disembodied hands mocking and striking Jesus. This cleverly draws us deeper into the psychological cruelty Jesus endured and frighteningly realizes the gospel passage from Luke 22:63-65: "The men who held Jesus in custody were ridiculing and beating him. They blindfolded him and questioned him, saying, 'Prophecy! Who is it that struck you?' And they reviled him in saying many other things against him."

The viewer, therefore, gets a glimpse of just how frightened and upset Jesus might have felt to be mocked and beaten in such a way. Moreover, because Fra Angelico depicted only generic hands, without cultural, historic, or gender specificity, they raise a question: are these hands really that much different than our own hands? That is the more disturbing implication of Fra Angelico's aesthetic choice. He challenges us with these hands. He makes us wonder how different we might be from those who mocked and beat Jesus. If we share in Jesus' humanity, we also share in the humanity of those who ridiculed and struck Jesus.

For Fra Angelico, who gave us some of the most beautiful and tender Christian paintings of the early Italian Renaissance, this painting is all the more jarring for its depiction of cruelty and suffering. Indeed, he displays with works of this kind that he knew well the full scope of human behavior. It seems that his body of artwork echoes in paint what Saint Peter Julian Eymard said in words, "To be able to bear the crucified Jesus, we must see the risen Jesus."

## Poetry

### Praying

Some say, praying is a waste of time.  
I say,  
I say,  
The wasting is a *letting go*  
That *lets in* the voice of the Lord over mine.

Patricia Chehy Pilette

### Adoration Chapel

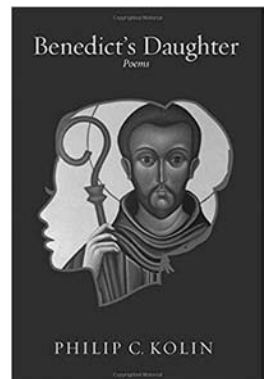
Sometimes I come as Martha busy sorting through worries,  
envies, and fears.  
Sometimes I am Mary sitting in silence, leaning in to freely-  
given grace.  
Sometimes I am Zacchaeus looking for Jesus, seeking to be  
near.  
Sometimes I come as a prodigal daughter returning home  
for a merciful embrace.  
Spending time in chapel loved for who I am  
and consoled by knowing whose I am.

Patricia Chehy Pilette

## Book Reviews

Philip Kolin, a distinguished professor emeritus at the University of Southern Mississippi and editor of the *Southern Quarterly*, has written or edited over 40 books. *Benedict's Daughter* is his eighth book of poetry. This inspiring collection of 41 poems contains a variety of forms and styles. Kolin's rhythmic verses in simple language create memorable images that rouse the heart to the deeper mysteries of life.

A prologue of five poems corresponding to the hours of the day in the Divine Office celebrates this sacred practice of prayer in Benedictine



**BENEDICT'S  
DAUGHTER:  
POEMS**  
Philip C. Kolin  
Eugene, Oregon:  
Resource  
Publications, 2017  
80 pp., \$9.99

life. In "Day Opens," "It's time to shake off / the mortality of sleep; / the tomb of night / is cracked, step out / and feel the infinity of light. . . . God fills daybreak with himself." Kolin is known for weaving together spiritual and secular themes. He begins this volume based on his knowledge and appreciation of Benedictine spirituality which is lived out in the life of a daughter of Benedict. He intersperses several other poems reflecting the Benedictine way of life throughout the book.

In the heart of the book, we meet Midge, an extraordinary woman of faith. Kolin's had developed a deep spiritual bond over the 30 years she served as his spiritual director. As a novice in a Benedictine community, she had flourished spiritually, but regretfully, prior to her profession, the community sent her home. It was feared that her slight stature and weak constitution would not allow her to endure the life. She had already absorbed the essence of Benedictine life which she faithfully continued to live out as a Benedictine Oblate.

On her return to secular life, a priest advised her. In "Father Luke, OSB," a simple poem of couplets with striking images, "He taught her to open to God's outdoor lectionary / and read the messages written there / to see the sky as his canvas, / each rainbow a stroke of quiet color / . . . / hoping for a new birth / she strived to be a small light / for others on their journey from self to salvation."

She spent her ordinary life as a loving wife to Mr. Al, mother, teacher, and spiritual guide who integrated prayer and work. Her brothers had earlier nicknamed her Midedge; though small in size, she was large in compassion. In "Midge," we read, "curled up in her Bible / she birthed prayers for those who sought her / after Mass or at the school in which she taught. / Souls rang her doorbell, called her name / in the small hours of their mourning. . . ." When a young man from El Salvador showed up at her door looking for work, she took him in and made him part of her family. She fed the poor and homeless and welcomed every guest as Christ, to her table.

In "She Taught Her Classes Proverbs," Kolin captures her insight in the true heart of teaching. "She taught her classes proverbs / helping students grow holy / from the inside out. / First they had to befriend / the skeletons they wore / under their flesh. . . ."

After her long and fruitful life, we are privileged to share Kolin's description of her suffering and death in "A Hospice Crucifixion." Its

final lines recall the biblical images, "The ancient gates open / and martyrs receive her rejoicing / leading her into the Holy City." Then we read, "A Holy Woman's Obituary," which summarizes her life, "Her house was a bakery for souls / seeking rest from restlessness, lives fleeing the flurry and fault of self. / She baked bread for the homeless / and fed a table full of envelopes / begging for her rich mites."

Kolin's heartfelt tribute to Midge and the Benedictine charism encourages the reader to recognize and appreciate the possibilities of human existence when lived with great purpose. His poems give us a glimpse of this woman who dedicated her life to serving God by caring for others in an extraordinary way. At the same time, we are challenged to review our own life and discern how purposeful it is.

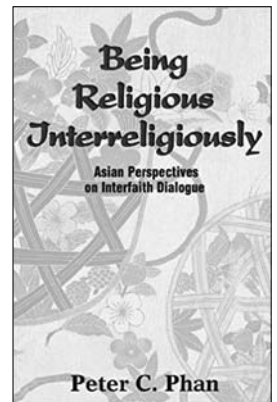
This book should hold a permanent place on our bookshelf so that we can return to it frequently for inspiration.

Ann Kelly, OSU, PhD  
Professor Emerita  
Ursuline College  
Pepper Pike, Ohio

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In this book, the author, Dr. Peter C. Phan, offers up a wealth of reflections on issues facing Roman Catholics and Asian Christians in the postmodern society. Moved by the serious problems of the society concerning interreligious dialogue, Phan divides his work into three major parts. In the first part, he discusses at length issues and challenges pertaining to doing theology interreligiously, especially in the postmodern age. Moving further, in the second part, he develops particular themes of Christian theology, especially in dialogue with Confucianism and Judaism. Finally, in the third part, he elaborates on how prayer and worship should be practiced in the postmodern, multicultural, and multi-religious age.

Convinced by the fundamental imperative that to be religious is to be interreligious, Phan engages himself in a project of explaining different ways and models in which one should be engaged in being interreligious. He is convinced that interreligious dialogue today is no longer a historical accident but a theological imperative required by religion itself. His point is that through globalization and migration, people are exposed very much to different religions and that people



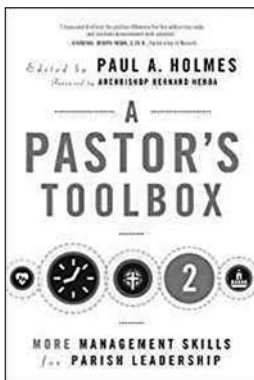
**BEING RELIGIOUS  
INTERRELIGIOUSLY:  
ASIAN  
PERSPECTIVES  
ON INTERFAITH  
DIALOGUE**  
Peter C. Phan  
Maryknoll, New York:  
Orbis, 2004  
283 pp., \$40.00

have no option but to live interreligiously.

What I appreciate most in Phan's presentation is his simplest yet in-depth deliberations on the challenges and opportunities of being a religious person today and the necessity of interreligious dialogue for the faithfulness of one's spiritual life. His presentation tries to answer the following questions: What are the theological issues posed by being interreligious? Is there the possibility of "multi-religious belonging"? What will "religion" look like if this being interreligious is taken seriously? How is religious identity formed? What is the point of "mission" and conversion?

With extensive footnotes, copious bibliographical references, and a detailed index, it is clear that this book is targeted toward professional theologians, academic scholars, and graduate students. Nevertheless, Phan's clear and convincing writing style renders the book accessible even to a general audience. From this perspective, one can easily be motivated by his own conviction that the most difficult yet most enriching and transformative way to promote interreligious dialogue is through interreligious sharing.

Finally, I must say that this book is laudable, not only by those interested in Asian theology in particular, but also anyone who is interested in researching on wider topics concerning the interplay between postmodernism, religious pluralism, and interreligious dialogue.



**A PASTOR'S  
TOOLBOX 2:  
MORE  
MANAGEMENT  
SKILLS  
FOR PARISH  
LEADERSHIP**  
Paul A. Holmes, ed.  
Foreword by  
Archbishop Bernard  
Hebda  
Collegeville,  
Minnesota: Liturgical  
Press, 2017  
193 pp., \$19.95

Justin Chawkan, SSS  
Vicar Provincial  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament  
Professor  
National Seminary of Sri Lanka

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This book is an outgrowth of the Toolbox for Pastoral Management, a nationally-recognized project of the Leadership Roundtable held at Seton Hall University. As with the first volume of this resource, this volume puts together the work of 16 authors and topics ranging from leadership skills, finances, personal health of a pastor, time management, why Catholic schools are important, and why we all have a stake in promoting them. The writers are leaders in their fields providing best practices. Included in the volume is a checklist for personal, spiritual, and administrative health to strike a balance in the



often very busy lives of pastors.

Whether you are a new pastor (which was one of the audiences to which the “toolbox” was directed) or wishing to enhance your skills as a “veteran” pastor or priest, this volume assists with key insights, communication, and stewardship information to improve how you perform your administrative duties in today’s parishes. Highly recommended!

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

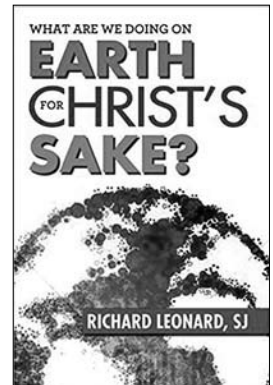
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My initial glance at the cover of Leonard’s text led me to think that this was a Christian reflection on our relation to the environment. A more focused look at the cover revealed that I had mistaken “on earth” for “to earth.” This is not a book about creation theology. Instead, it is a theologically solid, accessible exposition of the Christian message in three parts. It is directed at younger Christians.

The first of the three sections offers an explication of what has traditionally been called fundamental theology. Under the title of “Belief and Unbelief,” Leonard unpacks basic distinctions between theists and atheists, faith and certainty, science and religion. Regarding the first of these distinctions, Leonard insightfully highlights morality as a common ground of interest to both theists and atheists. There are certainly ethical atheists.

In addressing the second distinction, Leonard carefully describes the fundamental human freedom to believe or not to believe in God. The third distinction, between science and religion, leads Leonard to the following formulation: “Science asks *how* we came to be here. Faith asks *why* we are here in the first place. Science questions the mechanics. Faith addresses the meaning” (18).

Recognizing the existence of people who identify as nonreligious or atheist, Leonard points out that this group comprises only 5.4% of the 7.02 billion people on planet Earth. The vast majority of people profess some religion. Of this total, roughly 31.6% are Christian. Leonard concludes his study of belief and unbelief by stating that “Christian faith



WHAT ARE WE  
DOING ON EARTH  
FOR CHRIST'S  
SAKE?

Richard Leonard, SJ  
New York, New York:  
Paulist Press, 2015  
184 pp., \$14.95

will not be judged by what we say as much as by what we do" (30).

The middle section, "Questions of Faith," is reminiscent of apologetics. Here, Leonard takes up a number of questions being posed by young Christians. These questions are presented as challenges to the reasonability of believing in the traditional Christian message today. For example, "Isn't Religion the Cause of Most Wars?" (35). This question spills over into the biblical theological question of whether God is in fact a violent God.

Another significant question Leonard engages concerns the agonizing reality of the sexual abuse of children by clergy and the resulting cover-up by some Church leaders. He suggests that this reality is one of the most prominent stumbling blocks to faith today.

Alongside this contemporary challenge to faith, Leonard treats several of the traditional challenges to Christianity: Is the Bible true? Did Jesus really exist in history? If he did exist, did he have to die in the way he did? Can there be a hell if God is a loving God? What about women's ordination? Why is the Church so wealthy? How can the Church be relevant to modern society?

Within the confines of this review, permit me to give but a sampling of Leonard's work regarding the challenges posed by these questions.

In responding to the question of the truth of the Bible, Leonard makes fruitful use of Lonergan's distinction between truth and fact (51). While the Bible may contain statements that are not factual, nonetheless the Church believes in the truthfulness of the revelation contained within the biblical tradition. This distinction between truth and fact grounds Leonard's response to the tradition of "satisfaction theology" and the argument that Jesus had to die to redeem us and the world from sin. Leonard argues that "our God does not deal in death, but life. . . . On Good Friday, we find God in Jesus Christ confronting evil, death, and destruction head-on, and staring it down, so that light and life have the last word" (63).

With regard to the question of women's ordination, Leonard lists the several arguments often posed against this idea and then offers the distinction between ordination and leadership. Of course, we are very familiar with the numerous examples of women's leadership within the Church's history and ministries. Leonard also points hopefully to

the initiative of Pope Francis to study the issue of women deacons in the early Christian communities.

Perhaps the question that elicits Leonard's most creative theological application concerns the influence of modern technology. Leonard is concerned with how children's digital technology has contributed to "the disempowerment of parents in regard to the supervision of their children in the home" (88). The internet and the various forms of social media have brought about "the relatively new phenomenon of what is now termed the *techno addict*" (88-89). This addiction to technology has linked with the world of pornography, "combining as it does a perfect storm of two addictions: sex and technology" (89).

In response to this dual addiction, Leonard guides the reader to "the EABV model: *event, attitude, behavior, and values*" (90). This model, the work of John Pungente, SJ, offers a meaningful approach in our attempts to assist people addicted to unwise consumption of all that is available today on internet websites.

The third and final section of the book is devoted to short biographical sketches of "Witnesses of Faith, Hope, and Love." Leonard's choices are diverse. Two are well-known saints from history, Thomas More and Ignatius Loyola. In Thomas More, Leonard highlights two qualities: "the importance of silence, and being prepared to die rather than wanting to be killed" (100). Leonard sees these two qualities in More, paralleling Jesus' actions at his trial. The aspect of Ignatius' spirituality that Leonard raises up for our consideration is the virtue of humility.

The remaining biographical sketches are of more contemporary Christian figures, some well-known, others less so. While all are aware of the heroic virtue of Teresa of Calcutta, Leonard highlights what we now know about "how long and lonely her life of faith actually was" (127). Leonard also charts for us the spiritual journey of Archbishop Oscar Romero. What he finds illuminating is Romero's journey of *conscientization* — "his conversion, not to Christianity, but to the radical call of the Gospel to have a faith that does justice, to the needs and rights of the poor" (129).

To these well-known Christian individuals, Leonard adds some that are more germane to his personal life-history. Two are Irish nuns — Venerable Catherine McAuley and Helen Leane; one, Mary Mackillop, "is Australia's first, and at present, only canonized Catholic saint" (112).

These women are significant to Leonard in their unwavering efforts to be faithful to the call of the Gospel, even in the midst of the countless roadblocks they encountered on their respective journeys of faith.

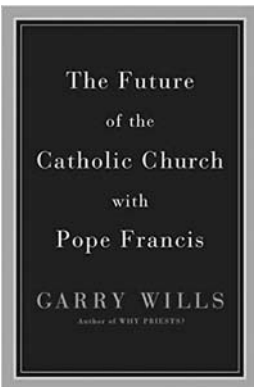
Leonard offers a personal portrait of Pope Francis. For him, Pope Francis is someone who “sees the poor. He really *sees* them” (134). Leonard also highlights Francis’ image of the Church as “a field hospital after battle, tending the major wounds” (135).

Leonard includes sketches of his family, a transvestite parishioner, and the Trappist monks of Algeria who were murdered in 1996. In each of his snapshots, he illuminates faith-in-action. Each inspires the reader and, at the same time, encourages the reader to see how each and every Christian has the opportunity to live her or his faith not in competition with others, but alongside those whom the Church calls “canonized” saints.

I recommend Leonard’s book for any Christian who would like to engage with a very accessible and contemporary account of the Christian life of faith. In addition, I would suggest that getting this book into the hands of young Christians would be an excellent way of strengthening their faith, which is likely asking the same kinds of questions that Leonard engages so straightforwardly and non-defensively in his book.

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**THE FUTURE OF  
THE CATHOLIC  
CHURCH  
WITH POPE  
FRANCIS**  
Garry Wills  
New York, York:  
Penguin Books, 2015  
288 pp., \$27.95

I was intrigued when I saw that Garry Wills had written a book on the Church and Pope Francis. I have enjoyed reading Wills’ earlier books on the Church. He has a profound grasp of history and often reveals insights like those in *Papal Sin* and *Why I Am a Catholic*, which cut with the precision of a surgeon’s scalpel. I was interested in learning what he saw as unique and challenging in how Pope Francis lived his papacy. So, I delved into the text.


I have to say that I was disappointed in the book. It is a good book. Wills masterfully demonstrates major shifts in Church belief and practices over the centuries. He begins with the Latin language, which in the beginning was a language of inclusion, as it was a language understood

by many, but, as the Church moved beyond its Italian borders and won over peoples for whom Latin was foreign, it became an exclusive language primarily for scholars and clergy. It stayed too long.

The same could be said of the Church's monarchical style of government and leadership. Wills describes briefly the centuries-old battle of who was in charge. Was it king or bishop, pope or emperor? He also offers a short summary of the Church's response to the growth of nationalism, democracy, and the "evils" of the separation of church and state, all of which eroded the power and control of the Church which she battled well into the twentieth century.

Wills then tackles the Church's long history of anti-Semitism. Jesus and the disciples might have been Jewish, but the early attacks on Christianity by the leaders of the Jewish community were not forgotten, and anti-Semitism was so pervasive in the life of the Church for centuries that it was one of the sins for which Pope John Paul II asked forgiveness in the Jubilee of 2000.

The Natural Law is next on Wills' agenda in the book. He examines this as a central focus of Catholic ethics as it provides the framework for so much of the Church's teaching on sexuality, homosexuality, birth control, abortion, and so on. Wills, in fact, titles one of his chapters in this section of the book, "The Pope as Sex Monitor." Wills tries to demonstrate how the Natural Law is understood and used for justifying Church teaching is in great need of rethinking.

Outside of a few side comments, Wills leaves Pope Francis out of the book until we come to the Epilogue. Here, he writes that "Pope Francis, like Chesterton, does not see the Church as changeless, as permanent, as predictable, but as a thing of surprises." So, the weight of the book from its contents might have been better titled *The Church Which Pope Francis Inherited: What Surprises Will He Bring to It?* With this title, I would have read the book and enjoyed it from the actual perspective of the author. With that caveat in mind, read the book. It is well written. 

Patrick J. Riley, DMin  
Book Review Editor  
*Emmanuel*  
Cleveland, Ohio



## *EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS*

### Father Roger Bourgeois, SSS


#### **THE CALL STILL ECHOES**

There was something adventuresome and daring about jumping on a bus at midnight, at age 14, saying goodbye to my parents and heading out with older seminarians on a six-hour trip to the minor seminary of the Blessed Sacrament Congregation in upstate New York, my first venture outside of my small home town. It was the initial baby step to becoming a priest. Those steps grew longer and longer, until in September of last year, I celebrated 60 years as a priest and a consecrated religious of 65 years. The grace of God is all powerful!

After ministering in the Philippines for ten years, and in several parishes administered by our Congregation in the United States, I continue to hear the echo of God's call daily as I celebrate Eucharist and continue to minister to God's people in active retirement. God's call echoes persistently as I "personalize" certain scripture passages and put myself in the stories.

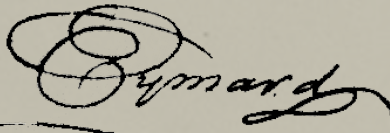
One of my favorites is the insightful words of the author of Hebrews 6:10: "God is not unjust as to overlook your ministry and the love you have demonstrated for his holy name by having served and continuing to serve his holy ones." Our God does not forget the "continuity" and the "enthusiasm" with which we minister as priests, religious, or laity.

At the liturgy of my Diamond Jubilee, I shared the story in Matthew 20:20-28 about Jesus challenging the brothers James and John whose motivation in following him was tinged with ideas of self-advancement and personal privilege: "Can you drink the chalice I am going to drink?" "Yes, I can," they each resolutely answered to their everlasting credit. So, "Yes, I can" has become a catch phrase to motivate myself to accept whatever ministerial assignments are asked of me.

Our founder Saint Peter Julian Eymard adopted another catch phrase, actually a developed spirituality, to essentially say the same thing. He called it the Gift of Self, patterned on Jesus' total gift of himself to us in the Eucharist. Symbolically, in the offering of bread and wine, we intentionally surrender our life to God as priest, religious, married, single, divorced, widowed, young, elderly, sick, or healthy, and we equivalently are saying: Yes, Lord, I can drink the chalice of my life and its circumstances, and I firmly believe that you know and love me so unconditionally that you will never forget how I am continuing to serve you in my chosen vocation. Lord, may your call to serve you and your Church always echo in our hearts! 

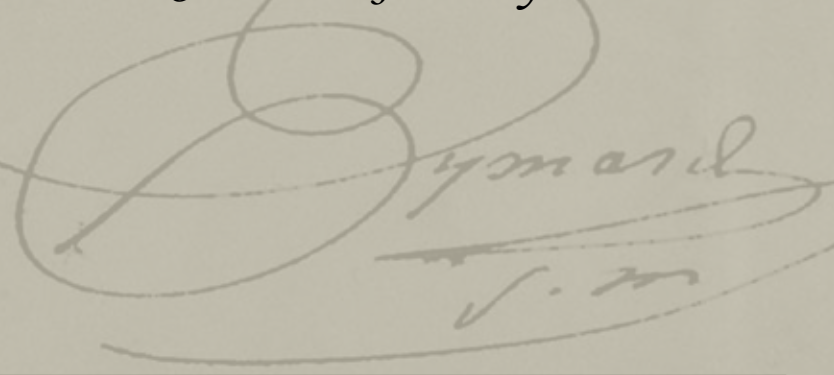
*serenus general. qui a  
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“May the heart of Jesus on  
fire with love be your strength,  
your haven, your center, your  
Calvary, the resting place  
of your whole being. Then  
resurrection will come, as well  
as life and glory.”



*Eymard  
S. J. S.*

Saint Peter Julian Eymard



*Eymard  
S. J. S.*



*"To be able to bear the crucified Jesus, we must see the risen Jesus."*

*-Saint Peter Julian Eymard*