

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

September/October 2014



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EDITOR
ART DIRECTOR
LAYOUT
CIRCULATION MANAGER
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

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John Christman, SSS
Kay Vincent
Elizabeth Zaller
Patrick Riley
John Christman, SSS
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emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

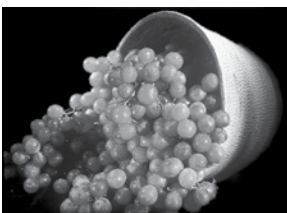
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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 120 Number 5



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FROM THE EDITOR

I recently spent some time at my order's Generalate in Rome. Being in Rome is always special. The city is filled with magnificent churches, hallowed archeological sites, great restaurants, and friendly people.

Everywhere we turned this time, it seemed, there were copies and representations of Pope Francis' pectoral cross, available in every price range and medium—except gold!

The humble silver cross with the image of the Good Shepherd on it was made for Francis when he was the archbishop of Buenos Aires by Giuseppe Albrizzi, who lives in the northern Italian town of Vidigulfo. In the May 2014 edition of *Messenger of Saint Anthony*, Renzo Allegri writes of its deep significance for the Holy Father. He describes the cross as Francis' "inseparable companion," always close to his heart:

"When he became the archbishop of Buenos Aires and later a cardinal and primate of the Argentine church, Archbishop Bergoglio continued to lead the lifestyle of a simple parish priest. He refused to reside at the Archbishop's House, preferring instead to live in a small flat with a retired priest, and he cooked his own meals."

"Whenever he had any free time available from his numerous duties as archbishop, he went to the slums of Buenos Aires (*favelas*). At that time, Archbishop Bergoglio did not even have a car. He just used the buses or the subway. During the trip from the Archbishop's House to the *favelas*, located on the outskirts of the city, he would often clutch his pectoral cross—the symbol of his desire to shepherd the poor. The cross had more than a sentimental value for the man who wore it; it also meant something for those he visited. The outcasts of society in the *favelas* touched it too; they kissed it and bathed it with their tears while the archbishop listened to their stories."

Pope Francis has frequently challenged his brother bishops and priests to avoid careerism, to live simpler lives close to the people, and to

preach the gospel message clearly and unequivocally. I believe that his pectoral cross not only reveals much about his own personal story and predilections, but also about his vision of ministry.

Close to the People of God

The central image of the cross is the Good Shepherd standing amid the sheep, guiding them, unifying them, protecting them. In Jesus' day, shepherds would often position themselves between the sheep inside the enclosure and predators and danger outside. The shepherd's first responsibility was the safety and well-being of the sheep.

Pope Francis has said: "The priest who seldom goes out of himself... misses out on the best of our people, on what can stir the depths of his priestly heart. . . . This is precisely the reason why some priests grow dissatisfied, lose heart, and become in a sense collectors of antiquities or novelties— instead of being shepherds living with 'the smell of the sheep.' This is what I am asking you—be shepherds with the smell of sheep."


Caring for the Lost and the Vulnerable

The parable of the shepherd who goes in search of the lost sheep (Mt 18:12-14; Lk 15:4-7) speaks to the tender care of the shepherd for the most fragile and frail among the flock. The Good Shepherd of the pope's pectoral cross holds a sheep around his neck, gently supporting its legs with his hands.

Pope Francis reminds us that "we have to become courageous Christians and seek out those who are the flesh of Christ." Last October, he said: "Every day we are all called to become a 'caress of God' for those who perhaps have forgotten their first caresses, or perhaps who never have felt a caress in their life." And he has repeatedly called Jesus the "man for others."

It isn't difficult to identify the lost sheep of our age: the poor, the disabled, the sick, the homeless, refugees, the unchurched, those struggling with belief, the young, and the elderly. Do we have the courage and the will to be the "caress of God" for them?

Praying for the Church

Those who first saw Pope Francis' pectoral cross as he stood on the balcony of Saint Peter's following his election thought it was black. Silver darkens as it is touched and kissed and exposed to the air. Archbishop Bergoglio believed, says Allegri, that "the world's suffering had been impressed on it, darkening it." On his way home, then, he would pray for the people he had met, asking God to grant them healing and comfort and to transfer their pain to the cross . . . and to his heart. 

Father Anthony Schueller, SSS
Editor



EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Celebrating God's Plan of Creation/Salvation

by John Zupez, SJ

Father John Zupez, a former contributor to *Emmanuel*, taught for years in seminaries in Africa and is now serving in prison ministry.

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, gave guidelines for a renewed spirit and practice of the church's liturgy. Over 50 years later, the constitution continues to challenge us to improve our understanding of public, communitarian prayer.

For centuries, we were left to our own thoughts and devotions at Mass celebrated by the priest in Latin. There was little sense of sharing with those around us. Hans Urs von Balthasar succinctly describes the challenge this presents for us: "We must make every effort to arouse the sense of community within the liturgy. . . . Liturgical piety involves a total turning from concern with one's inner state to the attitude and feeling of the church. It means enlarging the scope of prayer, so often narrow and selfish, to embrace the concerns of the whole church and indeed of God" (*Church and World*, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967, 32).

As an assist for our more fully realizing this larger perspective, I review here God's overall plan in creation, which has the power to move us beyond a narrow focus on ourselves during the Mass to an experience of a more pervasive community consciousness that was integral to the church's liturgy from the start. Such consciousness is evident in the liturgies of the Eastern Christian churches that were not impacted by barbarian invasions during the "Dark Ages," when the church in the West lost vital contact with its roots. The *ressourcement* called for by the bishops at Vatican II is largely about going back to our roots in the Bible and being inspired by the message of Christian revelation in its integrity.

The epistles of the apostle Paul are filled with polemic regarding Judaism, and also with encouragement for the early Christian church. To grasp Paul's insight into God's overall plan in creation, one must select phrases and verses from throughout the Pauline corpus and weave these into a meaningful narrative. I have done this in what follows. Texts are taken from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the New Testament.

God's Plan in Creation

Alienation is an overarching theme from the very beginning of the Bible: alienation from God (Adam and Eve), from other persons (Cain and Abel), nation from nation (Babel), and from the very elements of the universe which work against humankind (the flood). It's not just humankind, but all of creation that experiences alienation, as if it were created without plan or purpose. Paul reflects on this in Romans 8: "Creation was subjected to futility by the will of the one who subjected it in hope. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves groan inwardly" (20-23).

Paul goes on to find the answer to our own alienation, as well as that of all creation, in "the mystery hidden throughout the ages but now revealed in Christ . . . the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things were created, through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:26, 15-20).

The movement from alienation to reconciliation is God's plan for the world carried out by the Son.

From alienation to reconciliation, such is God's plan for the world carried out by the Son, "whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the world. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word" (Heb 1:2-3).

God's plan for the world reflects the inner life of the Trinity, where the Son emanates as the Word or expression of the Father, and returns all fealty and praise to the Father in a bond of love that is the Holy Spirit. Even so, in God's creation, the divine Son is the expression of the Father's creative love and God's means of drawing all things through love to a new unity in the divinity. "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor 5:17-19).

Pauline theology moves easily from the cosmic to the human to the Christian. "God destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus



Christ to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us. For he has made known to us the mystery of his will that he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph 1:5-10).

Christ was a part of God's purpose in creation from the start: Adam's sin came as no surprise to God! The biblical word for sin is *hamartia*, which means "falling short of the mark." Our being sinners in this sense is a part of the divine plan. It is only by grace and the proper use of our freedom, by opening ourselves to the love which God inspires in our hearts, that we are able to overcome the deficiencies with which we are born and to keep growing into the perfect charity that is our calling.

God's plan for our lives, then, is a constant *metanoia*, "conversion," or turning to God: "Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mt 5:48). We will never reach complete charity in this life, but by God's grace we can keep growing out of our alienation and into complete reconciliation with others, living fruitfully and with graciousness toward the world around us.

This understanding of God's love and plan in a unified creation-salvation history calls for less emphasis on sin and more on grace, which is the constant emphasis in Paul's epistles: "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:20). It calls for us to do less breast-beating and more celebrating of God's love and grace when we come to render Eucharist ("thanksgiving") to God as a community gathered to celebrate God's work, "who has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light."

Life, by God's plan, is constant growth into the perfection of virtues. "We are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph 2:10).

In the Eucharist, we receive not only Christ, the head of the body, but its members as well.

Communitarian Focus


Jesus' explanation of how we make our contribution to the great divine project in creation is expressed succinctly and beautifully in his new commandment: "Love one another just as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34). This is also at the very center of our Eucharistic Prayer, as explained by Jesuit Father General Pedro Arrupe:

The rediscovery of what might be called the “social dimension” of the Eucharist is of tremendous significance today. We once again see Holy Communion as the sacrament of our brotherhood and unity. We share in a meal together, eating the same bread from the same table. And Saint Paul tells us clearly: “The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf” (1 Cor 10:17). In the Eucharist, in other words, we receive not only Christ, the head of the body, but its members as well. This fact has immediate practical consequences, as Saint Paul once again reminds us: “God has arranged the body so that . . . each part may be equally concerned for all the others. If one part is hurt, all parts are hurt with it” (1 Cor 12:24-26).

Wherever there is suffering in the body, wherever members of it are in want or oppressed, we, because we have received the same body and are part of it, must be directly involved. We cannot opt out or say to a brother or sister: “I do not need you. I will not help you.” . . . We cannot properly receive the bread of life without sharing bread for life with those in want” (*Justice with Faith Today*, Saint Louis, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1980, 176-177). This assumes a great deal of community consciousness which is fostered by our way of celebrating the Eucharist together.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio, as the archbishop of Buenos Aires, celebrated Mass with the poor in their base communities in the slums, where a true sense of community and of unselfish sharing is celebrated in the Eucharist. Now, as pope, he has captured the imagination of the world by being the great reconciler, by seeking out and showing God's all-inclusive, redeeming love. He has initiated dialogue with those near and far, using the word “dialogue” 60 times in his exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, and presenting himself as the reconciling Christ in his whole manner of life and of speaking.

Conclusion

The apostle Paul addressed his fellow Christians in Corinth in words that speak to our need today: “Open wide your hearts” (2 Cor 6:13). We need to enlarge our understanding of God's gift in Jesus Christ to include all of creation, drawn together by God's Spirit, a Trinitarian love that embraces all. We are called to open our hearts in sung praise, in full and active participation in the Eucharist that inspires lives and sends sparks from the fire of Christ's love to warm the hearts of all to the ends of the earth. 



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

The Ministry of the Parish Pastoral Council in a Eucharist-Centered Parish

by James W. Brown

Jim Brown is an organization development consultant. His work over the last 30 years has included delivering workshops for parish pastoral councils. He has served the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament for over 25 years and is a lay associate of the congregation.

In 1983, the Catholic Church revised the *Code of Canon Law*. It challenged dioceses throughout the world to change the name, purpose, and functioning of parish councils by calling them “parish pastoral councils.” In canon 511, we read, “Councils are to investigate pastoral matters, to ponder them, and to make recommendations.” In effect, the role of the pastoral council is to assist the pastor in pastoring. In essence, the purpose envisioned is strategic, that is, giving helpful advice on how to be a vibrant, Gospel-centered organization and what plans are to put in place to realize such a vision.

Any pastor will tell you that pastoring covers many tasks: from keeping the parish mission-focused and ministerially complete to keeping the parish fiscally solvent; from dealing with broken boilers to dealing with broken hearts; from managing schools, catechetical programs, youth sports, festivals, and fish fries to managing the people who make these and all other activities work for the good of the parish and the wider community it serves.

Shepherding the People of God

And yet, at the heart of pastoring is faith, the spiritual journey of those who have committed themselves to a lifelong relationship with God and to expressing that relationship in how they live and serve others. At the heart of a Eucharist-centered parish is leading the parish community in making the Eucharist the “source and summit” of its life—the center from which all ministries and activities flow.

My wife and I belong to a Jesuit parish in Cincinnati, Ohio. Some years back, I had the privilege of serving a three-year term on the parish pastoral council. Clearly at the center of who we are as a parish is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. Teams of dedicated parishioners work with the pastor and pastoral staff to insure that our liturgies are well planned, spiritually engaging experiences. The parish provides plenty of opportunities for

child and adult faith formation, has a robust social outreach ministry, and strives diligently to be fiscally solvent.

At the same time, our pastor was thoroughly committed to being a Jesuit parish in the Ignatian tradition. We would take time at the beginning of each year to study Ignatian spirituality, to pray together and form a plan for the year that reflected both the priorities we had as a diocesan parish *and* what it meant to be *Ignatian*. The pastor expected us each month we met to help him think this through, with all of its implications. However, we could not have done our job—our ministry—well had we not taken the time to understand something about the Jesuit tradition, its charism, its values, and how to translate these into parish life and ministry.

At the heart of pastoring is faith, the spiritual journey of those committed to a lifelong relationship with God and to expressing that relationship in how they live and serve others.

Serving a Eucharistic Community

Many readers of *Emmanuel* are associated with the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament or share the eucharistic focus at the heart of its corporate charism. The order's founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, had a eucharistic vision that I and others have written about in past articles that was prescient for his times and clearly anticipated the vision of the Second Vatican Council, especially as articulated in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

A pastor who leads a parish dedicated to this vision commits himself to helping its members in “seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist” (the mantra of this journal by the way). Discerning what this means for setting ministerial priorities *for this parish, in this place, at this time*, is his charge.

The entity to assist him in this vital task is the parish pastoral council. This takes us back to what I am convinced is the primary purpose of a parish pastoral council: to investigate important pastoral matters, to ponder them in light of what it means to be a eucharistic community (or a parish in the tradition of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Saint Francis of Assisi, or Saint Ignatius of Loyola, etc.) and to make recommendations that keep the parish and its activities wholly centered on the Eucharist.

Many years ago, I listened to an expert on volunteerism in church-related settings. She impressed upon us that the pastor owes three things to



those who give of their time and talents to serve on parish councils and committees:

- Clarity regarding their role and what's expected of them;
- Training and formation for their task;
- Thanks! Thanks! Thanks!

In order, then, to fulfill this "job," I believe the members of a parish pastoral council need to be informed *and* formed. In addition to knowing something about Saint Peter Julian, Saint Ignatius, Saint Francis, or the patron of their diocesan parish, they can only assist their pastor effectively if they themselves can "speak the language" of the Eucharist and offer an informed opinion (or practical advice) on what it means to do faith formation (catechesis), social outreach, hospitality, stewardship, evangelization, administrative management, and all the ministries of the parish "in the light of the Eucharist."

A typical term for a parish pastoral council member is three years. Some members will serve even longer. They fulfill their end of the "covenant" with their pastor by taking time to:

- Understand the role they play in the parish;
- Study diocesan policies and programs that relate to any topic brought to them;
- Go deeper in understanding the vision of the pastor, whether that be Eymardian, Ignatian, Marian, diocesan, or some combination of the above.

At the heart of a Eucharist-centered parish is assisting the parish community in making the Eucharist the "source and summit" of its life—the center from which all ministries and activities flow.

As members of a Jesuit parish pastoral council, we periodically reflected on the heart of Ignatius' spirituality—*finding God in all things*. Council members of a Eucharist-centered parish are called to embrace and to understand the *centrality of the Eucharist* in the parish's and the individual's life, the heart of an Eymardian eucharistic spirituality.

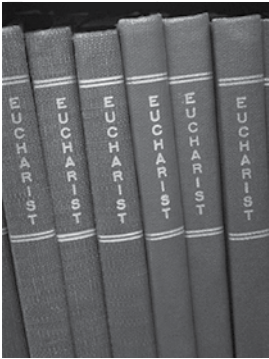
One could make the case that the entirety of the eucharistic celebration (the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist) is geared to the final act, the "missioning" of the faithful to "go in peace to love and serve the Lord." And "please do that" in a way that reflects who we are as a parish and what's important to us:

- Worship in the spirit of the church's liturgy and prayer;
- Pray and adore in ways that flow from the Mass;
- Teach and live a eucharistic spirituality;
- Welcome people warmly and genuinely;
- Reach out to those in need in a spirit of eucharistic gratitude and sharing;
- Evangelize joyfully and in a way that "brings people to the table";
- Manage parish resources (human, financial, and material) as responsible stewards;
- Treat others in a manner that reflects their baptismal vocation and their dignity as children of God;
- Return faithfully to celebrate the joys and tribulations of living the "dismissal charge";
- Renew yourself again and again at the table of the Lord.

If such a vision is missing, lacking in areas, or difficult to implement given changing realities in the parish, community, or diocese (e.g., the shortage of priests, demographics, emerging needs of the local church, etc.), a strategic conversation is needed. The group for a pastor to have this "holy" conversation with is the parish pastoral council. This is part of their "job," their ministry and contribution to church life.

And, pastors, *remember to be eucharistic*: to express your thanks and your appreciation in many and varied ways for their partnership in shepherding the people of God.





EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Avery Dulles on the Eucharist

by Dennis Billy, CSsR

Father Dennis Billy, formerly professor at the Alphonsianum in Rome, now teaches at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Avery Dulles, SJ, (1918-2008) was one of the most renowned American Catholic theologians of his generation. He converted to Catholicism while attending Harvard University (1936-1940), was a Lieutenant in the United States Navy during World War II, and entered the Society of Jesus upon his discharge in 1946. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1956 and studied theology at the Gregorian University in Rome, where he earned his doctorate in 1960.

Dulles' teaching career spanned almost five decades. He served on the faculty of Woodstock College from 1960 to 1974, The Catholic University of America from 1974 to 1988, and was the Laurence J. McGinley Professor of Religion and Society at Fordham University from 1988 to 2008. He served as president of the Catholic Theological Society of America and the American Theological Society, was a member of the International Theological Commission, and was active in the Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue.

In 2001, Pope John Paul II made Dulles a cardinal of the Catholic Church in recognition of his important contributions to Catholic theology. A prolific author, he is best known for his works on systematic theology, such as *Models of the Church* (1974), *Models of Revelation* (1983), *The Craft of Theology* (1992), and *The Assurance of Things Hoped For* (1994). His teaching on the Eucharist is noted for its emphasis on the real presence, its strong ecclesial dimension, and its close connection to the ministerial priesthood.¹

Dulles' Spirituality

As a Jesuit, Dulles was deeply influenced by the *Spiritual Exercises* of Saint Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) and its principle of thinking with the church. This collection of meditations seeks to help people master themselves and order their lives so as to not be influenced in their decisions by any undue attachments. The person making the exercises reimagines the gospel stories in a personal way and then prayerfully discusses his or

her experiences with a trained spiritual director. The ultimate goal of this process of discernment is to help people see God's providential plan for their lives and to enable them to become contemplatives in action.

Dulles' long and dedicated career as a Jesuit theologian in the area of systematic theology must be understood as a direct result of his adherence to the Jesuit ideal of doing everything "for the greater glory of God."²

This spiritual outlook influenced Dulles' approach to theology, which involved a prayerful, imaginative, and critical examination of Christian revelation as found in the Scriptures and the tradition of the church as presented and interpreted by the magisterium. In all of his writings, he was careful to place the subject under investigation in the context of biblical revelation and the living tradition of the church. To aid his understanding and analysis of Catholic theology, he took care to study the thoughts of contemporary theologians, but gave priority of place to the hermeneutical role of the church's magisterium in elucidating the meaning of God's word for the world today.

Taken together, these various strands of his approach to theology led him to formulate a creative approach to the systematic study of theology that was, at one and the same time, open to a variety of perspectives and loyal to the deepest instincts of the Catholic faith.³

Dulles was one of the major proponents of the "models" approach to Catholic theology, the basic idea of which was that certain images or metaphors serve as organizing principles for theological reflection on divine revelation and vie with one another to become an overarching paradigm. His fundamental insight was that each model has something to contribute to the understanding of theology and needs to be viewed in complementary fashion rather than in opposition to one another.

For example, in *Models of the Church* (1974), his groundbreaking work on the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, he identified five models at work in the church's self-understanding. These were the church as Institution, Mystical Communion, Sacrament, Herald, and Servant. Many of the tensions within the church, he concluded, could be traced to an overemphasis on one of these models to the detriment (or possible exclusion) of one or more of the others. The key to a proper ecclesiological understanding of the church was to place all of these models in a dynamic and creative tension with one another so that they correct the limitations of each and propel the church to a deeper appreciation of the mystery of the divine plan.

Dulles would later employ this same "models" approach to theology to



the notion of revelation in *Models of Revelation*, the meaning of faith in *The Assurance of Things Hoped For*, and to areas of pastoral concern such as catechesis and evangelization.⁴ This approach to theology enabled him to sustain an underlying unity in the midst of theological pluralism without giving in to the dangerous extremes of theological relativism, on the one hand, and dogmatic fundamentalism, on the other.⁵

In addition to this approach, Dulles was also aware of two overlapping but also different “models,” if you will, of Catholic theology itself: the more magisterial approach taught in Catholic seminaries and the more curious, exploratory approach found in many Catholic colleges and universities. Each of these approaches presupposes adherence to the Catholic faith, but have different points of departure related to their specific purposes.

In Catholic seminaries, where the primary purpose is to train young men for the priesthood, the point of departure is the teachings of the councils and pronouncements of the magisterium. In Catholic colleges and universities, by way of contrast, professors are not bound by the rigors of seminary formation and often start at the cutting edge of theological inquiry and work their way back to the teachings of the magisterium.

In addition to these two approaches to Catholic theology, Dulles was also very much aware of the “Catholic Studies” approach taken in many secular universities, where Catholicism is often taught outside the context of a committed faith and examined in light of the sociological and anthropological approaches used in the discipline of religious studies. Having taught in Catholic seminaries, colleges, and universities, as well as serving as visiting professor of a number of secular universities, he was very adept at navigating the often stormy theological waters of Roman Catholicism and ecumenical dialogue in a balanced, professional, and highly competent manner. As his teaching on the Eucharist suggests, he sought to use his deep theological acumen in service of the church he so dearly loved.⁶

Dulles on the Eucharist

In one respect, Dulles’ approach to the Eucharist is a reflection of his “models” approach to theology. He sees, for example, that a person’s views toward this sacrament will vary depending on whether he or she has an understanding of the church as Institution, Mystical Communion, Sacrament, Herald, and Servant—or various combinations thereof. He also recognizes that other variations are possible depending on the model(s) of revelation a person adopts (e.g., revelation as Doctrine,

History, Inner Experience, Dialectical Presence, or New Awareness) or of faith (e.g., Propositional, Transcendental, Fiducial, Affective-Experiential, Obediential, or Praxis).

From this perspective, a person can incorporate any one or more of the above models into his or her views toward the Eucharist that, in turn, appears as an extension of his or her presuppositions about the nature of faith, revelation, and the church. In such an approach, it is important, on the one hand, to prevent a single model from having undue precedence and, on the other, not to have an overabundance of models that would dilute the symbolic meaning of the sacrament and obscure its doctrinal clarity.⁷

Dulles' career as a theologian must be understood as a direct result of his adherence to the Jesuit ideals of thinking with the church and doing everything "for the greater glory of God."

Dulles' personal views on the Eucharist reflect the balanced approach displayed throughout his writings. In an article on Pope John Paul II's teaching on the sacrament, he affirms the famous statement by Henri de Lubac, SJ, that the Eucharist "builds the church and the church makes the Eucharist." He also affirms John Paul's claim that the Eucharist displays the four marks of the church as being one, holy, catholic, and apostolic.

He concludes the article stating that the church is in dire need of renewal in each of these four essential marks or characteristics. Although irrevocably *holy* in its divine head and apostolic heritage, its members are sinful and in constant need of purification. The church, moreover, is not only imperfect in holiness, but also suffers from internal ethnic, national, and ideological tensions that detract from its *unity*. If that is not enough, we often use the term *catholic* without having any sense of what it entails, and the church's *apostolicity* is difficult to maintain when surrounded by the forces of secular culture that seek to negate all sense of the sacred in modern life and create the illusion that we can imagine a salvation of our own making. In his mind, only the Eucharist has the power to preserve these four essential marks of the church. Only it can renew the hearts and minds of its members and enable them to be a force for positive change in the world today.⁸

Dulles displays his breadth of knowledge and typical clarity of expression when examining the theological basis for Catholic teaching on Christ's presence in the Eucharist. He affirms the limited capacity of the human



mind and sees the real presence as an ineffable mystery that should be welcomed “with wonder and amazement.” He recognizes that some Catholics have interpreted the Eucharist “either too carnally or too mystically, too grossly or too tenuously, too naively or too figuratively;” and goes on to explain that “Christ’s presence in this sacrament resembles that of the soul in the body. My soul is not partly in my head, partly in my heart, partly in my hands, but is entirely present in the whole and in every part.” What is more, while it is true that the Second Vatican Council recognizes multiple ways in which Christ is present in the liturgy, “the presence of Christ in the Eucharist surpasses them all.”

Dulles summarizes the importance of the real presence with his customary eloquence of expression: “Although the mystery of the real presence certainly stretches our powers of comprehension to the utmost, it is not simply a puzzle. It is a consoling sign of the love, power, and ingenuity of our divine Savior. He willed to bring himself into intimate union with believers of every generation and to do so in a way that suits our nature as embodied spirits. The forms of food and drink, deeply charged with memories from the history of ancient Israel, are meaningful even to the unlearned throughout the ages. They aptly symbolize the spiritual nourishment and refreshment conferred by the sacrament. On another level, they call to mind the crucifixion of Christ, who shed his blood for our redemption. And finally, they prefigure the everlasting banquet of the blessed in the heavenly Jerusalem. The many-layered symbolism of the Eucharist is not separable from the real presence. The symbolism has singular power to recapture the past, transform the present, and anticipate the future because it contains the Lord of history truly, really, and substantially.” One would be hard put to find a more balanced and well-reasoned defense of Christ’s presence in the sacrament.⁹

Finally, Dulles draws a close connection between the Eucharist and the priesthood. The sacrament, he believes, unfolds in three tenses: it looks back to the Last Supper; it celebrates the presence of the Holy Spirit in the believing community; and it looks forward to the eschatological banquet and Christ’s return in glory. The priest, in his mind, celebrates the sacrament *in persona Christi* as priest, prophet, and king. These sanctifying, teaching, and governing offices are intimately related and cannot be separated from the person of Christ and his ministerial priesthood.

Dulles believes that part of the reason for the loss of priestly identity in the period immediately following the Second Vatican Council was due to a minimizing of the sacral dimension of the priesthood. He believes that priests fulfill their highest office through the celebration of the eucharistic

sacrifice and that this sacral function must be revitalized and integrated into a single identity if priests are to minister to the church effectively through the threefold ministry of word, worship, and pastoral care.¹⁰

Observations

This brief exposition of Dulles' teaching on the Eucharist highlights the central role it plays in his understanding of the believing community and the ministerial priesthood. The following observations highlight some of the spiritual and theological underpinnings of his view of the sacrament and their relevance for today's Catholics.

1. To begin, Dulles was convinced of the centrality of the Eucharist for the life and mission of the Catholic Church. The church, at one and the same time, both constitutes the Eucharist and is constituted by it. This sacrament, he believed, put the church and its members in touch with the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying Lord, and did so in such a way that they were divinized by it through their participation in and reception of it. The Eucharist, in other words, cannot exist without the church, and the church cannot exist without the Eucharist.

His approach to the Eucharist is a reflection of his "models" approach to theology.

The preeminence of the Eucharist in the church's life and mission is the starting point from which all other theological reflection on the sacrament takes place. To overlook this fundamental point of departure for the church's life and mission does serious damage to the gospel message. Jesus came to this world to give life, and to give it in abundance (cf. Jn 10:10). The Eucharist, for Dulles, represents God's gift of abundant life to his people.¹¹

2. Dulles also maintains that the Eucharist is an unfathomable mystery, one that ultimately goes beyond the limits of human comprehension. Part of the reason he adopts a "models" approach to theology is because it recognizes a gap between the particular model being employed and the mystery it seeks to express. Although employing other models simultaneously to capture different aspects of the mystery and thus create a logical web of meaning may lessen the gap, he recognizes that, even then, a disparity will still exist and the full meaning of the mystery will remain elusive.



When seen in this light, Dulles' "models" approach to theology represents a profound sense of the limitations of human reason, while still recognizing its capacity to say something rather than nothing. Dulles successfully applies this approach to theology to such areas as revelation, faith, and ecclesiology. Although he does not apply it specifically to the Eucharist, the implications of his approach for the sacrament are clear and have been eagerly pursued by others.¹²

3. Dulles recognizes that the four marks of the church are reflected in the Eucharist, but also sees the sacrament as an important instrument of renewal. In its humanness, the church is in constant need of being purified of its sins and in desperate need of overcoming national, racial, and ideological tensions that divide it and prevent it from carrying out its universal apostolic mission in the world. Only Jesus, the God-man, the person whom God sent into the world to heal our sinful humanity and elevate it to new heights, can bring about the deep changes necessary for the renewal of the church.

The Eucharist, for Dulles, is the means through which the church remains in vital contact with the divinizing power of Christ. Through it, Christ not only enters our midst, but also gradually transforms those who receive him into Spirit-filled beings fully alive with love for God and others.¹³

4. Dulles affirms the priority of the real presence and draws an intimate connection between the Eucharist and the ministerial priesthood. He recognizes a single priesthood of Christ, but makes an important distinction between the ordained priesthood and the priesthood of all believers. The character of the ministerial priesthood is intrinsically ordained to preside over the eucharistic sacrifice and to serve the community of the faithful.

In the absence of an ordained priest, the community cannot simply call forth one of its members to take his place, since the ordained priesthood represents the apostolic and catholic nature of the church and must be exercised in unity with the apostolic succession of bishops. This sacral duty of the priest is intimately related to his teaching and governing offices and constitutes a part of his essential identity. Dulles believes the confusion in priestly identity in the period immediately following the Second Vatican Council stems, at least in part, from an unfortunate (and possibly unintended) lack of emphasis on this important and constitutive function of the Catholic priesthood.¹⁴

5. Dulles also emphasizes that the priest plays a twofold role of mediation

at the eucharistic sacrifice: representing Christ to the believing community (a christological dimension) and the believing community to Christ (an ecclesiological dimension). For this very reason, the liturgy has the priest sometimes speaking in the first person singular (representing Christ to the people) and, at other times, in the first person plural (representing the people to Christ). This twofold process reflects the incarnational mediation of Christ who, as the God-man, makes it possible for humanity to enter the presence of the Father and reap the benefits of divine sonship. Because he acts *in persona Christi*, the priest both intercedes for divine mercy on behalf of his people and mediates the sanctifying grace that comes through the sacraments. Because of this, the priest fulfills the demands of Christian discipleship in a unique way. At one and the same time, he both follows in the footsteps of Christ and finds Christ standing in his own shoes.¹⁵

This Eucharist puts the church and its members in touch with the creating, redeeming, and sanctifying Lord, and does so in such a way that they are divinized by it.

6. Dulles points out that the Eucharist is a sacrament of the universal church and cannot be constituted by any human group. The priest acts on behalf of the church and dispenses the mysteries of salvation according to those rites properly set forth to render them valid and licit. In this respect, he has a special responsibility to safeguard the integrity of the sacrament and to protect it from being defamed or denigrated in any way. While this responsibility lies at the feet of every member of the Catholic faithful, it is a special duty of the ordained priesthood, since they offer the eucharistic sacrifice *in persona Christi* and without them the sacrament could not take place.

For this reason, the eucharistic church relies on the priesthood of Christ as manifested through the ordained priesthood in the service of the priesthood of the faithful. The latter, in turn, share in the one priesthood of Christ by virtue of their membership in the body of Christ, the church, and their common call to discipleship.¹⁶

7. Finally, because the Eucharist is the “sacrament of sacraments” and the primary means by which God divinizes his people, Dulles emphasizes the importance for priests to nourish their life and ministry through prayer and the search for holiness. Because priests are public figures who stand before the people as representatives of Christ and his church, they must



be careful not to allow the trappings of their public role to take center stage in their lives and devolve into a hollow clericalism and careerism. On the contrary, their desire to become holy will enliven all three aspects of their priestly office—the prophetic, the priestly, and the pastoral—and will enable them to be of greater service to the people they serve.

The Eucharist, for Dulles, lies at the very heart of the priestly life and ministry and points the way to their own personal sanctity and divinization. In keeping with his Jesuit vocation, Dulles wants all priests and the people they serve to become a eucharistic church “for the greater glory of God.”¹⁷

Although these observations do not exhaust Dulles’ teaching on the Eucharist, they cover its major aspects and point to the essential role it plays in his understanding of the church and its relevance for the ordained priesthood. They also reflect the balanced approach of his theological outlook and the perennial value of eucharistic worship for Catholic faithful.


Conclusion

Avery Dulles has left the church a rich corpus of theological scholarship rooted in Scripture, tradition, and the teaching of the magisterium. A voice for the “moderate middle” in Catholic thought, his “models” approach to theology provided both scholars and the people in the pews alike with a valuable tool for understanding the fast-moving changes in the post-Vatican II church. He possessed a rare gift that enabled him to write in a way that was faithful to church teaching, intellectually rigorous, and accessible on a popular level. For this reason alone, his writings will continue to be read and will impact future discussion along a wide spectrum of theological issues: the nature of faith, revelation, and the church—to name but a few.

Dulles’ balanced approach to theology is reflected in his teaching on the Eucharist, which is a logical extension of his views on fundamental theology and ecclesiology. Intrinsic to this teaching is the notion he adopts from his fellow Jesuit, Henri de Lubac, SJ, that the Eucharist both builds the church and is made by it. This reciprocal relationship between church and Eucharist is fostered by the ordained priesthood, which has been entrusted with a threefold office to teach, govern, and sanctify the church and its faithful. Dulles believed that the reason for the decline in priestly vocations in the post-Vatican II church was due, at least in part, to a de-emphasis of the sacral role of the priesthood in favor of its teaching and governing functions. For this reason, the renewal of the church must

include, among other things, a renewed balance in the priestly office, one which restores the mediating role of the priest between God and the faithful to its rightful place.

During his lifetime, Dulles achieved both national and international acclaim as a theologian and representative of mainstream Catholic thought. His popularity on the lecture circuit, his many visiting professorships, his 33 honorary doctorates, and his elevation to the college of cardinals all give witness to the high esteem in which he was held both in popular venues, ecumenical gatherings, the world of Catholic academia, and even the highest circles of the Catholic hierarchy. His writings are highly esteemed, have influenced a generation of Catholic theologians, and have even filtered into the popular Catholic imagination.

His views on the Eucharist reflect his overall theological outlook and are rooted in his Jesuit spirituality, his priestly vocation, and his close adherence to the Catholic understanding of God's redeeming and divinizing love made manifest in the person of Jesus Christ. 

Notes

¹ For more biographical information on Dulles, see Patrick W. Carey, *Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ: A Model Theologian, 1918-2008* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2010). See also Thomas G. Guarino, "Why Avery Dulles Matters," *First Things* (May 2009), <http://www.firstthings.com/article/2009/04/why-avery-dulles-matters-1243317340> (accessed March 6, 2013).

² For the influence of Ignatian spirituality on Dulles' life, see Carey, *Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ*, 94-136. For the Ignatian rules on thinking with the church, see *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, trans. Anthony Mottola (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1964), 139-42.

³ See Avery Dulles, *The Craft of Theology: From Symbol to System* (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 17-39, 69-118.

⁴ See, for example, Avery Dulles, "Historical Models of Catechesis," *Origins* 37/22(2007): 347-52; Idem, "Models of Evangelization," *Origins*, 37/1(2007): 8-11.

⁵ For Dulles' "models" approach to theology and its significance for interpreting Vatican II, see Carey, *Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ*, 211-73; 482-83.

⁶ For Dulles' comparison between teaching theology in the seminary and in the university, see Dulles, *The Craft of Theology*, 149-64; Carey, *Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ*, 427-44.

⁷ See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1978), 19-37; Idem, *Models of Revelation* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 19-35; Idem, *The Assurance of Things Hoped For: A Theology of Christian Faith* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 170-84. For an application of the "models" approach to the Eucharist, see Kevin W. Irwin, *Models of the Eucharist* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005).

⁸ See Avery Dulles, "A Eucharistic Church," *America* 119/20(2004): 8-12.

⁹ All quotations in this paragraph come from Avery Dulles, "Christ's Presence in the



Eucharist," *Origins* 34/39(2005): 627-31.

¹⁰ See Avery Dulles, "A Eucharistic Church," 8-12; Idem, *The Priestly Office: A Theological Reflection* (New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 33-34; Idem, *The Priest and the Eucharist* (Weston, MA: Blessed John XXIII National Seminary, 2000), 6-21.

¹¹ See Dulles, "A Eucharistic Church," 8-12.

¹² See Carey, *Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ*, 211-73; 482-83.

¹³ See Dulles, "A Eucharistic Church," 8-12.

¹⁴ See Dulles, "Christ's Presence in the Eucharist," 627-31; Idem, *The Priestly Office*, 39-41;

¹⁵ See Dulles, *The Priestly Office*, 35-37; Idem, *Models of the Church*, 74.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 34-35.

¹⁷ See Dulles, *The Priest and the Eucharist*, 18-20.

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EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Caryll Houselander: “Neurotic” Mystic

by Victor M. Parachin

In early 1942, an amazing medical referral took place. Dr. Eric Strauss, one of Great Britain’s most distinguished psychiatrists and neurologists, quietly began sending emotionally disturbed boys to spend time with a woman who was a spiritual writer, woodcarver, poet, and mystic. Her name was Caryll Houselander.

This was a most curious triangle of relationships. First, there was Dr. Strauss, a highly respected medical doctor who would become president of the Psychiatry Section of the Royal Society of Medicine and of the British Psychological Society. Secondly, there was Caryll Houselander, who had no formal training in either medicine or psychology. She had come to Dr. Strauss’ attention through her volunteer work at a school for boys who had been traumatized by the war, many of whom responded immediately and positively to her sensitive spirit. Thirdly, there were the boys sent by Dr. Strauss to Caryll, all of whom were suffering from what today would be called Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome as a result of the war. One boy, for example, had lived alone in the Malayan jungle after the murder of his parents. These boys were sent to Caryll after all traditional medical and psychological therapies were ineffective. Under her care and her intuitive application of music and art therapy, as well as patient listening, the boys quickly recovered from their psychological wounds and scars. Soon, other doctors began sending their adult patients.

Houselander’s biographer, Massie Ward, interviewed Dr. Strauss, asking him about the work Caryll had done for him. Dr. Strauss indicated he was so impressed with Caryll’s work with the boys that immediately after the war he unhesitatingly sent her adult patients for what he called “social therapy.” Intrigued by the phrase, Ward said, “Forgive me my dense ignorance, but what exactly is ‘social therapy?’” Dr. Strauss replied, “With Caryll, it meant that *she loved them back to life.*”

Caryll Houselander (1901-1954) was a living paradox. On the one hand, she had a deep and profound spirituality which connected with an

Victor Parachin is a minister, journalist, and author of a dozen books on practical Christian spirituality.

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amazingly wide spectrum of people. On the other hand, she battled with a variety of issues: a chain smoker, she was painfully shy, at times seriously anorexic, often frail physically, struggled with issues of abandonment, suffered from panic attacks, and covered her face with a chalky white substance giving her a grotesque appearance. These were some of the reasons she was labeled neurotic by some of her physicians. In fact, she considered herself damaged goods.

One physician, however, was more complimentary and said she was not neurotic but highly sensitive. Because of her own trials and traumas, she was sensitized to the wounds of others. This allowed her to connect in a deep way with suffering people. Through the 1940s and early 1950s, Houselander emerged as one of Great Britain's fascinating mystics and spiritual writers. She penned 15 books and wrote more than 700 poems, short stories, and articles.

Born in 1901 in Bath, England, Houselander's parents were Willmott and Gertrude Provis Houselander. Caryll was the second of two daughters; her sister, Ruth, was four years older. The family, while not extremely wealthy, was financially prosperous enough to permit luxuries. They had a nurse and governess for the children; Willmott had time to become a skilled huntsman; and Gertrude played tennis at Wimbledon. Their family structure began to change when Caryll was six. At that time, Gertrude underwent a strong religious conversion to Catholicism. This created distance from her husband, who did not share her religious enthusiasm. The impact of her mother's conversion was double-edged for Caryll. On the one side, she felt her mother's prayers and practices were oppressive: long daily prayers, altars set up inside the home, and frequent Mass attendance. Caryll referred to her mother's religious orientation as a "persecution of piety." On the other side, however, Caryll was deeply influenced by her mother's devotion and would, over time, find herself more and more drawn to spirituality.

Eventually, Willmott, who would not accept his wife's religious fervor, left the house, and the marriage ended in divorce when Caryll was eight. The event impacted Caryll harshly and it took years before Caryll could properly integrate it into her life. In order to provide for herself and her daughters, Gertrude ran a boarding house. An opportunity emerged for the mother to send Caryll to a convent boarding school when she was eleven. Thus, in her short life, Caryll experienced parental abandonment twice: once when her father left the house and secondly when her mother sent her away to a boarding school.

The Convent of the Holy Child School located in a Birmingham suburb was run by French and Belgian nuns. One sister, however, was German, and she was the one nun whom Caryll became close to. The sister was intuitively drawn to Caryll, probably because of the little girl's sensitivity and loneliness. It is quite probable that the sister herself was a lonely woman. She was a German living and working with French sisters just as the First World War was about to break out. Animosity between Germans and French was running high. Also, the sister spoke very little English and was thus somewhat isolated from the community.

Caring for those broken in body and spirit, Caryll loved them back to life.

One day as Caryll walked by the room containing convent books, she saw the German sister alone cleaning a pair of shoes. Caryll walked into the room, intending to offer her help when she noticed that the sister was crying. "Tears were running down her rosy cheeks and falling onto the blue apron and the child's shoes," Caryll would later write in *A Rocking Horse*. Speechless and embarrassed, Caryll did not know what to say or do. They both remained silent for a few moments, and then Caryll experienced her first vision. She describes the moment this way:

At last, with an effort, I raised my head, and then—I saw—the nun was crowned with the crown of thorns. I shall not attempt to explain this. I am simply telling the thing as I saw it. That bowed head was weighed under the crown of thorns. I stood for—I suppose—a few seconds, dumbfounded, and then, finding my tongue, I said to her: "I would not cry if I was wearing the crown of thorns like you." She looked at me as if she was startled and asked, "What do you mean?" "I don't know," I said, and at that time I did not. I sat down beside her and together we polished the shoes.

When Caryll was 16, her mother abruptly withdrew her from school because she needed her help running the boarding house. Returning reluctantly, Caryll found herself working for her mother as a domestic servant. One of her many tasks was shopping for groceries, and her second vision occurred while she was shopping for potatoes. At that time, in 1918, the major news story was the Russian revolution and the murder of the Czar and the royal family. As she made her way to the potato vendor's stall, she was suddenly stopped in her tracks. In front of her, as if displayed on a large theater screen, was a "gigantic and living Russian icon." Vividly, she saw Christ crucified, his head down, his arms



reaching to span the world. A few days later, she experienced part two of the vision at the same corner. She passed a newsstand and saw a newspaper picture of the Czar. When she bent down to see the picture more closely, she was startled to see that the face was identical to the face of Christ in her vision. Because of the vision, Caryll began working with Russian refugees and immigrants.

Her third vision came years later and differed considerably from the first two because she saw Christ not in one person, such as the German nun or the Russian Czar, but in all of humanity. The vision took place while she was riding a London subway. "I was in an underground train, a crowded train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-hanging, workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly, I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all."

The three visions combined were a source of spiritual enlightenment for Caryll. Through them, she realized that in spite of two world wars, Christians have no enemies; that Christ can be seen in all of humanity. She would spend the rest of her life seeing Christ in every person she met. As a result, ordinary life took on a sacramental dimension. She sought to manifest the presence of Christ in her life while seeking to evoke that same presence out of other lives. Caryll was especially drawn to those marginalized by society, devoting much of her life to them: the mentally ill, traumatized children, immigrants, refugees, the poor.

Caryll's last few years were filled with illness. Beginning in 1949, she suffered from pneumonia, influenza, tuberculosis, and, finally, cancer. She was very aware that her time was short. In the summer of 1954, her health began to deteriorate even more. She died on October 12, just a few weeks before her 53rd birthday. The wonder and lingering impact of Caryll Houselander lie in her eloquent ability to articulate the profound truth that the heart of the Christian faith is love: the love of God and the love of humanity.

Lessons from Caryll Houselander

Respond to people's hopes as well as their hurts.

Caryll received letters from people who were struggling with depression, chronic illness, divorce (which was judged more harshly in her time), and consequent feelings of guilt. She empathized with their dilemmas and always tried to generate hope. In spite of their challenges, she reminded them of God's love for them and of their own innate worthiness.

Don't be seduced by materialism.

Of course, there is nothing wrong with earning a living or even a very good one. However, don't make the accumulation of wealth your life goal. Caryll had considerable talent as an artist, poet, and writer. Yet she used her gifts to benefit others rather than just herself.

Learn from those less fortunate.

One of Caryll's most memorable experiences occurred while she was volunteering at a mental hospital. She was there to help others and be a blessing to the mentally ill. However, she ended up being helped by the patients and was blessed by her encounter with them. Like Caryll, be willing to learn from others, especially those on the margins of society.

Through her mystical experiences, Caryll came to believe that Christians have no enemies, that Christ can be seen in all of humanity.

See Christ in every person.

In her book *The Comforting of Christ*, Caryll reminded readers: "If we are not interested in the minds, the feelings, the hopes, the fears, sorrows and joys of everyone with whom we come in contact, we are not interested in Christ. Whatever we do to anyone, we do to him."

Help bring out the Christ which dwells in every person.

Caryll viewed Mary as a model of the spiritual life, saying that our task is like that of Mary, namely, to bear Christ into the world. Remember that many people are unaware of the Christ dwelling within them. By your words and acts, be the one who nurtures and helps give birth to that indwelling Christ.

Don't allow your human imperfections to prevent you from making a difference.

Caryll had many limitations and imperfections. She did not have a strong body and suffered from a variety of chronic conditions all her life. She was often referred to as a recluse; even in her own home, she found it difficult to enter a room in which there were other people. Caryll suffered frequent panic attacks. In spite of such human frailties, she cultivated and expressed the talents given her to make a difference in others' lives, especially through her books and poems.

Be open to the presence of God in the ordinary.

Caryll had three visions. Interestingly, these experiences of God's presence

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took place in very ordinary daily life. She experienced the divine presence while watching a woman cleaning shoes, while grocery shopping, and while glancing at a newspaper at a vendor's stand.

Enjoy your life.

Observing her mother, Caryll realized that her mother's life was filled with too much duty and obligation and not enough leisure and pleasure. Caryll made up her mind to work hard, but also to enjoy living. Look at how you live and ask yourself, "Is my life all work and responsibility?" If so, take steps to bring more beauty and pleasure, more spontaneity and play into your life.

Heighten your sensory awareness.

Much of Caryll's writing shows that she drew inspiration from all of her senses. She refers to tree bark, delicate blades of grass, the sun's warmth, the sounds of the sea, blight on a green leaf, smells of laundered linens, lemon oil, and soap. Recapture the ability to see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. Be thankful to God for your senses.

Reach out to people marginalized by society.

Throughout her life, Caryll responded to suffering people wherever she found them. When you see a hurt person, try to be a healer. Give some of your time to those who can benefit from your wisdom, your experience, your compassionate presence.



In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with Q, R, S, T, and U are asked to celebrate the Eucharist for deceased priests during September and October.

You are invited to send the names of recently deceased priests (Eucharistic League members and non-members) to emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com to be included in this remembrance. Thank you.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pope's Message Offers Insight into the Lay Vocation

by Anthony Schueller, SSS

Pope Francis' schedule, like that of any major religious or political figure today, is filled with appointments, meetings, ceremonies, and speeches. In early May, the Holy Father welcomed representatives of secular institutes from around the world to Saint Peter's and spoke to them of their distinctive vocation and lifestyle.

The theme of the Assembly of Institutes of Secular Life was "In the Heart of Human History: The Challenges of a Complex Society." Secular institutes, a relatively new form of consecrated life in the church, trace their origins to Pope Pius XII's apostolic constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* in 1947. Italy has more adherents than any other country.

Pope Francis set aside his prepared remarks to first speak spontaneously. His words, both oral and written, reveal a deep respect for his listeners and a grasp of their contribution to the life of the church. I was struck by his eloquence. Francis is someone not only able to convey the truth and power of the Gospel and the Christian life in a forthright manner; he also speaks to the heart.

His comments were published by the Vatican Information Service on May 12 in a release entitled "Institutes of Secular Life: A Sign of the Church in Dialogue." They are presented below for your prayer and reflection with only section headings added. His words on the lay vocation are worthy of thought for all of us, lay and ordained.

An Act of Bravery

"... You have done great good for the church, with bravery, as it takes bravery to live in the world. Many of you come and go, alone, in your apartment; others are in small communities. Every day, you live the life of someone who lives in the world, and at the same time protect the dimension of contemplation in relation to the Lord and to the world; contemplating reality, contemplating the beauty of the world, and also



the great sins of society, deviations, all these things, and always in spiritual tension. . . . For this reason, your vocation is fascinating, as it is a vocation that is located right there, where the salvation of not only people but also institutions is at play.”

“I hope you will always maintain this attitude of going beyond, not only beyond, but even further, where everything is at play: politics, the economy, education, the family. It is perhaps possible that at times you are tempted to think, ‘But what can I do?’ When this temptation rears, remember that the Lord has spoken to us about the grain of wheat. And your life is like the grain of wheat. It is like leaven. Do everything possible so that the kingdom might come, grow, and be great, and that it may protect many people, like the mustard tree. Think about this. A small life, a small gesture; a normal life, but it is leaven, it is a seed, it allows growth. And this brings consolation. The results in the balance of the kingdom of God cannot be seen, but only the Lord enables us to perceive something. . . . We will see the results there, above.”

You live as one who lives in the world, and contemplate it and the Lord.

The Importance of Hope

“This is why it is important to have so much hope! It is a grace that you must ask of the Lord, always: the hope that never disappoints. It never disappoints! A hope that goes ahead. I would advise you to read very frequently chapter 11 of the Letter to the Hebrews, the chapter of hope. And learn that many of our forefathers have taken that road and have not seen the results, but they perceived them from afar. Hope. . . . This is what I wish upon you. Many thanks for what you have done for the church; many thanks for your prayer and your action. Thank you for your hope. And do not forget: be revolutionaries!”

“By vocation you are laypeople . . . in the midst of others, you lead a normal life, without any outward signs, without the support of community life, without the visibility of an organized apostolate or specific works. You are rich only in the totalizing experience of God’s love and are therefore capable of knowing and sharing the burden of life in its many expressions, fermenting them with the light and strength of the Gospel. You are a sign of that church in dialogue that Paul VI spoke of. . . . Your vocation makes you interesting to every person and to their deepest yearnings, which often remain unexpressed or masked.”

A Conscious, Careful Presence

"Through the strength of God's love, that you have encountered and known, you are capable of proximity and tenderness, like the Samaritan who passed by, saw, and had compassion. This is the moment to which your vocation commits you: to place yourself next to each one and to make yourselves close to every person you meet; because your stay in the world is not simply a sociological condition, but rather a theological reality that calls you to a conscious, careful presence, in which you are able to perceive, see, and touch your brother's flesh."

You are rich only in the totalizing experience of God's love and are therefore capable of knowing and sharing the burden of life in its many expressions.

"If this does not happen, if you became distracted, or worse still, you do not know this contemporary world but instead know and frequent only the world that is most comfortable to you, or that most entices you, then conversion is urgent! Yours is a vocation that is by nature outgoing, not only because it brings you to others, but also and above all because it requires that you dwell where all reside."

"Never lose the impulse to walk the streets of the world, with the knowledge that walking, even with faltering steps or limping, is always better than standing still, closed up in our own questions or our own certainties. Missionary passion, the joy of the encounter with Christ that leads us to share the beauty of faith with others, is a bulwark against the risk of being paralyzed by individualism."

Missionary passion, the joy of the encounter with Christ that leads us to share the beauty of faith with others, is a bulwark against individualism.

"You are like antennae, ready to gather the seeds of newness inspired by the Holy Spirit, and can help the ecclesial community to take on this benevolent gaze and find brave new paths to reach everyone. Poor among the poor, but with a burning heart. Never still, always on the way. Together, and sent, even when you are alone, since consecration makes you a living spark of the church. Always in motion, with that pilgrim virtue: joy!"





PASTORAL LITURGY

Fruits of the Constitution: RCIA—Part 5

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

Father John Thomas Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church, his home parish, in Highland Heights, Ohio, and a liturgical consultant and presenter.

We have been reviewing the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA) this year. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, blessed us with a revision of rites to help us understand “the mysteries” and their sacredness. In this column, we will continue our examination of the RCIA with some of the other minor rites and Holy Saturday and Easter Vigil notes important for our pastoral visitation of this marvelous fruit of the Second Vatican Council.

As you recall, the RCIA is for those who have never been baptized and who wish to become Catholic Christians. A lesser-known ritual, the Penitential Rite (Scrutiny), USA RCIA, 459-472, was included to have a ritual to celebrate with those preparing to receive confirmation and First Communion or to be received into full communion.

This ritual is envisioned for the Second Sunday of Lent, when we always hear the Gospel of the transfiguration of the Lord, since the other Sundays of Lent are devoted to rituals for the unbaptized, namely, the Rite of Election and the three Scrutinies. This is a “penitential rite,” “intended solely for celebrations with baptized adults” preparing to complete the sacraments of initiation and/or full reception into the Catholic faith. It may be done at a suitable time (462), even if the candidates are not going to enter into full communion at Easter. Another important aspect of this ritual is that it “[prepares] candidates to celebrate the sacrament of penance” (461). I would suggest that these prayers and texts might be helpful for a communal penance service (Rite of Penance, Rite 2), for they are beautiful texts that remind us of our need to have the Holy Spirit help us overcome evil and “be fearless witnesses to [the] Gospel and one with us in the communion of love” (470A).

The Statutes for the Catechumenate and the RCIA foresee that candidates for full communion (those already baptized and becoming Roman Catholic) not be brought into the Catholic faith during the Easter Vigil. The vigil is truly for the elect, namely, those becoming Catholic through

baptism. Paragraphs 32 and 33 state:

The reception of candidates . . . should ordinarily take place at the Sunday Eucharist of the parish community.

It is preferable that reception into full communion not take place at the Easter Vigil lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism, possible misunderstanding, or even reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another church or ecclesial community or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic eucharistic community.

Every parish should practice for the Easter Vigil with the candidates for baptism. There is debate among some who feel that the night should truly be a mystery. However, experience has shown that people need to plan, for a change of clothes for immersion especially. Those becoming Catholic by now know that they will be getting wet and that this is a key element in initiation into the church. Nevertheless, they want to know how, when, and where. As part of making the rehearsal a spiritual retreat experience, I recommend sharing the Preparation Rites that are in RCIA, 185 and following. The RCIA sees this as a Holy Saturday morning experience. However, many parishes decorate for Easter on Holy Saturday morning, since this is the only time that volunteers are available, making it difficult to conduct a rehearsal. The rehearsal might outline the Easter Vigil, instruct people on logistics of the ceremony, and use the rituals as a basis for some final reflections. It is helpful to have all involved in the vigil, including concelebrants, be present for the rehearsal. Calling on the Holy Spirit will calm anxious nerves and refocus on what we anticipate and will enjoy.

The third step of RCIA, the celebration of the sacraments of initiation, is the “center and high point” (209). We still hear of parishes that separate the three sacraments of initiation, having confirmation when the bishop comes and First Communion being postponed until the children of the parish receive their own. Both Canon Law and RCIA, 215 make it clear that the three sacraments are *one sacrament* and not to be broken into segments. The Eastern rites of Catholicism and the Orthodox have always celebrated the rites of initiation as one sacrament, either on this holy night or at any time. Furthermore, when we baptize someone in an emergency, the RCIA is to be celebrated. Thus, candidates begin their last journey with the comfort of the Holy Spirit and the strength of Communion to accompany them.

The rites are intended to take place in prescribed places and in sequence in order to highlight the moments of initiation. The RCIA envisions that

the candidates for baptism make their own profession of faith apart from the congregation. RCIA, 236 speaks of this separation, with the renewal of promises by the assembly coming later. While the newly baptized change their clothes, the members of the congregation could light their candles and renew their baptismal promises. Thus, the neophytes would return to a church filled with light, to realize that they are now part of this community of radiant faith and witness.

Some videos and groups suggest that the newly baptized should go from being wet into their white garments, followed by the presentation of the lighted candle and confirmation—*wet*. In northern climates, this presents obvious health concerns for candidates and pastors alike.

In our last column for this year, we will finish our review of the RCIA, focusing on the period of mystagogy and other topics. We will make some final remarks and discuss pastoral concerns, especially as we look ahead to the updating of the texts for the RCIA.

Note: The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, the Bishops Committee on Divine Worship, and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions are planning a major consultation on the RCIA from October 1-3, 2014, in Lombard, Illinois. Go to fdlc.org to register and receive more information.

The September and October Calendar

Back to School

Parts of the country go back to school in September. See the *Book of Blessings* (BB), 522-550 for a blessing for the beginning of the school year. One may adapt the prayers in the *Roman Missal* for the Beginning of the Civil Year for use at an opening of the school year Mass.

Monday, September 1—Labor Day (United States)

See volume four of the lectionary for the special texts that are available for this day, as well as the *Roman Missal* for the optional Mass for the Sanctification of Human Labor.

Monday, September 8—Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Like the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, a blessing for the harvest and produce may be appropriate.

Thursday, September 11—Patriot Day

Today's Gospel instructs us how we are to treat those who mistreat us. This is a hard teaching, but helpful as we remember the tragic events of this day. Previous issues of *Emmanuel* magazines have included a ritual for this day; contact me at jtlaness@gmail.com for a copy of this paraliturgy.

Sunday, September 14—Exaltation of the Holy Cross

It is a rare occasion to celebrate this feast on the Lord's Day. A good suggestion is to highlight the crosses and crucifixes in your church and on your property, and perhaps have the Stations of the Cross as an afternoon devotion. Emmanuel Publishing offers a variety of scriptural Ways of the Cross. Call us at (440) 449-2103 for samples.

Newer September Saints

Note some of the newer saints in the liturgical calendar and celebrate these special witnesses:

- Saturday, September 20: Saints Andrew Kim Taegŏn, Paul Chŏng Hasang, and Companions
- Tuesday, September 23: Saint Pio of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)

Saturday, September 27—Saint Vincent de Paul

Bless or commission the members of your social justice ministry or outreach to the poor.

Monday, September 29—Saints Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael, Archangels

Honor your local police, firefighters, and others who protect your community.

Saturday, October 4—Saint Francis of Assisi

See the Blessing of Animals, *Book of Blessings*, 942-965.

Saturday, October 18—Saint Luke

Tradition identifies the evangelist Luke as a physician; celebrate the anointing of the sick during Mass today.

New October Saints

- Saturday, October 11: Saint John XXIII (anniversary of the opening of Vatican II)
- Wednesday, October 22: Saint John Paul II (anniversary of the inauguration of his papal ministry)

Taizé Prayer Service: Remembering the Dead

Traditionally, the church remembers those who have died in the past year on November 2, the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed. The following prayer service is appropriate on or around this day or on September 11, and can be done either in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament or the Taizé cross and the paschal candle.

The "Taizé style" of prayer is based on a "mantra" where one gets lost in the music and chant by way of its repetition. From GIA Publications, and their ecumenical guide book (800) 442-1358, this form of prayer is meant to join Christians together. It encourages prayer in the spirit of the Taizé Community in France. An instrument, such as a piano playing the melody of the music line, leads. Then a cantor sings the melody line. Other instruments and voices, with harmony, are added and build in volume, with the assembly joining in as comfortable. The mantra or line of the music repeats for as long as five minutes or more, with instruments and voices diminishing until all hum the chant line of music.

Prepare ahead of time: corporal for the altar, monstrance on the altar in the church, a newly consecrated host for the luna/monstrance, an incense bowl, candles for the altar and around the altar or sanctuary area, and mood lighting

Opening Song "The Kingdom of God"

The minister goes to the tabernacle to retrieve the luna and bring it to the altar, reverences the Blessed Sacrament, adds incense, and goes to the chair or the front pew for the Opening Prayer.

Opening Prayer

Loving and merciful God,
We come to remember those who have gone before us,
marked with the sign of faith.

We pray for continued healing and wholeness
for those grieving the loss of a loved one,
remembering that the souls of the just are in the hands of God.
Bring peace and care to our families.

We stand tonight in vigil, waiting for you to return in glory.

May you gently wipe every tear and console us.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Silent Meditation *5 minutes*

Remembering the Dead *Explanation to the assembly*

We bring forth a candle to remind us of those who have died.
Let this flame of faith unite us always as baptized in Christ.
Please say the name of the person as you light the candle
and place it in the candle holder. Also say what you would like to
remember about the person.

Taizé Song “Confitemini Domino” (Jacques Berthier)

*Add incense after all have come forward with their lighted candles and the
singing of the hymn continues.*

Silent Meditation *5 minutes*

Reading 1 John 3:1-2, 14-16
We shall see God as God really is.

Silent Meditation *5 minutes*

Taizé Song “With You, O Lord”

Silent Meditation *5 minutes*

Taizé Song “Nada Te Turbe” (Jacques Berthier)
Add incense.

Reading John 11:17-27
I am the resurrection and the life.

Silent Meditation *5 minutes*

Intercessions *Response: Lord, have mercy (led by the cantor).*

Leader: We stand together to pray for the needs of ourselves and the
world.

1. May all who have died rest in the Lord.

2. May those who have died a violent death be in Christ's peace.
3. May those who have died of hunger and disease come to feast at the table of the Lord.
4. May caregivers and those who grieve be consoled.
5. May those who harbor hate be filled with God's love and justice.
6. And for any other intentions we remember at this time. Please mention them aloud.

Leader: Now we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

The Lord's Prayer *Chanted*

Benediction "Jesus, Remember Me" (Jacques Berthier)

Bless the people with the Blessed Sacrament in the monstrance. During the song, remove the luna and return it to the tabernacle. When the song ends, pray the Closing Prayer.

Closing Prayer

Good and gracious Lord,
your Spirit changes our hearts
and calls us to a deeper sense of the paschal mystery.

May this prayer have an active part in our lives,
that we may go forth renewed in the hope that you promise.

Your Son suffered, died, and rose from the dead to bring us
new life.

May we share in the fullness of life
in your kingdom, where you live and reign
with your Son and the Holy Spirit,
one God, forever and ever.

Amen.

Closing Song "I am the Bread of Life" (Suzanne Toolan)





BREAKING THE WORD

HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS, MA

The Eucharist and the Poor

There is a powerful statement on the Eucharist in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: “The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the body and blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest” (1397). It is powerful because of the implications that flow from it. We who are privileged to truly receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood at every Mass must become a people of charity and compassion for others. The “Amen” we say upon receiving Holy Communion is a recommitment to being a people of love, because God is love (see 1 Jn 4:8).

Father Ernest Falardeau, SSS, is a confrere of mine in New York City, whence I write. He is a senior priest and religious of our province from whom I have much to learn. Father Ernest, who is no stranger to the pages of *Emmanuel*, notes that “we rediscover who we are by recovering worship and adoration. God is self-giving love. We become more fully ourselves, children of God, by imitating God’s self-giving” (*A Holy and Living Sacrifice: The Eucharist in Christian Perspective*, Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996, 49).

Our readings during these fall months point to issues of compassion, mercy, justice, and righteousness. They tell the story of God’s never-failing mercy coupled with his justice and love. They are an invitation for us, to borrow from Father Falardeau, to “rediscover who we are . . . by imitating God’s self-giving,” manifested and celebrated in the Eucharist. The feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14) is a beautiful occasion to point to the cross as the reminder of Christ’s self-offering for our salvation. May we rediscover what it means to be a Christian, receiving the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, by recognizing Jesus Christ in our brothers and sisters.

Blessed Sacrament Father Anthony J. Marshall earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in Theology from Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. He is an associate member of both the Catholic Biblical Association and the Canon Law Society of America. Based out of New York City, Father Anthony presently serves the U.S. Province of his congregation as Vocation Director.

Twenty-Third Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 7, 2014

We are Responsible to the Lord

Breaking the Word

Ezekiel 33:7-9

Ezekiel is told that his prophetic mission is to alert Israel to the coming tribulation. Israel is offered the chance to repent, and Ezekiel is charged with calling their attention to their evildoing. It is Israel's choice whether or not to respond to God's "watchman" in the person of Ezekiel, and it is his responsibility to speak the truth of the prophetic message of the Most High.

Romans 13:8-10

Because the end times are at hand, Paul continues to exhort his readers to the singular precept of loving one another. Incur no debt, save the debt of love, he tells them. As Paul has been striving in this epistle to reconcile his Jewish ancestry with Christianity, here he concludes that love is the law's fulfillment, reflecting Jesus' own statement on the matter (see Mt 22:34-40).

Matthew 18:15-20

Today's gospel passage contains practical advice for living community life in the church. Jesus advises his followers to directly confront people who harm them (i.e., the one who sins against another), bringing along other members of the church if needed as witnesses. The power of binding and loosing is hereafter extended to the other disciples after first being granted to Peter (see Mt 16:18-19), and Jesus promises to be in the midst of his church that calls upon the Father in prayer.

Sharing the Word

At first glance, the readings for today's liturgy seem to be all over the theological landscape. The first reading from the prophet Ezekiel is an admonition to the prophet to act as a faithful watchman of Israel.

Paul sums up the law with the commandment of love, and Jesus offers the early Christians practical advice in handling difficult people in the community. Nevertheless, there is indeed a “golden thread” that binds all the readings together, namely, “responsible charity.”

God’s admonition to Ezekiel to call the people to repentance by pointing out their wickedness is no easy task for Ezekiel to undertake. He won’t win any popularity contest with such a mission! We humans do not naturally enjoy having our flaws or our sins exposed. Nor do we like being told that we have to change our ways. I can imagine the people of Ezekiel’s time responding to his prophetic utterances with, “Oh, yeah? Who died and made you the boss? Are you perfect?” And yet, Ezekiel must courageously speak the truth to his fellow believers for their own salvation. Ezekiel is responsible for the people’s spiritual welfare, just as they are responsible to be open to his message and respond accordingly. He undertook his mission with a love for God and neighbor. Responsible charity.

Jesus tells his disciples and his early followers that they, like Ezekiel, are responsible for one another, calling each other to faithfulness when one wanders from the path. It is an act of love. We cannot simply dismiss those with whom we disagree, let alone those sisters and brothers of ours who sin. Mercy is at the heart of Jesus’ message, and all of us, clergy and laity, are responsible for proclaiming the truth in love, even when the message is a difficult one to pronounce. Paul is right: love is the law’s fulfillment, and love implies responsibility. We are responsible to the Lord for one another!

Praying the Word

Ever-faithful God,
your Son promised to remain in our midst
whenever we gather together in prayer.
Strengthen our communion with you
and with each other
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross September 14, 2014

Lift High the Cross

Breaking the Word

Numbers 21:4B-9

I find today's first reading to be one of the more unusual stories we have in salvation history. Situated as it is in the book of Numbers, the story follows upon Aaron's death and Moses' wife Miriam's death and the story of the water flowing from the rock at Meribah. It is a time of upheaval and change for the Hebrew people on their journey to the Promised Land. The Hebrew word rendered in English as saraph (סַרְפָּד) forms the word seraphim (סִרְפָּיִם), or fiery angelic-beings, found in Isaiah's vision and calling (see Is 6:6). The similarity could stem from the fact that the serpent's bite caused a burning sensation for its victims (much like the bite of fire ants, commonly found in the Southwest United States), whereas the seraphim in Isaiah's vision are depicted as fiery creatures carrying a burning ember to purify the prophet's lips.

Philippians 2:6-11

This passage is an early christological hymn that Paul inserted into his epistle to the Philippians. It speaks eloquently of the self-offering of Jesus Christ, who could have clung to his divine status, but instead humbly became human like us and obediently took up the cross and died. As a result, the Father raised Jesus from the dead and glorified him, before whom every being must prostrate and adore.

John 3:13-17

In a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, Jesus uses the story of the saraph serpents from Numbers, today's first reading, as an analogy to describe the salvific power of his crucifixion. God's immense love for the world is fully revealed in Jesus' incarnation, death, and resurrection.

Sharing the Word

Coming as it does toward the beginning of the academic and pastoral years in most American schools and parishes, today's feast is a beautiful reminder for us of God's tender love and mercy. "For 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" (Jn 3:16). In Christ Jesus, the cross, formerly a symbol of fear, death, and power used by the Romans, has become the powerful symbol of divine mercy, eternal life, and the sacrificial love of God.

One need only watch the news or read the newspaper online or in print to realize how much of our daily life is filled with reminders of death, destruction, infidelity, and evil. If an alien were to drop in from outer space and read a newspaper, I suspect that he would quickly return to his home planet, given the amount of bad news found in the media. The bad news is all around us. And yet, today's feast points to Jesus Christ as our hope, our guiding light, the Good News embodied.

God commanded Moses to use the very creatures, the seraph serpents that were killing the Hebrews, as a remedy for their healing. Jesus used the cross, the cruelest form of capital punishment in ancient times, as the remedy for our salvation. In the words of the apostle Paul: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal 6:14 RSV). The cross of Christ is indeed our only hope and joy!

Praying the Word

Lord Jesus Christ,
in order to save us from sin and Satan's power
you did not hesitate to become like us in all things except sin.
You willingly offered your life on the wood of the cross
for our salvation and the forgiveness of sins.
May we always glory in your cross
as a symbol of divine mercy and justice,
and so render thankful praise to the Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Twenty-Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 21, 2014

Living According to the Gospel

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 55:6-9

In these short, poetic verses from the prophet Isaiah, we come to know of a gracious and merciful God. The ways of the Almighty often seem unreasonable to us. This pericope is part of the larger section in Isaiah wherein the prophet speaks of God's salvation being extended beyond Israel to all the world (see Is 55:1, 4-5).

Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a

In our *lectio continua* of Paul's epistle to the Philippians, the apostle writes of his own conflicted spirit, which on the one hand longs to be with the Lord in heaven and on the other knows his mission is beneficial here on this side of eternity. Within the wider context of the epistle, Paul, writing from prison (see Phil 1:13-14), is frustrated with the pettiness and false pretenses of other preachers (see Phil 1:15-18) while he sits in jail for the sake of the Gospel.

Matthew 20:1-16a

Our gospel passage contains the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. The passages just before this pericope include the story of the rich young man who cannot follow Jesus because he values his wealth (see Mt 19:22) and Jesus promising that all those who leave everything behind to follow him will be blessed (see Mt 19:29). It is within this context that today's parable makes sense because Jesus tells of the vineyard owner's seemingly unreasonable labor practices—paying a daily wage to everyone who works his land, regardless of when they start—to illustrate God's lavishness toward those who give up everything and follow him.

Sharing the Word

It is tempting to use today's Gospel as a springboard for preaching the basics of Catholic social teaching on just wages and labor laws. It is tempting, indeed, but such a homily would be better preached at the Labor Day holiday Mass. Today's texts are reminders of how extravagantly God bestows his love and mercy on us.

Isaiah broke ground, so to speak, when he told of the Most High extending his mercy upon all the nations, and that Israel would become a source of joy for the world (see Is 55:5, 12-13). Such ways are not our ways. God's lavishness is, on the surface, unreasonable according to our limited capacity to understand. Isaiah tells us to seek God and to welcome him into our lives through repentance.

The teaching in the Gospel corresponds to Isaiah's words. Nobody, in his or her right mind, would pay a laborer who worked only one hour a full day's wages. Why should the other laborers who worked the full day have to continue to work all the time? Might as well just show up at the last minute and get the same wage, right? The point Jesus' parable demonstrates for us, I believe, is what Isaiah spoke of in our first reading: God is utterly gracious and merciful (see Is 55:7). The offer of divine mercy and the compassion of the Most High are available to us at every moment of our lives; we need only open our hearts.

Finally, it is God who made us in his own image and likeness (Gn 1:26-27), not the other way around. In other words, we cannot domesticate God or his mercy and justice in order to fit our limited categories or our ways of acting. And yet, because of the supernatural grace of the sacraments and the anointing of the Holy Spirit we have received, we are indeed capable of being gracious and merciful like our merciful Father. Hence, the petition we pray in the prayer our Savior taught us: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Mt 6:12).

Praying the Word

God our Father,
you are so patient with us
and quick to forgive when we repent of our sins.
By the power of your Holy Spirit,
help us to imitate your tender compassion
with all whom we meet this day.
This we ask in faith through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time
September 28, 2014

Have the Same Attitude as Christ Jesus

Breaking the Word

Ezekiel 18:25-28

Ezekiel calls Israel to take personal responsibility for each one's conduct. The sins of their ancestors will not be held against them; rather the Most High will judge each person according to his or her own actions and not those of others (see Ez 18:19-20). While this was not new theology for Israel (e.g., Dt 24:16), it was not easy to accept, especially in light of Exodus 20:5 or Lamentations 5:7; thus, the complaint found in the first verse: "The Lord's way is not fair!"

Philippians 2:1-11 or 2:1-5

Nobody would think it askew if you said that you're experiencing a little *déjà vu* with this reading; it was the second reading two weeks ago for the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Suffice it to say that this *lectio* reveals God's love and mercy in the humility of his Son Jesus Christ, who humbled himself in obedience to the Father for our salvation.

Matthew 21:28-31

This passage comes from the section of Matthew's Gospel where Jesus is in Jerusalem. The parable is unique to Matthew and is the first in a series of three parables Jesus tells in the Holy City. His words about tax collectors and prostitutes entering the kingdom before the chief priests and elders (see Mt 21:23) must have surely stung the heart of his hearers.

Sharing the Word

In the second reading, Paul admonishes us to "have in you the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5). This attitude is best reflected in our Catholic tradition, which begins with a respect for life and a respect for the dignity of every person created in God's own image and likeness. Our Catholic tradition compels us to have a preferential option or a special concern for the poor and the vulnerable in society.

Our Catholic tradition teaches us that the lifelong partnership of man and woman in marriage and the family are central institutions that must be supported and strengthened, not undermined.

If we are serious about having the same attitude as Christ Jesus, then it is an essential part of our lives as Catholics to build a more just society and economy. We do this when we feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, educate the young, welcome immigrants, care for the sick, and safeguard the beauty of creation. The task of overcoming sin and evil starts with changing our ways to match God's holy way in our families, schools, neighborhoods, and workplaces.

This is what the Lord God asks and expects of each one of us, according to the prophet Ezekiel, when someone "turns from the wickedness he has committed, [and] does what is right and just, . . . he shall surely live, he shall not die" (Ez 18:27-28). This is God's word; this is his promise to us, and God does not lie. He promises us life, not death, when we embrace his compassion and mercy and extend them to one another.

"The Eucharist commits us to the poor. To receive in truth the body and blood of Christ given up for us, we must recognize Christ in the poorest" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1397). Having been fed with the bread of life, we will be sent forth from the altar with "the same attitude that is also in Christ Jesus" (Phil 2:5), recognizing Christ in the poor, in our neighbors, and in one another, proclaiming to the glory of God the Father that Jesus Christ is Lord forever and ever.

Praying the Word

Heavenly Father,
strengthen us with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit
so that we might have in our hearts and minds
the same attitude that was in your Son,
Jesus Christ,
who is Lord forever and ever.
Amen.

Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 5, 2014

Tomorrow Will Be Too Late

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 5:1-7

Isaiah portrays Israel as God's vineyard. God did all the necessary work for planting and reaping the fruit of his vineyard, but the grapes were useless at harvest time. Because the vineyard yielded wild grapes, it will be destroyed due to its lack of good fruit. The prophet invites his hearers to consider that Israel is the vineyard and as such it will face God's judgment due to its lack of good fruit (i.e., justice and righteousness; see Is 5:7).

Philippians 4:6-9

The lectionary skips over the third chapter of Paul's epistle, arriving near its conclusion. Paul admonishes the church of Philippi to trust in the peace and goodness of the Most High through Christ Jesus and conform their lives to the Gospel he preached (see Phil 4:9).

Matthew 21:33-43

Today's parable echoes the analogy found in the first reading from the prophet Isaiah. No doubt, Jesus' audience would have been quite familiar with such a parable; hence the reaction of the chief priests and Pharisees (see Mt 21:45-46). Given its context within Matthew's Gospel (i.e., in Jerusalem), Jesus' words are a challenge to the authorities and an invitation to repentance.

Sharing the Word

What is fascinating in today's Gospel is how Jesus took a popular metaphor for the people of God—the vineyard—and used it to illustrate his role as the divine Son. Through the parable, Jesus is telling his listeners that God the Father sent him to lay claim to the produce of the vineyard. But the tenant farmers have not produced the desired fruit, and so "the

kingdom of God will be taken away . . . and given to a people that will produce its fruit" (Mt 21:43).

It was a bold challenge Jesus made to his listeners then, and it remains a bold challenge for us today. We cannot take our faith or God's mercy for granted. All too often, many of us may find ourselves in "spiritual procrastination." We put off getting ready for Mass until the very last minute, we nearly forget to pray the grace before our meals—maybe even forgetting to pray it at all—and we put off our spiritual conversion (*metanoia*) until a later time when we're perhaps more focused or prepared. Some people say, "Father, I'd like to get more involved in the parish, or give more in the collection, but I need to work, pay off student loans, etc., before I can." You get the idea. The founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, once said in reply to his sisters who wanted to delay his departure, "God calls me now, tomorrow will be too late!" This should be our motto, too, as Christians.

Jesus tells us to get our priorities straight. Our task, our focus as his disciples, is the proclamation of God's kingdom and bearing good fruit. In John's Gospel, Jesus challenges us even more directly: "I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned" (15:5-6). This Sunday's readings summon us to get out of our spiritual stupor and get to work in bearing good fruit for the Lord, to become missionary disciples, to use Pope Francis' terminology. It is the grace of Christ in the Eucharist that enables us to become a people who produce good fruit for the kingdom of God.

Praying the Word

Merciful Father,
you tenderly prepare us for your harvest.
Help us to conform our lives to the Gospel
and to place our trust
in the peace of Christ your Son,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.
Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 12, 2014

Everything is Ready! Come to the Feast!

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 25:6-10a

Isaiah offers us a truly comforting scene. God will provide a rich banquet for his people, and death will finally be destroyed. The prophet poetically describes the fare and wine at God's banquet table, and he notes further that God will comfort his sorrowful people. Situated in the so-called apocalypse of Isaiah, the scene is certainly a hopeful one, filled with bold eschatological promises which only God can fulfill.

Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20

Paul expresses his gratitude to the Philippians for their sense of solidarity in his missionary endeavors (see Phil 4:15-16); the lectionary omits the reason for Paul's gratitude. Our passage from the epistle comes at the letter's conclusion, wherein Paul acknowledges that all that he has and is comes from the hand of God, noting that "I can do all things in him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:13).

Matthew 22:1-14 or 22:1-10

This is the last of the three Jerusalem parables meant to sting the consciences of the chief priests and the elders of the people. Jesus offers his hearers a common image—a wedding feast—to which a king invites guests to join in the celebration, but each refuses to attend. The shorter version of the Gospel in the lectionary omits the conclusion of the story where the king asks a non-invited guest why he is not properly dressed. It is reasonable to interpret the king in the parable as God the Father, Jesus as the bridegroom, Israel as the invited guests, and the Gentiles, the rest of humanity, as those on the streets whom the servants gather in at the last minute.

Sharing the Word

There is a very important line that Jesus mentions as he begins

the parable in today's Gospel. He tells us, "The kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son" (Mt 22:2). The *king* gave a wedding feast for *his son*. God our Father is this king who gave the wedding feast for his Son, our Lord Jesus. It is God who prepares a feast for his people: "The Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples," the prophet tells us, "a feast of rich food and choice wines, juicy, rich food and pure, choice wines" (Is 25:6).

The Eucharist we celebrate is the sacrament of this wedding feast, and the church is the bride of Christ for whom this banquet is prepared. As members of the church, our bodies and souls must therefore become icons, symbols of Christ's beloved bride. Christ is our passionate lover. To this great wedding feast, the king invited guests who refused to show up. They had more important business to attend to than celebrate the wedding of the king's son. How foolish! This excuse is common in modern society. I have heard from people that they don't want to go to Mass on Sunday—the celebration of the wedding banquet of Christ—because the church is filled with hypocrites. Aren't we told by the media, "There are so many hypocrites inside the church"? I recall reading that Archbishop Fulton Sheen, after being told the same line, once responded, "So why don't you come to church, so that there will be one less hypocrite in our community?"

Then there's the issue of the guest who didn't have the proper garment for a wedding feast. Like that guest, we can show up to the Eucharist unprepared. We can leave worship unchanged by the grace we have celebrated and received. We can make use of God's grace and live worthy lives or we can hide the gift of our baptismal garment away in the dark closets of sin and evil. The choice is ours. God has given us the freedom to respond both to the invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb and to live lives of holiness, clothed in the wedding garment of faith, hope, and charity.

Praying the Word

Heavenly Father,
you wondrously lavish us with your grace,
and you invite us daily
to the eucharistic table of your beloved Son.
Make us worthy of your love and kindness
by generously pouring your Holy Spirit
into our lives this week.
This we pray through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 19, 2014

Give the Lord Glory and Honor

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6

The prophet Isaiah writes of Cyrus, the king of Persia. The “anointed” in the Greek version of our pericope is *christos*, so Cyrus is a Christ, an anointed one. Through this pagan king, God will work great wonders for his people.

1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b

With this Sunday, we begin reading from Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians. Today’s text is from the letter’s greeting. It is the oldest of the Pauline literature in the New Testament, having been composed near 50-51 and was likely written during Paul’s time in Corinth. The late eminent biblical scholar Raymond E. Brown notes that within “the opening ten verses [of First Thessalonians] one would hear references to God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and to faith, love, and hope. This is a remarkable testimony to how quickly ideas that became standard in Christianity were already in place” (*Introduction to the New Testament*, New York: ARBL/Doubleday, 1997, 465).

Matthew 22:15-21

This Gospel is one of Jesus’ finest retorts to his interlocutors who were trying to catch him in a dogmatic and legalist minefield. Jesus answers their question with a very simple answer, one that has echoed down through the centuries: “Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God” (Mt 22:21). Curious is the juxtaposition of the Herodians, who supported Herod Antipas, and the Pharisees.

Sharing the Word

It is sometimes the case that in hearing today’s Gospel, people believe that Jesus was referring to what we now call the separation of

church and state, that repaying to Caesar means living as good citizens of the state in public life and repaying to God means going to church and being a good Christian in private, but never any mixture of the two. In effect, that's the equivalent of saying that we are Christians on Sundays when we're in church, but our faith—the revealed traditions found in Sacred Scripture and in the church's teachings—has no bearing on our lives in public. Outside of the church, religion is thought of as a private affair. And since we live in a secular society, religion has no place in the public square. Is this what Jesus intended for his disciples when he said, "Repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God" (Mt 22:21)? The reading from Isaiah offers us an interpretive clue.

God chose a pagan, a non-believer, to make his glory known throughout the whole world (see Is 45:6). The powerful voice of the Most High reminds us, "I am the Lord and there is no other, there is no God besides me" (Is 45:5). Because of our baptism, we have a special mission in the world to publicly proclaim, in both word and in deed, that the Lord is God and there is no other (see Is 45:5). We do this by living a life of virtue, founded on the gospel command to love God with our entire being and our neighbor as ourselves (see Mt 22:37-39). By reading the Bible regularly, getting to know and live better the church's teachings, praying more intensely, and growing closer to the Lord Jesus, who fills us with his love and mercy, we are thus enabled to be in public who we claim to be on Sunday: disciples of Jesus Christ and members of his church.

Praying the Word

God our Father,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
you have gathered us together
around the eucharistic table of your beloved Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ.
Through the sacred mystery we receive,
may our communion with you and your church
be strengthened and enriched each day.
This we pray through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time
October 26, 2014

To Serve the Living and True God

Breaking the Word

Exodus 22:20-26

Today's passage from Exodus follows upon Moses' receiving the Decalogue on Mount Sinai (Ex 20:1-17). God adds further covenantal provisions flowing from his compassion for his people. The command to not oppress strangers in Israel's midst, as Israel itself was once an alien people in Egypt, is found throughout the Old Testament (e.g., Ex 23:9, Lv 19:33-34) and has implications for our country vis-à-vis comprehensive immigration reform.

1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10

Continuing with the introductory matter of Paul's first epistle to the Thessalonians, this pericope is a description of how the Thessalonians once received his apostolic ministry and how it bears fruit. Paul quotes what could have been an ancient statement of faith of the early Christian community, a people who turned from idols to serve the living and true God, awaiting the return of his Son, Jesus our Savior (see 1 Thes 1:9-10).

Matthew 22:34-40

Unfortunately, our lectionary skips Matthew 22:23-33, the story of the Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection of the dead (see Mk 12:18), asking Jesus about the resurrection. It provides the context for the first verse where the Pharisees attempt to further entrap Jesus and entangle him in conflict. The greatest commandment, about which Jesus is asked in this passage, is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5, the *Shema, Yisrael*, which every Jew knew well. To it, Jesus links love of neighbor, found in Leviticus 19:18. Jesus not only answers the Pharisees' question, but he adds a bonus answer to it.

Sharing the Word

In today's Gospel, Jesus tells us the path to holiness and the secret to the holiness of the saints: loving God with our entire being, all

our strength and our will, and loving our neighbor as ourselves. Striving to love God and one's neighbor is the foundation of what it means to be a faithful son or daughter of God our Father. This is the "secret" to holiness. It is possible "to serve the living and true God" (1 Thes 1:9) through our words and our deeds. In fact, our baptism into God's family, the church, entrusts us specifically with this mission.

We have major problems in our communities. Families are struggling to pay bills, put food on the table, and take care of their children. Across the nation, we have continuing unemployment, a growing gap between the rich and the poor, and increasing homelessness, poverty, and crime on the streets of our cities. A 2011 report said that nearly 40 percent of our children will leave our church for some other community or no faith at all (National Public Radio, "U.S. Hispanics Choose Churches Outside Catholicism"). These realities force us to examine the reasons for the injustices we see and the abandonment of the faith by the young.

Perhaps one reason why we have such problems is because Jesus' command to love God and our neighbor (Mt 22:37-39) has gone largely unheeded. The handing on of our Catholic faith begins not so much with the homily as it does with the credible witness of faithful Catholics in daily life. Our first reading tells us what love of God and neighbor demands: living a holy family life, acting as prudent stewards of creation, protecting immigrants, being honest in our dealings with one another, caring for the poor and the marginalized.

When we give our children, our neighbors, and our communities a credible witness that faith in God makes a difference in the way we live, only then will we more readily find justice, peace, and holy families and communities. Our children will understand why going to Mass on Sunday is important only when we ourselves make it a priority. Our neighbors will understand how "the Eucharist commits us to the poor" (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1397) only when we ourselves recognize Christ in the poorest among our brothers and sisters. Our communities will understand why we Christians preach "God is love" (see 1 Jn 4:8) only when we ourselves extend God's compassion to our neighbors.

Praying the Word

Compassionate Father,
this week help us to bear witness to your Son,
our Lord Jesus Christ,
by an intense love for you
and for one another.
We make our prayer in the name of Jesus the Lord.
Amen.





THE EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Art Review



PIETIES QUILT

Maria Cadman
Hubbard (possibly
1769-?)
Probably Austerlitz,
New York
1848
Cotton
88½" x 81"
American Folk Art
Museum, New York
Gift of Cyril Irwin
Nelson in loving
memory of his
parents,
Cyril Arthur and
Elise Macy Nelson,
1984.27.1
Photo by John
Parnell

by John Christman,
SSS

Often when we think of religious art, we think of the religious spaces where we encounter this art. We think of churches and cathedrals with high vaulted ceilings, dazzling stained glass windows, finely-crafted marble statues, jewel-encrusted vessels, and awe-inspiring paintings. That these sacred spaces are beautiful, there is little doubt. That they put us in a religious frame of mind, there is also little doubt. Yet, for all of their grandeur and wonder these works and the spaces that house them can give the impression that religious art belongs solely in religious spaces. And if we only encounter religious art in religious spaces, what does that say about our practice of religion?

We make aesthetic choices every day, from the color and style of the clothing we choose to wear to the decorative ways we choose to prepare and garnish our meals. Allowing these moments to be an encounter with God is a step that spirituality takes. It is a step that prevents religion from being something we do only in churches on Sundays and makes it part of our everyday lives.

Consider the lovely *Pieties Quilt* by Maria Cadman Hubbard. Making a quilt or a blanket is perhaps first and foremost a practical act informed by our need for warmth and protection. Beyond this, however, making a quilt or a blanket is an aesthetic act. Every stitch, every color, every pattern is creatively selected by its maker and placed just so. The dynamic contrast of white and red, the intricate intersecting diamond patterns, all of these are aesthetic choices made by Maria Cadman Hubbard to engage and delight the senses. But she decided to take this a step further. She decided to make this quilt an encounter with God and an expression of her faith. Into each of the quilt's many squares and rectangles, she has sewn a message. Some are words of wisdom, such as, "Forgive as you hope to be forgiven." Many are religious in tone, "Little acts of kindness, little words of love, make our earthly Eden like our heaven above." The sayings and the creative design all point to a person whose aesthetic choices were rooted in a vital religious experience.

Today, in numerous parishes around the country, people gather together in what are often called “prayer shawl ministries.” They come together to make blankets and shawls for people who are sick, struggling, or alone. As they sew, talk, and enjoy each other’s company, they also pray for the person who will receive the blanket or shawl. They weave their prayers and concerns into the variety of colors and patterns they have chosen. When the shawl is finished, it is given as a gift.

Like Maria Cadman Hubbard’s *Pieties Quilt*, these shawls become domestic religious art. They become works of art that testify to God’s presence in everyday experience. As such, they can be every bit as compelling as the religious art we find in churches, sometimes even more so.

Film Review

Vampire movies may be somewhat difficult for eucharistically-minded Catholics to stomach. As some scholars and critics have observed, these films evoke the notion of Christ’s eternal life-giving precious blood and reduce it to an earthbound “bloodsucking” that extends life through murder and violence.¹ The holy is made unholy and given a romantic allure. This is generally not the kind of thing lovers of the Eucharist would be attracted to. And Jim Jarmusch’s new vampire film *Only Lovers Left Alive* certainly draws from this tradition. Blood is consumed in this film with an almost insatiable ecstatic reverence. However, despite this unsettling genre convention, rarely has a vampire movie proved to be quite so thoughtful.

Only Lovers Left Alive centers upon the marriage of two vampires, the reclusive musician Adam (Tom Hiddleston) and the inquisitive Eve (Tilda Swinton). And despite the unfortunate names the director has saddled them with, their relationship is a compelling one. Their marriage has lasted for centuries and their fondness for each other has not diminished. They don’t stalk the night looking for prey, but rather pass the long hours of darkness with great literature and meaningful conversation. Their blood comes from a hospital, not from innocent victims, and their time is spent in relative peace. She still delights in his creativity as he writes music and experiments with different technologies. He is still intrigued and challenged by her perspective on existence and can’t manage to beat her at chess. Most impressive is their complete sense of ease in one another’s company. They share their thoughts, experiences, and memories, memories that stretch far back through history. They have experienced generations. They have experienced the vicissitudes of time, and their love remains.



ONLY LOVERS
LEFT ALIVE
Jim Jarmusch.
2014,
United States

by John Christman,
SSS

Fear and violence still appear, as one would expect of a horror film. Death and the macabre still hover around the edges of the film. Surprisingly, however, under all of its moody music, crumbling cityscapes, and fashionable cynicism, *Only Lovers Left Alive* actually strikes a note that is quite traditional. Love is forever and two people cannot only be committed to each other for a lifetime, but their lives can be better for it. To find such a story in the veneer of an art-house vampire film is a rare treat, even rarer perhaps than O negative blood.

¹ Cf. <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2012/05/vampire-stories-and-the-real-presence> accessed May 23, 2014.

Poetry

Poem Prayers

Prayer before Mass

This heart, O Jesus, is poor and seeking bread.
It hungers for your presence, my Lord,
to your banquet I am gently led.

This bread, your body, this wine, your blood,
miracle beyond belief.
Saved and redeemed by your precious blood,
I come to you as a repentant thief.

A thief who utters, "Remember me
when to paradise you have come."
Your eyes then crucify and resurrect me,
"Come to me, my daughter, my son."

Body, blood, soul, divinity all now one
in a small circle of love, I find.
I give thanks to Father, Spirit, Son,
Son dying and risen for humankind.

Poem Prayers

Prayer after Mass

I praise you, God, that your Son
has come to enter into my heart.
Now his light is like a radiant sun
deep within my soul's secret part.

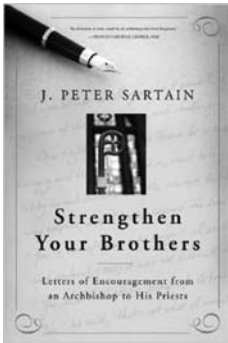
Heaven and earth now are one
in this communion of human and divine.
Now in this church, your will is done
in the transforming of bread and wine.

Now Christ lives, no longer I.
He must grow greater, I the less.
He is risen now, the crucified,
and this holy banquet has healed and blessed.

Yes, I must take this Christ within
to the others of life's avenues.
Love the loveless, forgive the sin
for our Savior has made all things new.

Carlo Notaro, MI

Book Reviews



**STRENGTHEN
YOUR
BROTHERS:**
Letters of
Encouragement
from An
Archbishop to His
Priests.
J. Peter Sartain,
Collegeville, MN:
The Liturgical
Press, 2012,
167 pp., \$19.95.

Since his elevation to the episcopate in 2000, now-Archbishop Sartain has understood that a significant aspect of his ministry involved his relationship with his priests. From Little Rock, to Joliet, and now to Seattle, Archbishop Sartain has made it a priority to strengthen his brothers. The title of this collection of letters comes from Luke 22:32, where Jesus assigns this task to Peter. It is fitting that this modern-day Peter hears Jesus' invitation and takes it to heart in the exercise of his episcopal ministry.

What did Jesus mean when he asked Peter to "strengthen your brothers"? These words, spoken at the Last Supper just before Jesus would be arrested and undergo his passion and death, illuminate the strong challenge to remain faithful to Jesus that the apostles would undergo during and following his passion and death. In the aftermath of Good Friday, it was Peter who first heard the news of the resurrection from the women who had visited the tomb, ran to the tomb himself, and was amazed at the empty tomb (Lk 24:9-12).

As Luke continues his narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, it is Peter who assumes the role of servant-leader within the early Christian community. He initiates the selection of an apostle to replace Judas and gives his dramatic Pentecost speech. In these ways, and throughout the first fifteen chapters of Acts, Peter is doing precisely the task that Jesus had assigned to him: he was strengthening his brothers.

What needed strengthening, both during Jesus' passion, as well as after his death and resurrection, was the faith of the apostles. More precisely, it was the fidelity of the apostles to Jesus and his message. One can only imagine the shock to the faith of the apostles as they were confronted with the grim reality of Jesus' crucifixion. Peter's repentance for his denials and recovery of his fidelity to Jesus were vital sources of spiritual strength for the other apostles at that moment.

The first section of Archbishop Sartain's book includes letters collected under the theme of Priestly Identity in Crisis. Like the earliest apostles coping with the death of Jesus, priests today must minister amid the several scandals facing the church in our day, not the least of which is the ongoing tragedy of priestly misconduct of many different kinds and of differing levels of severity.

Within this context, Archbishop Sartain's viewpoint is clear and unflinching. His letters consistently focus on the importance of one's union with Jesus Christ. The letters are not about doing, but are always focused on being more fully united with Christ. The letters are never about the many issues of our day, but are always about the one issue of our day, and every day: the radical importance of each priest's (and one may expand this to read "each Christian's") deepening relationship with Christ. "Ultimately, what matters most is not age or experience. What matters most is a common focus on Christ, fraternal charity and forgiveness, sacrificial love for our people, and our eagerness to grow in holiness as individual priests and as brothers in the Lord" (36).

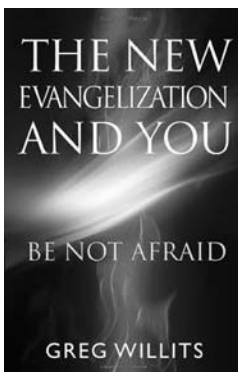
One by one, Sartain's letters cultivate the spiritual lives of his priests. Each letter contains spiritual nourishment harvested from the vast storehouse of the tradition of Christian spiritual writers. The archbishop takes time to nourish himself at the table of this spiritual feast, and then breaks that bread and shares it with his priests, some of whom may be so overburdened in their ministries that spiritual reading is unfortunately sometimes omitted from their daily lives. And not only does he share the fruits of his spiritual reading with his priests, Archbishop Sartain also reminds them of his constant prayers for them and their ministries.

The second section of the book collects letters on Priestly Practicalities. In these letters, priests are given encouragement and guidance in remaining the *imago Christi* even during trying experiences. Each faces the challenges of loving difficult people as well as coping with discouragement, loneliness, and gossip. Sartain sagely refers to his own experiences within his priestly ministry to illuminate the virtues lived by Jesus. In these letters, he could easily be mistaken for a spiritual director, given the wisdom contained in them and the grace with which that wisdom is communicated: "Perhaps what we sometimes identify as loneliness is not loneliness at all but our souls crying out to God in spontaneous response to his longing for us, reminding us that we will never be satisfied until we see him face-to-face" (100).

The final section of the text provides a series of letters on Priestly Prayer. Here, Sartain offers his priests examples of the many forms of prayer found in the Christian tradition and deftly connects these forms to his own daily prayer. In one letter, Sartain quotes Saint John Climacus in *The Ladder of Ascent*: "Pray in all simplicity" (134). This simplicity can be as brief as a single word: "A single-word prayer exposes the true state of affairs before God: our one-word poverty reveals his lavish bounty" (134).

All priests will find encouragement in these letters. I believe that they will find themselves strengthened after reading and reflecting on Archbishop Sartain's spiritual wisdom. I hope that by reading these letters priests will become more fully united to Christ in their lives. I am confident that after reading this book, priests will more deeply love Christ, their priesthood, and their people. And, in doing so, the words of Luke 22:32 will be once again fulfilled as Peter has indeed strengthened his brothers.

Father George S. Matejka, PhD
Ursuline College
Pepper Pike, Ohio



THE NEW
EVANGELIZATION
AND YOU:
Be Not Afraid.
Greg Willits,
Cincinnati, OH:
Servant Books,
2013,
pp. 167, \$16.99.

The enthusiasm of author Greg Willits oozes from each page of this breezy treatment of the new evangelization. He directly challenges the reader to become actively involved in sharing the faith. Willits, trained as an information technology specialist, is the director of Evangelization and Family Life Ministries for the Archdiocese of Denver. He has personally experienced the thrill of evangelization, both in its more personally-oriented traditional modes and in its modern digital equivalents.

Willits urges his readers to become involved in knowing the faith, living it, and sharing it with others. He grounds the reader in the essentials of magisterial teaching on the subject, including pertinent documents from Benedict XVI, John Paul II, and Paul VI, as well as the working document on the new evangelization for the 2012 Synod of Bishops. The book is organized in twelve chapters, each of which raises a pertinent issue and closes with a list of discussion questions and a prayer imploring the grace to implement the goals described in the chapter. Chapters also include sidebars in which various people give testimonials about their experiences with the new evangelization.

Willits keeps the tone light and humorous while noting the importance of the threats of relativism and secularism highlighted especially during the reign of Benedict XVI. He laments the "Kumbaya Catholicism" taught to his generation in the '70s, and asks readers to reach for a Catholicism that is more solid than the Play-Doh his generation manipulated during their formative years. The author gives a good analysis of the relationship

between knowing, living, and sharing the faith. He includes lengthy lists on why some people leave the church, and three lists of 52 practical ways Catholics can know, live, and share their faith. He addresses directly the awkwardness that most Catholics feel when raising faith issues among friends and family. Fear and ignorance play substantial roles in the hesitancy people feel about evangelization.

While the author offers worthwhile ideas on the new evangelization, the book sometimes becomes repetitive. Several of his sidebars, for example, report similar experiences of website developers. At times, he falters on doctrinal issues. Twice he boldly proclaims that Jesus becomes “physically present” in the Eucharist (37, 48). The doctrine of the real presence is much more subtle than the author suspects. Church documents regularly avoid the term “physical presence” to steer clear of any notion that breaking the host produces two Jesuses or that chewing a host is equivalent to biting Jesus (ouch!). The author also endorses the opinion of a blogger that faith is grounded through reason (151). What does such a claim mean? Should one be able to compel belief on the basis of reasonable argumentation? The relationship between faith and reason is much more subtle than the author suggests. Faith is reasonable, but not based on reason.

While the book will be useful for generating interest in, and ideas for, the implementation of the new evangelization, it would be best if someone trained in theology could guide the laity through its claims and suggestions.



Father Gerald J. Bednar, PhD
Saint Mary Seminary
Wickliffe, Ohio



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

Sister Mary Catherine Perko, SSS

There is a very moving hymn where Jesus is quoted as saying to his friends, after he had washed their feet, "Do you know what I have done to you? I have given you example that so you also may do."¹ Precisely what is Jesus' example? At the Last Supper, he said, "This is my body which is given for you." The example, then, that Jesus wants us to follow is to give ourselves in service and love as he did.

Service, I think, has been a motivating force throughout my life. As a young woman, Catholic and idealistic, I can remember wanting to go out and do my part to "save the world." How exactly this would be achieved became a life challenge. The ways were limitless; all roads were open, any and all opportunities existed. I chose social sciences as my college major, thinking that as a future social worker, I could do good, especially for the poor. Even before graduation, however, this option seemed too limiting; perhaps a few persons could be helped on an individual basis, but was this really enough?

Then came the thought that politics might possibly be more effective; with one stroke of a pen or one change of a law, many people could be helped. The next step was to obtain a law degree, which I did. When I passed the bar exam, things seemed to be looking up regarding my plans, but in the meantime, something quite unexpected had happened.

Through unusual circumstances, I met a very holy priest. He was a person who prayed and encouraged people to pray. That was a new element for me to consider. God is all-powerful, can do all things, and certainly can "save the world." He sent his only Son just for that reason. Now I knew that for me, there would be no greater vocation than to devote myself to prayer; that it was through prayer I could accomplish some of my prior goals.

I pray always for great social workers and capable lawyers who are doing what I had originally hoped to do, but my path as a religious sister—as a Servant of the Blessed Sacrament—is different. Jesus in the Eucharist, Jesus who gave himself for us and who continues to give himself daily, is and will always be my inspiration.



¹ "The Lord Jesus," Weston Priory

“GOD CALLS ME NOW, TOMORROW WILL BE TOO LATE!”

SAINT PETER JULIAN EYMARD
FOUNDER



DISCOVER HOW GOD MAY BE CALLING YOU TO A
EUCCHARISTIC LIFE IN SERVICE TO THE CHURCH
AS A BLESSED SACRAMENT PRIEST OR BROTHER

*For more on vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life,
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Just as God gave us everything in giving us his Son,
and Jesus gave himself completely
on the cross and in the Eucharist,
so should our Christian lives be a total gift of self to Christ.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Eymard" in a large, flowing script, with "S. J. S." written below it in a smaller, simpler script. The signature is set against a white background.