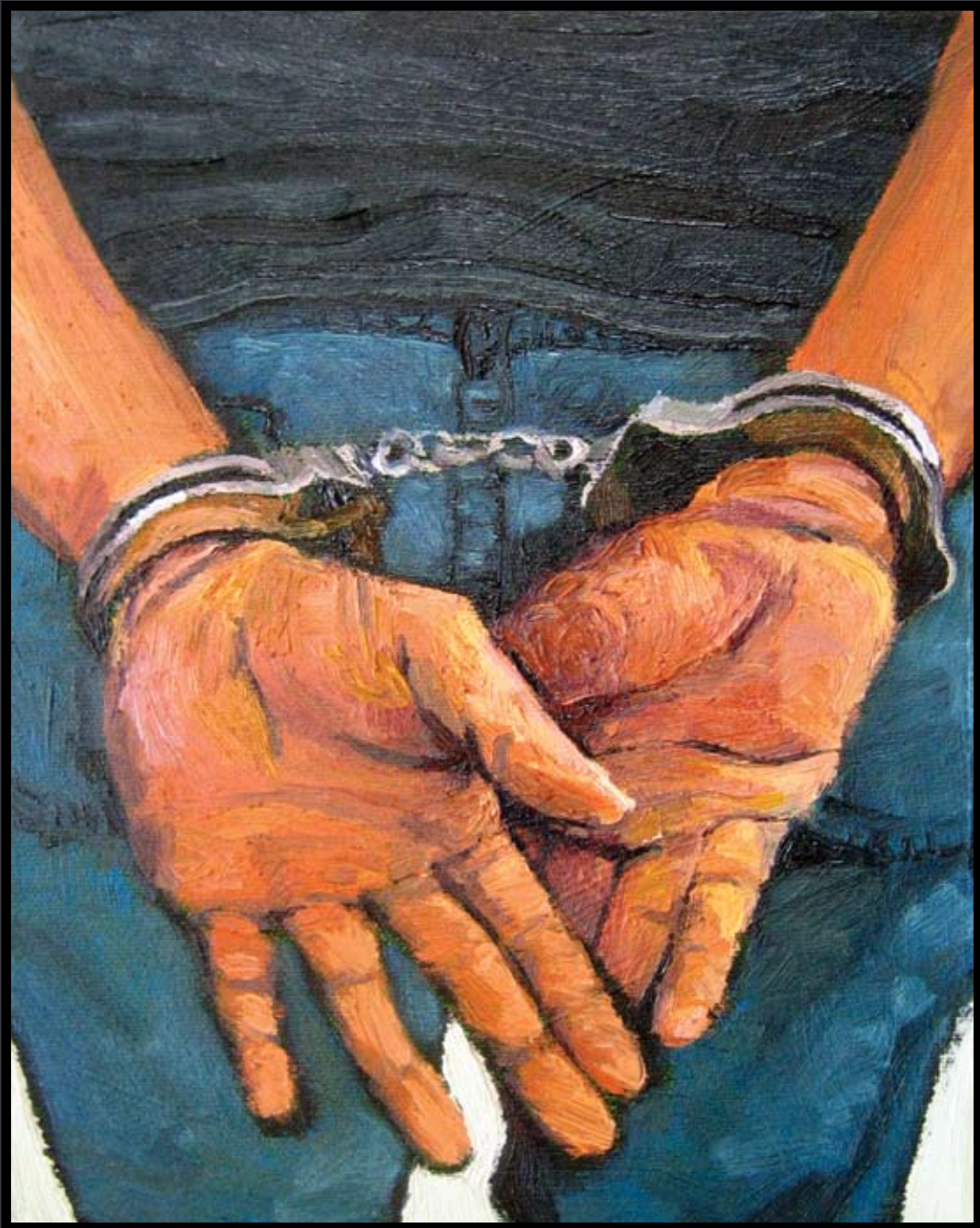


# Emmanuel

*Eucharistic Spirituality*



July/August 2015



The Eucharistic Vision of Vatican II:  
Dignitatis Humanae

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# Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 121 Number 4



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## FROM THE EDITOR

The book *Tuesdays with Morrie: An Old Man, A Young Man, and Life's Greatest Lessons* touched the popular imagination and became an intergenerational hit a dozen years ago. It told the story of an enduring friendship between two men at very different points in life's journey as they conversed about some of the great themes of human existence.

Several years ago, a group of parishioners in New York City who had committed a year to studying and exploring Catholic social teaching through a life-changing program called JustFaith approached me about continuing to meet once a month for prayer and reflection. They asked that I join them. Thus, "Tuesdays with Tony" was born. They still meet in my absence now to talk about how the "social Gospel" has transformed their lives, their relationships, and their worldview. These remarkable people have taught me so much about compassion, about justice for the oppressed and those on the margins of society and the church, and about concern for the earth, which is home to us all. And, importantly, each has found ways to translate social theory into concrete actions with and on behalf of others.

In the subtitle of a 2003 book on the subject, the authors describe Catholic social teaching as "our [the church's] best secret."

It is generally accepted that the modern emphasis on Catholic social teaching began with the publication of Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*, on labor and capital, in 1891. It has echoed through the decades in John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* (1963), Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio* (1967), John Paul II's critique of both totalitarianism and unbridled capitalism, and Benedict XVI's *Caritatis in Veritate* (2009).

In this same tradition, Pope Francis recently stated: "Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns,

there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 2).

Catholic social teaching is rooted in the prophetic tradition of Israel, in the words and actions of Jesus, who showed a shepherd's care for all, especially for the lost and the downtrodden, and in the awareness that even as we look to a heavenly city we are nevertheless citizens of this earth and of human societies, and therefore obligated to act justly and compassionately.

### **In the Issue**

Catholic social teaching was integral to the new relationship between church and world defined by the bishops of Vatican II. Present in many council documents, our particular lens in this issue of *Emmanuel* is *Dignitatis Humanae* and its conviction that the rights, dignity, and duties of the human person flow from his or her relationship to God.

I suggest you start with Lisa Marie Belz, OSU's excellent article and then move to Robert S. Pelton, CSC's reflection on the Chilean church's experience of the council and its continuing challenges for the Catholic Church in that country today.

On February 3, Pope Francis signed a decree declaring Salvadoran Archbishop Oscar Romero a martyr for the faith and a witness to gospel principles of justice and reconciliation. Victor Parachin has penned a moving tribute to this humble man who sought to be the voice of the voiceless in a time of great suffering for his people. He died at the altar while celebrating Mass.

In Eucharistic Teachings, Dennis Billy, CSsR, introduces us to the Dominican friar, priest, and theologian Yves Congar. You will also find scriptural reflections for homiletic preparation and personal prayer as well as poetry and reviews, etc., in the Eucharist & Culture section.



Anthony Schueller, SSS  
Editor



*EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING*

## The Chilean Catholic Church: Challenges and Hopes

by Robert S. Pelton, CSC

*The experience of Chile's Catholic Church reflects the hopefulness and renewal envisioned by Vatican II as well as the present challenges facing a church and a society which are changing.*

Father Robert S. Pelton is professor emeritus in the theology department of Notre Dame University and the director of Latin American/ North American Church Concerns.

Having celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, it now seems appropriate to review both Chile's early response to Vatican II and how well it is currently living out the council. Perhaps, it is time to once again ask the famous question posed by then-Father, now Saint Alberto Hurtado (1901-1952) in his 1941 book *Is Chile a Catholic Country?*

Historically, the Latin American Catholic Church responded quicker and more vigorously in its efforts to reconfigure itself in the light of Vatican II than either its European or North American counterparts, and CELAM (the Conference of Latin American Bishops) has, from the very first, been in the vanguard of innovations despite internal differences of opinion about how best to live out the council.<sup>1</sup>

### **Chile's Past Experience**

Even when compared to Latin America as a whole, the Chilean church was often a leader. Indeed, Chile anticipated Vatican II as well as responded to it. By the early 1950s, a sizeable percentage of Chilean bishops, priests, and progressive lay Catholics had already developed an acute awareness of social and economic injustices and the impact those injustices were inflicting on a majority of the Chilean people. Seeing such injustices as a failure to follow Jesus Christ's teachings, they responded with many challenging pastoral letters, the beginnings of major land reform initiatives, and the election of the Christian Democrat Eduardo Frei to the presidency of Chile, among other responses.

Coupled with concerns about the growing dechristianization of Chilean society, enhanced social awareness led to development of the General Mission throughout all the nation's dioceses in the early 1950s. The General Mission gave rise to productive practices and programs, leading to the creation of hundreds of Small Christian Communities (SCCs) at the parish level. Although SCCs now exist around the world, the Chilean church was among the first to officially recognize and support these grass-root groups more than half a century ago.

Similarly, the Chilean church actively promoted a myriad of Catholic Action movements, devotional groups, and social associations. All were closely monitored by their dioceses, and the records prove that these predominantly lay groups filled vital needs, especially in a time of severe shortage of priests during the 1950s.<sup>2</sup>

Speaking in the name of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America at the Second Religious Congress of the United States, held at the University of Notre Dame in August 1961, Monsignor Agostino Casaroli appealed to U.S. religious superiors to send 10 percent of their members to Latin America before the decade's end.<sup>3</sup> The invitation sparked commitments to serve in Latin America from many priests and religious, including many of "the best and the most qualified vocations," as Monsignor Casaroli had specifically requested.

As chair of Notre Dame's theology department, I heard in person and was moved by Monsignor Casaroli's address. Earlier, I had collaborated with John Considine, MM, to promote interest in the Latin American church by sponsoring a graduate course in the department of theology on inter-American relations. Considine was the person who suggested to the Vatican the 10 percent figure cited above, and he, more than anyone else, shaped and focused the activities of these missionaries with his three-part theory of mission: intensive cultural and linguistic education of the visiting religious; creation of strong Christian communities where teaching of the Gospel prepared people for eternal life, while simultaneously improving their well-being in the present; strong solidarity with the people and dedication to working for justice on their behalf.<sup>4</sup> An excellent biography, Robert Hurteau's *A Worldwide Heart: A Life of Maryknoll Father John J. Considine*, was published by Orbis Books in June 2013.

Missionary work was sharply criticized by some, who feared an Americanization of the Latin American church. Such fears proved largely groundless. Whether due to the emphasis on cultural education or to the triumph of solidarity over ethnocentrism, most missionaries



clearly recognized that the purpose of their presence was to aid the Latin American church, not to impose U.S. attitudes and customs. Considine's theories of missionary activity were highly successful, and some of his way of "doing theology" is still at work in contemporary Chile.

Hierarchical innovations equaled those at the grass-roots level. For example, the Archdiocese of Santiago implemented major organizational changes in 1961, forming deaneries with territorial vicars in an attempt to deepen their involvement in the lives of ordinary people.

As planning began for Vatican II, Marcos G. McGrath, CSC, later the archbishop of Panama, led the Pontifical Faculty of Theology at the Catholic University of Santiago into a major preparatory role. Cardinal Raul Silva and Bishop Manuel Larrain initiated extensive contact with pastoral leaders in other nations, including Belgium, France, and Germany, in order to better prioritize issues for conciliar discussion. Although Cardinal Silva is best remembered for his staunch advocacy of human rights, his interventions on the council floor clearly reflected the theology of Congar, Suhard, and Suenens. In all, the Chilean church leadership was in the vanguard of thought at Vatican II.<sup>5</sup>

It should be noted also that two synods were held in Santiago in 1967-1968 to adapt the council's principles to the specific needs of Chile. One of these synods (Church of Santiago, What Do You Say about Yourself?) consulted representatives of all the ministries to better understand widespread needs and then initiated specialized departments (education, youth, workers, etc.) in order to better meet those needs.

### **Chile's Present Reality**

Although the past performance of the Chileans is excellent, how committed is the current Chilean church to carrying out its ongoing mission? How well has it responded to the CELAM V conference, held in Aparecida, Brazil, in 2007?

CELAM V was both a revitalization of the previous CELAM conferences and a recommitment to a living out of the Second Vatican Council. Both the location of the conference in Brazil and its methodology were determined after extensive consultation with persons of divergent



opinions. Most significantly, the Aparecida conference affirmed once again the see-judge-act and signs-of-the-times discernment methodologies that proved to be so effective in *Gaudium et Spes* and at the watershed CELAM II conference in Medellín, Columbia, in 1968. This in turn led to a much clearer understanding of the preferential option for the poor.

At the Fifth General Conference of the Latin American Bishops, it was agreed that each national Latin American church would prepare an overview of its mission, which was to be renewed annually into the final national mission in the year 2013. Unlike the churches of some Latin American nations, the Chilean church was exemplary in following this assignment.<sup>6</sup> They have successfully followed the schedule every year between CELAM V and 2012.

### *The Catholic Church in Chile anticipated Vatican II as well as responded to it.*

Unfortunately, several other aspects of Chilean society, most notably the economic and educational spheres, are more troubling.

Much of the enormous change between Chile's now-thriving economy and the economy of Alberto Hurtado's time was produced by worldwide recovery from the Great Depression of the 1930s, a depression which impacted Chile more profoundly than any other nation, according to League of Nations economists. Nevertheless, the "Chicago Ideology" of Milton Friedman has altered the shape of economics in Chile so profoundly that much of the credit for Chile's overall economic strength and much of the blame for the ever-widening economic inequality between rich and poor both belong to the profits-before-all-else policies championed by Friedman and his followers, the so-called "Chicago Boys" who have strongly influenced Chile's economic policies for more than four decades.

These policies were undeniably successful in increasing Chile's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which averaged 1.0 percent growth from 1997 to 2011 and 1.4 percent growth during 2012, but those same policies clearly value individual profit more highly than the common good, than human dignity, and than Catholic social teaching. Neither Hurtado nor CELAM's bishops can think highly of the institutionalized inequality inherent to policies that reward the richest 10 percent of the population with 47 percent of GDP while allocating only 1.2



percent of GDP to the poorest 10 percent of the population, which virtually guarantees that the poor will continue to know only the most minimal and tenuous existence in the midst of plenty.

An ongoing emphasis on economic growth and individual profits clearly detracts from Chile's Catholic identity. Nevertheless, CELAM remains hopeful that the "new globalization" may foster evangelization and growth in solidarity within the church.

Although Alberto Hurtado would appreciate the fine development of certain Chilean colleges and universities, as well as of some public elementary and secondary schools, he would almost certainly renew his strong criticism of a public education system that has improved in ways that are often more apparent than real. Chile's literacy rate is now 90 percent, a significant improvement over the 75 percent rate of the late 1930s, but the ability to read and write is only one important component of a good education. All-too-many public schools offer little opportunity for significant learning in mathematics, the physical sciences, the social sciences, and other disciplines that are virtually essential for success in today's world.

Chile's decentralization of public education, done ostensibly in the name of "local control of schools," has shifted responsibility for schools from the federal government to local governments. Andrea Arango, a research specialist at the Council of Hemispheric Affairs, reports high levels of "stratification and inequality in access to private education, substantial differences in the quality of education received, and unequal opportunities for students pursuing higher education."

It is not clear whether these gross weaknesses in Chile's public educational system are unintended consequences or whether they are part of an effort to keep the marginalized trapped at the bottom of the economic ladder. In either case, lack of access to quality education makes it almost impossible for even the most intelligent children from low-income families to attain significant improvement in their socio-economic status.

It should be noted also that the Small Christian Communities, which have done so much to improve that quality of life in the nation of their birth, are not all receiving the same level of support and leadership that they received during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>7</sup> Still embraced by some dioceses, they are a low priority in others. As José Aldunate

points out, Chilean SCCs must be periodically renewed within the Chilean church.<sup>8</sup>

Some invaluable suggestions for effective renewal were offered. On May 24-26, 2006, in Quito, Ecuador, the bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean held a continental meeting — Small Christian Communities: Schools for the Followers and Missioners of Jesus Christ — to collect updated information from each national conference regarding the current situations of SCCs across the continent and to form a realistic assessment of their futures. After intensive discussion, approximately 50 bishops, priests, religious, and laity representing 18 national conferences offered specific recommendations for the SCC's struggles to overcome challenges and to avoid potential pitfalls.

*Latin American Catholicism is in close accord with the ecclesiology of Vatican II and its emphasis on discerning the signs of the times, the duty to work for social justice, the importance of the laity, and the role of the church in society.*

These recommendations included renewal of support for the SCCs, flowing from the teachings of Medellín and the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World; recognition that SCCs are works in progress that must be provided with “missionary space”; that they are the nucleus of the church rather than just a movement; greater respect for the work of the Spirit in the grass-roots of the church; recognition of the pastoral necessity to grant the SCCs minimal juridical recognition so that they do not depend solely on the sympathies, or lack thereof, from church leadership; heightened respect for the prophetic role of the SCCs and for the testimony of their contemporary martyrs; and fuller appreciation of the multi-cultural dimensions of SCCs.

The participants took these recommendations back to their home churches and to the planning sessions of CELAM V. Sadly, the much-hoped-for increase in support for the small communities has yet to materialize as fully as envisioned at that time.

That situation may well be changing, however, with the change in pontiffs. For example, the Brazilians recently celebrated the thirteenth national meeting of small communities (Justice and Prophecy in the Service of Life) in January 2014. There were approximately



4,000 participants. To their great surprise, Pope Francis personally commended the participants, stressing the point that evangelization is the duty of the entire church, while respecting local inculturation. This is widely regarded as official approval of the three greatest successes of the small communities:

1. SCCs function as an explicit follow-through from the pastoral inspiration of Vatican II;
2. Latin American SCCs exemplify the pastoral approach advocated by Pope Francis himself;
3. SCCs provide vital links to the poor, as strongly encouraged by the pope.

### Conclusions

What would Padre Hurtado say if he could return to today's Chile? He would be pleased by the statement of the Chilean bishops in which they say: "It cannot be hidden from anyone that, because of our shortcomings, the church has lost credibility . . . and it is not without reason that some no longer believe us,"<sup>9</sup> but he might hope that this statement would encourage larger conference participation.

In examining this pastoral letter, what might Hurtado point out as continuing challenges to be dealt with? Seeing the widespread economic injustice and recognizing that poverty is directly linked to disease, malnutrition, substandard housing, violence, and alcoholism, he would once again strenuously advocate wage scales that are high enough to provide the basic needs of families so "all can live truly as people."

His lifelong conviction that equality in educational opportunity is crucial to any effort to integrate the "two Chiles" would leave him deeply troubled by the inequalities throughout the public educational system, and he would champion educational equity, not by diminishing the quality of the best schools but by making concerted efforts to improve the poorer ones to achieve parity.

There is no doubt he would hope that Chile would assume a leadership role in ecological and indigenous issue. Land reforms during the governments of Alessandri and Frei in the 1960s gave hope to the Mapuche communities and legalized some of their possessions, and the process was greatly expanded during the Allende government in the early 1970s.<sup>10</sup> Under the Pinochet regime, however, the military

drove many Mapuche from their lands, completely reversing earlier recognition of legal ownership.<sup>11</sup> Return to democracy in the 1980s promised a different future for the indigenous, but the actual changes as yet have been rather small. The Mapuche continue to struggle not only for their lands but also for their language, culture, and other aspects of life that were taken from them.

A nagging concern for the Chilean church is the issue of pedophilia, which has been thoroughly documented internally and in *The London Tablet* and other members of the international press. The deep pain which Chilean Catholics feel about this issue is very similar to that within the Archdiocese of Boston and in other U.S. dioceses.

After this article was substantially prepared, an excellent new book was published in Chile.<sup>12</sup> It reviews developments within the Chilean church and proposes valuable steps for renewal. The book's conclusions confirm our evaluation.

There is little doubt that Catholicity is rapidly changing, in Chile as in all of Latin America. As Daniel Levine writes, "In Latin America today, religion is a buzzing, blooming confusion of possibilities, full of innovation and charged with social and cultural energies. . . . Christianity will remain dominant [in Latin America], but the Christianity in question will clearly be very different from the past."<sup>13</sup> Although perplexing at times, this ever-changing quality of Latin American Christianity is in close accord with the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council, which emphasized the necessity to discern the signs of the times in the light of the Gospel along with the duty to work for social justice, the importance of the laity, and the role of the church in society.

Chile has successfully worked through great challenges. Alberto Hurtado would surely say he hopes for it to both renew and deepen its resolve to fully living out its social commitment. If he and his good friend Bishop Manuel Larrain were alive today, I am firmly convinced they would both say, "*Duc in altum*"<sup>14</sup> — Launch out into the deep. Get things moving again!

### **Update**

Now, in the year 2015, Saint Alberto Hurtado, SJ, and Bishop Manuel Larrain would probably say that recent developments in the Catholic Church of Chile are disturbing.



As one example, the Jesuit theologian Jorge Costadoat has been removed from the faculty of theology at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile by the local ordinary of Santiago, Archbishop Ricardo Ezzati Andrello. Father Costadoat recently had an exchange with the retired Chilean Cardinal Jorge Medina. Father Costadoat advocated divorced persons receiving Communion, while Cardinal Medina opposed this. This debate took place in the pages of the newspaper *El Mercurio*. Father Costadoat was affirming Pope Francis' hopes for a more pastoral approach to this issue. By expelling him from the faculty, the archbishop is curtailing such hopes and is seriously straining relations between the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile and Chile's prestigious Manuel Larrain Theological Center and Alberto Hurtado University.

This and a number of other important examples of the tensions within the Catholic Church of Chile can be found in *Punto Final 825*, April 3, 2015.

*Quo vadis* the Catholic Church of Chile?



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> O. Ernesto Valiente. "The Reception of Vatican II in Latin America," *Theological Studies* No. 73, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism. Center Working Papers/ Working Paper Series.

<sup>3</sup> Robert S. Pelton, CSC. *From Power to Communion: Toward a New Way of Being Church Based on the Latin American Experience* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> Gerald M. Costello. *Mission to Latin America* (Orbis Books, 1979).

<sup>5</sup> Robert L. Ball and Kyle Markham. *The Future of Our Past* (Diamond Communications, Inc., 2001).

<sup>6</sup> La Misión Continental en Chile (Conferencia Episcopal Chilena) 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Joseph G. Healey MM and Jeanne Hinton. *Small Christian Communities Today* (Orbis Books, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> José Aldunate, SJ. *Recepción del Concilio Vaticano II por la Iglesia Chilena* (Centro Ecueménico Diego de Medellín).

<sup>9</sup> *Pastoral Letter of the Permanent Committee of the Episcopal Conference of Chile* (September 2012).

<sup>10</sup> Jeffrey Claiber. *The Church, Dictatorships, and Democracy in Latin America* (Orbis Books, 1998).

<sup>11</sup> Florencia E. Mallon. *Courage Tastes of Blood* (Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>12</sup> Mons. Manuel Larrain, Mons. Bernardino Piñera, P. Juan Ochogavía, SJ, & Antonio Bentué. *Arar en la Esperanza* (San Pablo, Chile: Verbo Divina, 2014).

<sup>13</sup> Daniel H. Levine. "The Future of Christianity in Latin America." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, V.41:1, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Lk 5:4. Quoted by Pope John Paul II in his apostolic letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte*.



## EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# Reflecting on *Dignitatis Humanae*

by Lisa Marie Belz, OSU

*Fifty years after the close of Vatican II, we continue our series on the major documents of the council. The focus of this issue is *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Declaration on Religious Liberty. We will present a brief context for the document, highlight some of its teachings, and speak to what was not said, while exploring its connections to other related council documents.*

Today, 50 years after the close of Vatican II, it would be easy to presume that the council fathers who, in *Dignitatis Humanae* (*DH*), insisted so strongly on religious liberty as a basic civil right were merely following what had already been promulgated “in most constitutions and . . . international documents” (15). Such a presumption, however, would lose sight of the global issues that were in the background as the council fathers met and discussed the contents of what would be included in *DH*.

Of course, in the years since Vatican II, the world has witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the end to the Cold War, and the general decline of communism as a world threat. Not surprisingly, most alive today do not know about (or can easily forget) the global turmoil and decades of violent civil conflicts that marked the lifetime and world of the council fathers.

### **The Historical Context for *Dignitatis Humanae***

Nonetheless, to fully appreciate *Dignitatis Humanae* and its message, it is helpful first to look at its mid-twentieth century historical context, especially the global upheaval and religious persecution that marked much of the century. *Dignitatis Humanae* was written at a time when communism — and its suppression of religion of any kind — was on the rise. Indeed, by the time the council had convened in 1963, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia — most of these either traditionally Catholic lands or

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with sizable Catholic populations — had all come under communist rule. Yet even beyond Central and Eastern Europe, communism had overtaken other countries with strong ties to Catholicism, such as Vietnam in Southeast Asia and Cuba in the Americas, threatening to swallow up still more.

As a result, the church in communist-ruled territories was forced to go underground as churches were closed, religious orders suppressed, and clergy and religious were imprisoned, exiled, or assassinated. Committed laity, too, were persecuted; some were tortured, imprisoned, or killed; others, compelled to live on the margins, were deprived, along with their families, of access to any meaningful political or economic role in civic society. Many, forced to choose between practicing their faith or survival for themselves and their families, chose survival.

The Catholic Church, however, was not the only target for communism; Protestant and Orthodox Christians were equally targeted, as were Buddhists in communist-controlled Asia. As the council closed in 1965, it was reasonable to fear that, for the foreseeable future, communism — and its persecution of believers of any kind — would continue unchecked in its advance around the globe. And, in 1965, such fears were well-grounded. In less than 20 years from the close of the council, nearly one third of the world's population would come under communist rule and be denied what *DH* defends as a basic human right: the right to religious liberty.

While reading between the lines of *Dignitatis Humanae*, however, it becomes clear that communism is not the only concern in view. For example, earlier in the century, the Ottoman Turks targeted multiple populations for extermination, killing between one and two million Armenians, Ottoman Greeks, and Assyrians, all of them Christian. And between 1941 and 1945, six million Jews had been systematically rounded up by the Nazis and sent to death camps, including at least one million Jewish children.

Nor were Catholic heads of state themselves beyond blame. Although putting an end to a brutal civil war, Spain's devout but equally brutal dictator, Francisco Franco, who came to power with support from Hitler and Mussolini, set up more than 190 concentration camps for his political and ideological enemies, killing as many as 400,000 people, nearly two percent of Spain's total population at the time.



When read in its historical context, it becomes clear that *DH* is responding to a world deeply scarred by brutality and violence, a world in which human dignity and basic human rights are repeatedly trampled upon, ignored, or discarded.

### The Highlights of *Dignitatis Humanae*

For the council, such a world, a world in which the image of God — the human person — is so profaned, is the natural result when the basic human need to connect to the divine, both individually and in community, is suppressed. As *Dignitatis Humanae* asserts, justice and peace in society result precisely from the human person's "fidelity to God and God's holy will" (6). It is thus in the best interest of society to permit its members the free exercise of religion so that they can faithfully fulfill their religious duties according to their own conscience.

*Justice and peace in society result from the human person's "fidelity to God and God's holy will."*

Of course, the question quickly arises, especially in today's post 9-11 world in which self-proclaimed "martyrs" regularly blow themselves up to kill myriad innocents, in what, precisely, does "fidelity to God and God's holy will" consist? Does *DH* have anything to say to us about this today?

In regard to the individual human person, *Dignitatis Humanae* insists that all human beings are "bound to seek the truth, especially as it concerns God and his church, and to embrace it and hold onto it, as they come to know it" (1). This search after truth is both a duty and a right (2-3). While repeatedly upholding the truth that resides in Jesus Christ and his Gospel, *DH* nevertheless affirms the primacy of conscience: "the human person is bound to follow his or her conscience faithfully in all activity, so as to come to God, the last end"; no one must be prevented from following one's conscience (3).

From the context, it is clear that this respect for the primacy of conscience is to be extended to all, be they believers or unbelievers, Catholics or adherents of other religious traditions. In fact, *DH* calls the church at large, as well as the individual disciple, to exercise great gentleness toward non-Catholics, following the example of the gentle



Christ and the apostles who never imposed the Gospel on anyone (12, 14). Even so, *DH* believes that a conscience that genuinely seeks God's truth will lead the true seeker of God to promote the common good and to defend the civil rights of all. Indeed, the search for truth leads the seeker to a deepened respect for the human dignity of each person, "known through the revealed word of God and by reason itself" (2).

In regard to civil authority, *Dignitatis Humanae* similarly insists that "the protection and promotion of the inviolable rights" of all is "an essential duty of every civil authority" (6). The protection of civil rights is vital for the common good; to promote the common good is the primary role of just government. This requires that governments respect and uphold the right of "all religious communities to religious freedom"; all are to be equal before the law.

Further, the suppression of religious liberty is "an even more serious transgression of God's will and of the sacred rights of the individual person" (6). There is an acknowledgment that civil society "has the right to protect itself against possible abuses in the name of religious freedom," but this must be done in accordance with just legal principles based on the objective moral order (7). Any religious activity in accord with the common good is to be permitted; civil authority which seeks to control or restrict such activity exceeds the limits of its own power (4).

In regard to the church, *DH* upholds the God-given freedom required for the church to exercise its "responsibility for the salvation" (13) of the whole human family. In sharing the Gospel, the church understands itself as "the teacher of truth by the will of Christ" (14). As such, the church is called by God to be a staunch defender of the civil rights of all, not only its own members. The church, which alongside others in the human family, has known oppression from unjust civil authority, sees itself as a partner to other religious communities, civil authorities, social groups, and citizens to promote the common good and to protect the inviolable rights of all (6). As such, the church offers prayer and intercedes for all humanity (14) even as it promotes and encourages the unity of the entire human family (15).

Throughout the document, there is a recognition that the church itself has needed time to grow in its own understanding of what fidelity to God's will implies. It is only "through centuries of experience" that the church, along with the human family in general, has come to a better

insight into what the recognition and defense of human dignity requires (9).

There is an honest acknowledgment of a failure to live up to the gentle and loving example of Christ and the apostles as some in the church's history have themselves used "methods unworthy of the Gospel" (4, 10, 11, 14). *Dignitatis Humanae* thus deplores coercion of any type, whether used to bring others into the church or, conversely, to put pressure on the faithful to abandon their faith.

*While repeatedly upholding the truth that resides in Jesus Christ and his Gospel, the decree nevertheless affirms the primacy of conscience.*

The church is inherently missionary, but it invites, it does not coerce. It recognizes that it is God who draws the human person; the church's role is simply to make possible the means in which a person can draw close to God with a faith that is both "reasonable and free" (10).

### **What *Dignitatis Humanae* Does Not Say: The Church and Other Religions**

While insisting on human dignity, religious freedom, the primacy of conscience, and the church's essential character as teacher of truth, there are some related topics that *DH* does not discuss in any detail. In fact, *DH* already presumes them. These include how the church is to view other religious traditions, both Christian and non-Christian.

In *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism, already published the previous year, the council discusses the church's relations with other Christian traditions. In *Unitatis Redintegratio (UR)*, the council laments the separation among Christians as scandalous, even as it admits that "people of both sides were to blame" (3).

Further, *UR* insists that "one cannot charge with the sin of separation those who at present are born into these [other Christian traditions]." Indeed, the Catholic Church receives Christians of other traditions "with respect and affection of brothers and sisters." Most strikingly, *UR* recognizes that "some, even very many, of the most significant elements" of the Catholic Church "can exist outside the visible boundaries of the Catholic Church" (3).



Similarly, the council deals with non-Christian religious traditions in an equally respectful manner in its document *Nostra Aetate* (the Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions), published some weeks before *DH*. In *Nostra Aetate* (*NA*), the council recognizes God already at work in other religious traditions, “rejecting nothing that is true and holy in these religions” (2).

Further, while expressing “high regard” for Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam, *NA* also states the council’s deep desire “to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation” with Jews, in acknowledgment of “the profound spiritual ties which link the people of the new covenant with the stock of Abraham” (4)

### Summary

What characterizes *Dignitatis Humanae*, as well as the other documents of the council, is an intentional rootedness in tradition, a deep desire to reach out in a spirit of unity to others beyond the church, and a profound sense of the presence of Christ working through the church despite its human limitations.

Undoubtedly, *Dignitatis Humanae* continues to have something to say to us today; its defense of human rights remains timeless, and its challenge to work for a more just world in which the dignity of all is upheld and protected is as necessary for our time as it was 50 years ago.





## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# Yves Congar on the Eucharist

by Dennis Billy, CSsR

*Yves Congar brought a renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit to Roman Catholic life, thought, and worship. No twentieth-century Catholic theologian did more to place the Spirit at the very center of the church's self-understanding and mission and its celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist.*

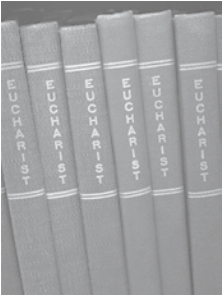
Yves Congar (1904-1995) was a Dominican friar, priest, and one of the most influential Catholic theologians of the twentieth century. He was born in Sedan in northeastern France, entered the Order of Preachers at Amiens in 1925, studied at the Dominican house of studies at Saulchoir in Belgium, and was ordained a priest in 1930. He was a chaplain in the French army during the Second World War and a German prisoner of war for much of that time.

After the war, he continued his teaching and writing and eventually became famous for his involvement in the French worker-priest movement and for his works on the Holy Spirit, the church, ecumenism, and the role of the laity. His writings in these areas laid much of the theological groundwork for the Second Vatican Council. In 1994, Pope John Paul II recognized his groundbreaking contribution to Catholic theology by naming him a cardinal.<sup>1</sup>

### **Congar's Spirituality**

Congar's life was rooted in the spirituality of Saint Dominic and the theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas, especially as interpreted by such early twentieth-century Catholic thinkers as the philosopher Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) and the Dominican theologian Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (1877-1964). As a Dominican, he placed a high premium on prayer, study, and community. These fundamental values permeated his life and his entire spiritual and theological outlook.<sup>2</sup>

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



In his book *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Congar examined the place of the Holy Spirit in the history of the church and showed how it is the life-giving, vivifying force of the Christian life. It is the Spirit who gives birth to the church, sanctifies its members, and empowers them to preach the word of God to the world. The Spirit calls all men and women to the following of Christ and the life of discipleship. It is the principle of unity within the faith and the binding force of all vocations within the church.

Congar saw the Spirit at work not only within the church, but also outside of it and, in many ways, anticipated many of the findings of the Second Vatican Council. Although he recognized the importance of the church's hierarchical structure for preserving unity of belief and practice, he placed a great emphasis on the role of the laity in the life of the church and, through their participation in the priesthood of believers, their vital role of bringing gospel values and the life of the Spirit to the marketplace.

He also saw the Spirit at work in the ecumenical movement and played a major role in getting the Catholic Church involved in repairing its relations with other Christian churches and ecclesial communities. The Holy Spirit, he believed, was also at work in the hearts of non-Christians and even non-believers in their desires to dedicate themselves to an authentic search for truth.<sup>3</sup>

For Congar, the Holy Spirit was the soul of the church at work in every aspect of its life, the internal as well as the external. These converged in the church's celebration of the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist when, during the epiclesis, the Spirit is asked to descend upon the gifts of bread and wine which the priest offers to God on behalf of the community of believers. The transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ is a work of the Spirit that takes place through, with, and in Christ in order to render glory and praise to the Father.

This transformative action of the Spirit sanctifies the faithful by empowering them to live the Gospel and share it through lives of authentic discipleship. For Congar, life in the Spirit is intimately related to the celebration of the Eucharist. His spirituality was rooted in the Holy Spirit and the mystery of the church and its sacraments, with special emphasis on the eucharistic banquet, sacrifice, and presence.<sup>4</sup>

### Congar's Teaching on the Eucharist

Congar roots the Eucharist in the mystery of Christ's passion and death and calls it the source of church unity. For him, "the real meaning and function of the sacraments is this, that by them Christians are placed in contact with the Lord himself, their Redeemer, the one and same Lord who, at a particular time, suffered and was raised up; that they receive the same life-giving sap that proceeds from the tree of the cross; in short, that life by which they are to live is the very life of *Christ*."<sup>5</sup>

"The Eucharist," in his mind, "imparts [Christ's] fellowship and life."<sup>6</sup> This fellowship and life is a work of the Spirit and manifests itself in unity. Congar maintains that "theologians, both ancient and modern, are at one accord in seeing the unity of the mystical body as the effect proper to the sacrament of the Eucharist."<sup>7</sup>

Congar is quick to point out that the Eucharist "does not begin anew Christ's sacrifice nor is it, strictly speaking, a supplement to the cross."<sup>8</sup> On the contrary, "it makes Christ present again as victim offered so that his sacrifice ever recurs without ceasing to be unique and becomes, wherever Christians are gathered together, their own sacrifice and that of the church, and the accomplishment by them of what was accomplished for them, once and for all by Christ."<sup>9</sup>

*The Eucharist imparts Christ's fellowship and life to the church and to the world.*

He maintains that the Eucharist is a work of the Spirit mediated through the church. As such, it reflects the church's apostolic, sacramental, and social nature, as well as all the spiritual realities of life in Christ.<sup>10</sup> Congar places a great emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in constituting the church, effecting the sacraments, sanctifying its members and carrying out its missionary activity. In his mind, is "the moving force, the animating principle, of everything Christian, everything holy, since Christ, is the Holy Spirit. He it is who leads us back to the God of holiness, and unites us to him."<sup>11</sup>

In his magisterial work, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, Congar asserts that in the Western church "the part played by the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist — not only in the change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of the Lord, but also in our communion — has hardly been developed."<sup>12</sup>



He goes on to say that “the Eucharist is seen and experienced in an essentially Christological perspective”<sup>13</sup> To counteract this tendency, he spends a great deal of time dealing with the Spirit’s role in the eucharistic epiclesis and provides exhaustive evidence to show that “the Latin West has always been convinced not only of the consecratory function of the words, ‘This is my body’ and ‘This is my blood,’ but also equally of the part played by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

In pointing this out, Congar offsets the tendency of some theologians to focus too heavily on the words of consecration and to downplay the important role of the invocation of the Holy Spirit. He points out that the epiclesis cannot be separated from the whole of the Eucharistic Prayer and that the role of the Spirit in the Eucharist is similar to its role in the incarnation: “The Eucharist . . . is like a begetting every day of Christ, body and blood. Just as the incarnation came about through the action of the Holy Spirit, so too should the consecration and sanctification of the gifts sanctify believers and incorporate them into Christ.”<sup>15</sup>

Congar also points out that “the same Spirit is at work in the three realities that bear the name of the body of Christ and are dynamically linked to each other through the dynamism of the Spirit: Jesus, who was born of Mary and who suffered, died, and was raised from the dead and glorified; the bread and wine that are ‘eucharistized;’ and the communion or body of which we are members.”<sup>16</sup> In this respect, the life of the church may be likened to one long invocation of the Holy Spirit.<sup>17</sup>

### Observations

This brief exposition of Congar’s teaching on the Eucharist underscores its close connection to his theology of the Holy Spirit and its vivifying role in the life of the church. 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. Congar is correct in pointing out the underdeveloped aspect of the Holy Spirit in the Western church’s theological tradition. He is also justified in highlighting the unifying role played by the Spirit in the sacramental life of the church and underscoring this significance for the Eucharist. This sacrament, in his mind, is not a substitute for the Holy Spirit (as some authors have wrongly held),<sup>18</sup> but the fullest



expression of God's love for humanity. It is the Spirit who immerses the community of believers in Christ's paschal mystery and who empowers them to proclaim its redemptive message. By emphasizing the role of the Holy Spirit in the mystery of God's salvific plan, he underscores the unity of God's inner Trinitarian life and external Trinitarian activities (creation, redemption, and sanctification) and how they are reflected in the internal life and missionary activity of the church.

2. Congar accentuates the centrality of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church with respect to its apostolic, sacramental, communal, and missionary dimensions, all of which are deeply intertwined. The church, in his mind, finds its origin in the gift of the Spirit to the community of disciples on Pentecost. Their experience of the Spirit on that day propelled them to proclaim the Gospel boldly and without fear of reprisals. This same Spirit guides the church and its members through time through its hierarchical structures, sacraments, life in community, and proclamation of the kerygma. For Congar, all of these dimensions come together in the celebration of the Eucharist, which constitutes the church, affirms its unity, and immerses the believing community in the redemptive mystery of the cross. The church, in his mind, cannot exist without the sacrament — and vice versa.

*Congar emphasized the transformative action of the Holy Spirit over the bread and wine and over the community.*

3. Congar emphasizes the Eucharist's role in imparting the life and fellowship of Christ to the church. It not only immerses us in the life of his Spirit, but also creates in us a bond of unity rooted in the mystery of the divine love. Along with baptism, the Eucharist is the greatest of the sacraments. If the former makes us members of Christ's body, the church, the latter nourishes and sustains us in the life of the Spirit. In this respect, the Eucharist is "the perfect sacrament of our incorporation with Christ."<sup>19</sup> That is to say, "it incorporates us in Christ precisely by catching us all into the supreme act of love by which he offered himself for us on the cross."<sup>20</sup> The simple act of breaking bread together affirms our participation in the mystery of Christ's mystical body. To receive the sacrament is to proclaim our dying and rising with Christ and to affirm the moving force of his Spirit in our lives.

4. Congar emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic epiclesis, when the priest asks God to send forth the Spirit



upon the gifts of bread and wine that are offered on behalf of the believing community. He insists that this invocation of the Spirit is an integral part of the Mass and should not be separated from the Eucharistic Prayer. To do so would be to isolate something that lies at the very heart of the liturgy and to take away from its mystery and the sacrifice of glory and praise offered to God the Father through Christ and in the unity of the Holy Spirit. This invocation of the Spirit over the bread and wine of the new creation is an echo of the wind of the Spirit which blows over the waters at the beginning of the first creation (Gn 1:2). When seen in this light, the epiclesis highlights the Spirit's role in bringing about the new creation and the divinizing and sanctifying role it plays in God's plan for the world.

5. The Eucharist, for Congar, is an action of Christ and his mystical body, the church. As such, it is an action of all of the members of the body — bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and laity. He is keen to point out that all of the members of Christ's body are called to participate in the church's life and mission and fond of recalling Paul's words to the Corinthians: "The body is one and has many members, but all the members, many though they are, are one body; and so it is with Christ" (1 Cor 12:12). However, since some members might not understand their role in the body, he emphasizes the importance of authorities within the church to guide, nourish, and care for it. Congar was a man, a priest, and a religious of the church, who sought, at one and the same time, both to challenge it and think with it as it faced the challenges of the future. In his mind, the church needed to remain in touch with its roots in the Spirit — or face the consequences.

6. Congar devotes much of his writing to the role of the laity in the church and their apostolate of bringing the Gospel to the marketplace. He rightly points out that, if they are to assume their rightful place in the church, they need to actively participate in the eucharistic liturgy and not consider themselves mere passive onlookers. By emphasizing the believing community's active role in the church's life, he is able to give the laity a more visible role in the eucharistic worship of Christ's mystical body. Although he always maintains the importance of the hierarchical priesthood, he insists that the threefold order of bishop, priest, and deacon is at the service of the priesthood of the laity — and not vice versa. His insights into the vocation of the laity contributed to the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on their active role in all levels of church life and their call to promote gospel values especially in society and in the secular sphere of daily life.

7. As a Dominican, Congar has a deep and lasting devotion to Mary, the *Theotokos*, the Mother of God. While he recognizes the apprehensions some may have regarding the emphasis Catholics give to the Blessed Mother, he is quick to point out that “the part played by Mary is situated within that played by the Holy Spirit, who made her the mother of the incarnate Word and who is the principle of all holiness and of the communion of the saints.”<sup>21</sup> Mary is not a substitute for the Holy Spirit, but the fullest expression of what it means to be a human being fully open to and imbued by its sanctifying and redemptive presence. She is the mother of the church only because she is fully alive with the Spirit of God. Congar spoke often of the Holy Spirit as being the “soul of the church” and looked to Mary as being the fullest expression of its presence in redeemed humanity.

*The Eucharist is an action of Christ and his mystical body, the church. As such, it is an action of all of the members of the body.*

Although these observations do not exhaust Congar’s teaching on the Eucharist, they cover its main contours and reflect its centrality to his understanding of the mystery of the church and the work of the Spirit in the lives of the faithful. The Eucharist, for Congar, was central to the life and message of the Christ and his body, the church. Without it, the faithful would be without food and nourishment for their pilgrim and missionary journey through time.


## Conclusion

Yves Congar brought a renewed emphasis on the Holy Spirit to Roman Catholic life, thought, and worship. The Spirit, he believed, was the soul of the church and the vivifying force of its structure, teachings, and sacramental worship, especially as they relate to the Eucharist. No twentieth-century Catholic theologian did more than he to place the Spirit at the very center of the church’s self-understanding and mission.

The Eucharist, for Congar, both constituted the church and was constituted by it. It gathered the community of believers around the table of the messianic banquet and placed them in direct contact with the saving mysteries of Christ’s passion, death, and resurrection. Through the power of the Spirit, it brought the risen Lord into the midst of the body of the faithful and enabled them to recognize his presence in the



breaking of the bread. If believers became members of Christ's body through baptism, they were nourished, sustained, and united in that body through the Eucharist. His writings on ecumenism and the laity, as well as his participation in the worker-priest movement are a reflection of his belief in the unifying role the Spirit played in the life of the church.

Congar's insights laid the groundwork for the Second Vatican Council's emphasis on the mystery of the church and its understanding of it as the pilgrim people of God. They also helped the fathers of the council appreciate the importance of reaching out to other Christian churches and ecclesial communities in a spirit of dialogue and respect. He saw the Eucharist as the "sacrament of unity" and believed it should inspire the members of Christ's body to work to overcome their divisions and find common ground in doctrine, life, and worship. The Spirit, he believed, was at the heart of this movement toward unity. Through his writings, he exhorted the community of believers not to stand in its way. 

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more on Congar's life, see Aidan Nichols, *Yves Congar* (Wilton, CT: Morehouse Publishing, 1989), 1-13; *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2d ed., (Thomas Gale/The Catholic University of America: Detroit/Washington, DC, 2003), s.v. "Congar, Yves Marie-Joseph," by J. A. Komonchak.

<sup>2</sup> For the philosophical, theological, and spiritual influences on Congar, see Jean-Pierre Jossua, *Yves Congar: Theologian in the Service of God's People* (Chicago: The Priory Press, 1968, 11-37; Nichols, *Yves Congar*, 1-13; *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2d ed., (Thomas Gale/The Catholic University of America: Detroit/Washington, DC, 2003), s.v. "Congar, Yves Marie-Joseph," by J. A. Komonchak; Fergus Kerr, "Yves Congar and Thomism," in *Yves Congar: Theologian of the Church*, ed., Gabriel Flynn, Louvain Theological and Pastoral Monographs 32 (Louvain: Peeters, 2005), 67-97.

<sup>3</sup> See Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Smith, 3 vols. (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 1:167-73; 3:267-72.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:258-66.

<sup>5</sup> Yves Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 2d ed. (Baltimore/Dublin: Helicon Press, 1965), 33.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 33

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

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-52.

<sup>12</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:162.

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

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:250.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:228, 230

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:264.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 3:267-72.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 160-62.

<sup>19</sup> Congar, *The Mystery of the Church*, 91.

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

<sup>21</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 1:164.



## EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# Oscar Romero — Voice of the Voiceless

by Victor M. Parachin

*Two weeks before his assassination, Archbishop Oscar Romero of San Salvador wrote: "I have frequently been threatened with death. As a Christian, I do not believe in death without resurrection. If they kill me, I will be resurrected in the Salvadoran people."*

In late 1979, Archbishop Romero was visiting an urban slum. It was a sizeable neighborhood of poverty where entire families lived in shelters made from cardboard, tin, and whatever other discarded building materials they could salvage. June Carolyn Erlick, a reporter traveling with Romero that day, asked: "How do you feel when you see a community like this?" His response was memorable: "I just think of what I have already preached. There shouldn't be first-class people and second-class people."

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

### Early Life and Ecclesiastical Career

Oscar Arnulfo Romero, the conservative cleric who became a passionate prophet, was born on May 11, 1919, and at the age of one was baptized in the Catholic Church. As a youth, he often spent time at the town's two churches during his free time, showing an unusual interest in spirituality and religious life.

Oscar enrolled in the national seminary in San Salvador completing his theological studies at the Gregorian University in Rome where he was ordained a priest on April 4, 1942. He remained there to pursue a doctorate in theology, which was cut short when he was called home to El Salvador in 1944. There was a shortage of priests, and he was desperately needed.

His first appointment was as the pastor of a rural parish, but his innate gifts combined with his international experience were recognized by



church authorities. He was soon appointed as the Executive Secretary of the Episcopal Council for Central America and Panama, the editor of the archdiocesan newspaper, chaplain of the Church of San Francisco, and, in 1974, the bishop of Santiago de Maria in Usulután.

Though both traditional and conservative, Romero was a pastor at heart who visited with and listened to the poor. Little by little and one by one, these impoverished, violated people helped their bishop understand the day-to-day reality which was their world. Important seeds were planted in Romero's mind and spirit, ones which would bear fruit three years later.

On February 23, 1977, Romero was appointed the archbishop of San Salvador. This appointment was met with delight by the government and the military, who saw him as a hesitant, timid, conservative cleric. Priests, however, reacted with dismay, disappointment, and even despair.

Romero succeeded Luis Chávez y González, the archbishop of San Salvador for 38 years. Chávez was both moderate and tolerant. He did not prohibit his clergy from supporting the poor and backing the rights of peasants to organize and to challenge landowners and the government.

The clergy favored Auxiliary Bishop Arturo Rivera y Damas to follow Chávez. In Rome, however, the decision was made to appoint Romero. Here is the account of Francisco Estrada, which reveals the deep disappointment in his appointment: "We knew that Rome had been in consultation with various groups since late 1976 in the search for a new archbishop, knowing that Chávez had reached the age of retirement. The nuncio (Rome's official representative to El Salvador) proposed Romero as a candidate and consulted with the government, the military, the business sector, and the ladies of society. They asked the rich, and the rich gave their complete backing to Romero's appointment. They felt he was 'one of theirs.'"

Yet, three weeks later, an event would take place that would utterly and profoundly transform Romero from a hesitant, timid, conservative cleric into a courageous, confident, and passionate priest. It would propel him to become the prophet of El Salvador, speaking in support of the oppressed while challenging the wealthy and chastising the government. Romero became a surprise in history.

## What Changed Everything

The event that turned Romero upside down was the assassination of a Jesuit priest and personal friend, Rutilio Grande. At that time, the military's efforts at suppressing the people were supplemented by mercenary death-squads. These freely roamed the country where they raped, tortured, and killed without fear of arrest, and were paid bounties for every person they victimized.

On March 12, 1977, Father Grande, whose ministry was among the poor, was traveling the road from Aguilares to El Paisnal. A death-squad was waiting and opened fire, killing not only the priest but also Manuel Solorzano, an older man, and Nelson Rutilio Lemus, a teenager. The two were giving Father Grande a ride to the rural church where he was scheduled to celebrate Mass.

*"We learn to see the face of Christ that also is the face of a suffering human being . . . the crucified . . . the poor . . . a saint . . . and of every person."*

Upon learning of the killings, Romero rushed to the parish house in El Paisnal where the three bodies had been carried. There, he celebrated a Mass. Deeply saddened by the deaths, Romero was equally deeply moved by hearing local sugar cane workers speak highly of Father Grande's ministry among them. Two days later, Romero led a Funeral Mass at San Salvador Cathedral celebrated by 100 priests before an immense crowd inside and outside the cathedral.

The readings for the funeral were personally selected by Romero. One was from the Gospel of John: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" (Jn 15:13). The other was from an apostolic exhortation of Pope Paul VI, who declared: "The church cannot be absent from the struggle for liberation." Referring to Grande and his two companions as "coworkers in Christian liberation," Romero, in this public forum, chastised his country's leaders saying: "The government should not consider a priest who takes a stand for social justice as a politician, or a subversive element, when he is fulfilling his mission in the politics of the common good."

Following the funeral, Romero felt the church he led needed a response to the murders. It was an agonizing decision, but Romero took three steps. First, he wrote the President of El Salvador, Colonel



Molina, informing him that, as archbishop, he was “not willing to participate in any official act of the government as long as the latter did not put all its effort into making justice manifest in regard to this unprecedented sacrilege.”

Secondly, Romero informed Molina that the church had published the excommunication of “the authors of the crime.”

The third decision was momentous. As a show of solidarity and protest for the murder of Grande and his companions, Romero made the decision to cancel all Masses throughout the entire country the following Sunday, except for one on the steps of the cathedral. This amounted to a general strike by the church against the government and the military. The decision was not made easily, nor did Romero make it alone. He convened all the priests of the archdiocese as well as some women religious. The matter was discussed at length and a vote taken. Seventy-one voted in favor, one against, and one abstained. Rome’s representative, the nuncio, objected and scolded Romero saying he was “irresponsible” and “imprudent.”

Nevertheless, Romero proceeded, canceling all Masses except the one on the cathedral steps to which the people were invited. The response had to be gratifying for Romero as more than 100,000 filled the plaza in front of the cathedral. Romero spoke: “I want to give a public thanks today, here in front of the archdiocese, for the unified support that is being expressed for the Gospel and for these our beloved priests. Many of them are in danger, and like Father Grande, they are risking even the maximum sacrifice. . . . Whoever touches one of my priests is touching me. And they will have to deal with me!” At the mention of Rutilio Grande, the crowd broke out in thunderous applause.

### **Speaking for Those Who Could Not**

From that point on, Romero increasingly became the “voice of the voiceless,” using the moral authority of his position as archbishop to speak out on behalf of those who could not do so for themselves — the tortured, the imprisoned, the terrorized masses. In a sermon, he declared: “The church is concerned about those who cannot speak, those who suffer, those who are tortured, those who are silenced. This is not getting involved in politics. . . . Let this be clear: when the church preaches social justice, equality, and the dignity of people, defending those who suffer and those who are assaulted, this is not subversion,



this is not Marxism. This is the authentic teaching of the church.”

In spite of Romero’s public support of the people, the government escalated violence against its people. More priests and religious women were killed. Countless people were arrested, detained, tortured, raped, and murdered. Bodies clogged rivers and streams. Tortured, disfigured bodies were left in garbage dumps or simply on the streets of the capital weekly. It is estimated that the civilian death toll exceeded 3,000 per month, with some 75,000-80,000 Salvadorans slaughtered. More than 300,000 simply disappeared without a trace; millions became homeless fugitives, fleeing the military and the police; all of this in a country the population of which was just 5.5 million.

As opposition was silenced, Romero was left alone speaking out against the atrocities and in support of the people. Even Romero’s sermons changed. Rather than simply study biblical texts and expound on them, Romero tied Scripture to current events as they unfolded. To prepare for his weekly homily, Romero did two things. First, he met for several hours with a team of priests and lay people to discuss and reflect on the situation in the country that week, listening carefully to them. The second was prayer.

*Romero not only tried to support the victimized, but boldly spoke to those committing the violence, asking them to reconsider, repent, and be converted.*

An eyewitness to Romero’s style of weekly sermon preparation recalls: “The meeting (with advisers) would end; he’d say goodbye to the group; then he’d sit down to organize his ideas and prepare himself. I’m a witness, having seen him on more than one occasion in his room, on his knees, from 10:00 on Saturday night to 4:00 in the morning on Sunday, preparing his homily. He would sleep a little while and then be at the cathedral by 8:00. Romero was so comfortable with what he would say in church that he stepped into the pulpit with nothing more than a slip of paper with two or three ideas written on it.”

In his sermons, Romero not only tried to support the victimized, but boldly spoke to those committing the violence, asking them to reconsider, repent, and be converted. On one occasion, he addressed directly soldiers and police officers, pleading with them to cease the violence: “I would like to appeal in a special way to the men of the



army, and in particular to the troops of the National Guard, the police, and the garrisons. Brothers, you belong to our own people. You kill your own brother peasants; and in the face of an order to kill that is given by a man, the law of God should prevail that says: 'Do not kill!' No soldier is obliged to obey an order counter to the law of God. No one has to comply with an immoral law. . . . Therefore, in the name of God, and in the name of this long-suffering people, whose laments rise to heaven every day more tumultuous, I beseech you, I beg you, I command you in the name of God: 'Stop the repression!'"

On March 24, 1980, Romero was celebrating Mass in a small hospital chapel when he was shot and killed. It is widely believed the assassins were members of notorious Salvadoran death squads. This view was later supported by an official United Nations report which identified several former El Salvadoran military leaders as involved in the assassination. With the death of Romero, the many tensions existing in El Salvador exploded. The country erupted into a horrific civil war which lasted twelve years causing 75,000 deaths.

Though bullets silenced Romero, his life has not been forgotten. He is considered by many as the unofficial patron saint of the Americas. His name has been brought forward for sainthood. Even outside of Catholicism, Romero is honored and respected. Pope Francis recently declared him a martyr, and Romero is one of ten twentieth-century martyrs depicted in statues above the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey, the Church of England cathedral in London.

Interestingly, in an interview only two weeks before his assassination, Romero referenced the many death threats he received saying: "Martyrdom is a great gift from God that I do not believe I have earned. But if God accepts the sacrifice of my life, then may my blood be the seed of liberty and a sign of the hope that will soon become a reality. . . . A bishop will die, but the church of God, the people, will never die."

### **Wisdom from Oscar Romero**

"The mission of Christ, to bring good news to the poor, to those who receive only bad news, to those who feel only the assault of the powerful, to those who see the riches that make others happy pass them by; to these the Lord has come."

"We must save not the soul at the hour of death, but the person living

in history.”


“To each one of us, Christ is saying, ‘If you want your life and mission to be fruitful like mine, do like me, give your life out of love for others.’”

“We learn to see the face of Christ that also is the face of a suffering human being, the face of the crucified, the face of the poor, the face of a saint, and the face of every person.”

“Those that trample the people must be in conflict with the church.”

“A church that tries to keep itself pure and uncontaminated would not be a church of God’s service to people. The authentic church is one that does not mind conversing with prostitutes and publicans and sinners, as Christ did, and with Marxists . . . in order to bring them salvation’s true message.”

“The Word of God has a human mission: to love our neighbor means to be concerned about their needs, their concrete situation, and, like the Good Samaritan, to help the poor fallen by the roadside.”

“The Eucharist makes us look back to Calvary twenty centuries ago . . . but it also looks ahead to the future, to the eternal, eschatological, and definitive horizon that presents itself as a demanding ideal to all political systems, to all social struggles, to all those concerned for the earth.” 

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## In Christ’s Peace Deceased Members

Rev. Jeremiah Moynihan  
Diocese of Rochester

Rev. Joseph H. Roy  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

Rev. Thomas J. Shea  
Diocese of San Jose

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests’ Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with K, L, M, N, and O are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during July and August.



## PASTORAL LITURGY

# Celebrating the Sacraments— Part 4: Anointing of the Sick

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

*We continue, during this 50th anniversary year of the end of the Second Vatican Council, examining how the renewal of the sacraments was a fruit of the council. Here we review “best practices” for the sacrament of the anointing of the sick.*

Father John Thomas J. Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church, his home parish, in Highland Heights, Ohio, and a liturgical consultant and presenter. He is available for workshops and presentations on the liturgy.

Formerly called the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB), they (who are “they”?) issued an updated ritual edition in for the First Sunday of Advent 1983, containing the 1966 edition of the rite. The ritual book became known as the *Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum* (PCS). This title demonstrates the shift that took place in the sacrament: no longer was it “last rites,” but a pastoral approach to caring for those in need of healing at different stages on life’s journey. The General Introduction is a masterful work, mixing theology and pastoral realities and reflecting on “human sickness and its meaning in the mystery of salvation.” PCS, 4 states:

Doctors and all who are devoted in any way to caring for the sick should consider it their duty to use all the means to help the sick, both physically and spiritually. In so doing, they are fulfilling the command of Christ to visit the sick, for Christ implied that those who visit the sick should be concerned for the whole person and offer both physical relief and spiritual comfort.

Although we still know people who wait to call and use the previous terminology — old phrases and beliefs take a long time to change — pastoral practice reveals how the sacrament has changed in the last generation. We are anointing regularly as people prepare for surgery, go into nursing homes, transition from one stage of care to another, or enter hospice. We even anoint sick children when there is a reason for them to be strengthened by this sacrament (PCS, 12), or for the comfort of the parents.

With priests busy on Sundays, it can be difficult to celebrate the rites of anointing during a regular liturgy. A weekday Mass or a deanery or regional Mass with parishes coming together occasionally to collaborate in administering the sacrament is a nice alternative. Some parishes offer the ritual outside of Mass before or after a regular Sunday Mass. Certain days are appropriate for celebrating the anointing, during or after Mass, for example, when the Scriptures mention healing (Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B), February 11 (World Day of the Sick and Our Lady of Lourdes), or October 18, the feast of Saint Luke.

Each parish should organize, if not already the custom, regular visits to the sick and the distribution of Holy Communion, a privileged ministry of care and healing. The first chapter of PCS reminds us of the loving encouragement this ministry provides. Chapter two has a special ritual for "visits to a sick child." Most are familiar with chapter three, "Communion of the Sick." The chapter offers two rituals: one for a service and one for a brief Communion rite. The title highlights that we are truly in communion with one another as disciples of Jesus. Chapter four is the heart of PCS: the "Anointing of the Sick outside Mass," in a home, hospital, or institution, or church. This is a liturgical text, and "appropriate vestments should be worn." Here I wish to highlight the second ritual, "Anointing within Mass." Once a year, a parish might schedule (again on a Sunday where there is mention of healing in the Scriptures) an opportunity for the anointing of the sick at the final Mass of the day, when there's no pressure to end the Mass "on time." The ritual offers scripture texts for weekday Masses and reminds us that there are certain days when we may not celebrate the rite "within Mass," due to the pastoral nature of these solemnities and feasts (see PCS, 134). Let me highlight the ritual and moments when special music may be done are indicated with \*.

- The introductory rites have a special greeting and welcome at PCS, 135. \*
- There are two collects as options.
- The Liturgy of the Word is in the usual way (PCS, 137) and there are no Universal Prayers because there is a special litany of anointing.
- After the homily, the Liturgy of Anointing:
  - o Litany (response "Lord, have mercy" may be sung \*).
  - o The Laying on of Hands (either at the chair or over each person individually).
  - o Prayer over the Oil (I am unfamiliar with a sung response for this part of the ritual; perhaps a chanted phrase could be sung or just recited).
  - o Anointing (during this time, music is sung, with several

selections available in all music resources, including “You Are Mine,” “Jesus, Heal Us,” and “Healer of Our Every Ill”).

- o Prayer after the Anointing (four choices).
- Liturgy of the Eucharist (the order of Mass continues as usual):
  - o During the Eucharistic Prayer, there is a special preface in PCS, 145 and special embolisms for the Eucharistic Prayers.
  - o Prayer After Communion (two choices are offered).
- Concluding Rites:
  - o Blessing (three choices).

PCS envisions a continuum of care and prayers that are noted in the other chapters of the rite. The rubrics for anointing in a hospital or an institution are followed by a chapter on viaticum, the commendation of the dying, prayers for the dead, and rites for exceptional circumstances. It should be noted that Christian Initiation for the Dying is also included and one of the key steps is often overlooked. PCS, 290 allows for any priest to confirm, and one should have, just like we have the “oil of the sick in the car” sacred chrism for confirmation in an emergency. PCS, 278 and 280 emphasize that if the person survives, he or she is to go through appropriate catechesis later. Too often a priest baptizes, but overlooks confirmation and Holy Communion, both of which are sacraments of initiation along with Communion as viaticum, true bread for the journey.

Vatican II wanted the healing presence of Christ to be manifested more completely and evidently in the church, as the quote below from *Sacrosanctum Concilium* indicates. What a gift the renewed ritual of anointing is to those who are seeking comfort and reassurance in the face of suffering and pain!

Properly called “anointing of the sick,” [it] is *not* (emphasis added) for those only who are at the point of death. . . . The number of anointings is to be adapted to the circumstances; the prayers that belong to the rite of anointing are to be so revised that they correspond to the varying conditions of the sick who receive the sacrament.

## The Calendar for July and August

### Special Blessings

Schedule some of the “interesting” blessings in the *Book of Blessings* (BB) after a parish Mass, for example, boats and fishing gear (chapter

22), technical equipment (chapter 23), tools (chapter 24), or at the beginning of the football season (chapter 29).

### **John 6**

This year we have the unique “retreat” of John 6 and its powerful meditations on the mystery of the Eucharist. Take time during August 2-23 (Sundays 18-21 of Ordinary Time) to plan homilies on eucharistic catechesis and the Mass.

### **Friday, July 3 — Saint Thomas**

An opportunity to highlight evangelization as we remember the apostle who, legend has it, traveled the farthest of any apostle to preach the Gospel of Jesus.

### **Saturday, July 4 — Independence Day (USA)**

A fitting time for your parish to have a breakfast or morning gathering.

### **Wednesday, July 22 — Saint Mary Magdalene**

Celebrate the first witness to the resurrection and her faithfulness even when it was dangerous to let it be known that she was a follower of Jesus.

### **Wednesday, July 29 — Saint Martha**

Honor your sacristans and volunteers who work diligently in your parish.

### **Sunday, August 2 — Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Apostle of the Eucharist**

Emmanuel Publishing offers a novena with special prayers, catechesis, and reflections on the extraordinary life of Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist. Why not make this novena booklet available in your Eucharistic Chapel during August?

### **Saturday, August 15 — Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary**

An opportunity to use the Thanksgiving for Harvest found in BB, chapter 28.

### **Saturday, August 29 — Passion of Saint John the Baptist**

The revised title for this feast highlights the importance of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ.

**Holy Hour with Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
August 2 and the Month of August**

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

**Opening Song** “In the Lord I’ll be Ever Thankful” (Jacques Berthier) or other hymn

The presider adds incense during the singing of the hymn.

**Opening Prayer**

Presider: Gracious God,  
you chose Peter Julian Eymard  
to proclaim your love for us in the Eucharist,  
and he accepted his call  
to be an apostle for the Eucharist.

May we contemplate this mystery,  
recognize your presence in our lives,  
and live our call to be disciples of eucharistic love.

May Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament,  
our model of prayer,  
help us to live our lives  
in service and thanksgiving,  
grateful always for this gift of love.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

**Silent Meditation** The presider takes a few minutes to explain Saint Peter Julian Eymard’s Method of Prayer (the Four Ends of Sacrifice) and then invites the people to pray quietly for ten minutes thinking about:

- Adoration
- Reparation (recognizing our sins and seeking forgiveness)
- Thanksgiving
- Entreaty (intercessory prayers or petitions)

**Taizé Hymn** “Confitemini Domino” (Jacques Berthier)



**First Reading** Selection from John 6: The Bread of Life Discourse

**Silent Mediation** The presider invites the people to pray silently for ten minutes.

**Taizé Hymn** "Nada Te Turbe" (Jacques Berthier)

**Second Reading** From the writings of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Eucharist: Sacrament of Life

The Eucharist is the life of the people. The Eucharist gives them a center of life. All can come together without the barriers of race or language in order to celebrate the feast days of the church. It gives them a law of life, that of charity, of which it is the source; thus it forges between them a common bond, a Christian kinship. All eat the same bread; all are table companions of Jesus Christ who supernaturally creates among them a feeling of togetherness. Read the Acts of the Apostles. It states that the whole community of the first Christians, converted Jews and baptized pagans, belonging to different regions, "had but one heart and one soul" (Acts 4:32). Why? Because they were attentive to the teaching of the apostles and faithful in sharing in the breaking of the bread (Acts 2:42).

Yes, the Eucharist is the life of souls and of societies, just as the sun is the life of the body and of the earth. Without the sun, the earth would be sterile; it is the sun which makes it fertile, renders it beautiful and rich; it is the sun which provides agility, strength, and beauty to the body. In the face of these amazing effects, it is not astonishing that the pagans should have adored it as the god of the world. In actual fact, the sun obeys a supreme Sun, the divine Word, Jesus Christ, who illumines everyone coming into this world, and who, through the Eucharist, sacrament of life, acts in person in the very depths of souls in order to form Christian families and peoples. Oh how happy, a thousand times happy, is the faithful soul who has found this hidden treasure, who goes to drink at this fountain of living water, who eats often this bread of eternal life!

Christian society is also a family. The link between its members is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the household who has prepared the family table. He is the head, Jesus Christ, who celebrated Christian togetherness at the supper; he called his apostles *filioli*, my little children, and he commanded them to love one another as he had

loved them. At the holy table, we are all children who receive the same nourishment, and Saint Paul draws out the consequences of this, that is, that we form but one family, one same body, because we all share in the same bread, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 10:16-17). Lastly, the Eucharist gives Christian society the strength to observe the law of honor, and to practice charity towards one's neighbor. Jesus Christ wants everyone to honor and love his brothers and sisters. For this reason, he identifies himself with them: "What you do to the least of mine, you do to me" (Mt 25:40), and he gives himself to each one of them in Communion.

## **Silence**

### **Explanation of Lighting Candles**

Light all candles.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
felt called to focus all attention and glory on Christ  
eucharistic.

As he brought attention and light to the Eucharist,  
he called forth disciples to realize this eucharistic mission  
in the church and the world.

The Eucharist lights our way,  
dispels darkness and evil,  
and guides our journey of life.

Let us stand (or gather around the altar when  
appropriate)  
to proclaim our presence with the Lord  
and to renew our baptismal commitment to be true  
disciples  
and to live by the light of our faith for all to see.

(Options: Bring your candles, light them from the candles around the altar, bring your song sheets, and remain standing around the altar  
Or Remain standing with lighted candles as we continue in prayer to show that we are the body of Christ, called to bring our light to the world.)

**Taizé Hymn**      "With You, O Lord"

Pause for a couple minutes of collective silence.

**Intercessions** "O Lord, Hear My Prayer" (Jacques Berthier)

We turn in prayer to God who hears our needs.

- For an end to all wars and violence, especially in (*name of the country with the biggest struggle currently*). We pray:
- For favorable weather and bountiful crops this summer, we pray:
- For those who serve our country around the globe, we pray:
- For the safety of all travelers and vacationers, we pray:
- For the sick and those who care for them, we pray:
- For those in need of healing, we pray:
- For the lay movements in the church, especially the Aggregation of the Blessed Sacrament, the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament, we pray:

For what else shall we pray?

Spontaneous petitions from the assembly.

And now we pray the prayer that our Savior taught us.

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Benediction** "Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today, and Forever"  
(Suzanne Toolan)

Extinguish candles after reposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

**Closing Prayer** Apostles of the Eucharist Prayer  
Based on liturgical prayers from the *Roman Missal*,  
Second Edition, and the writings of  
Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1811-1868).

Presider: God of life and of light,  
your love for us surpasses all our hopes and  
desires.

Renew our resolved to gather as your people  
and to celebrate your faithful love for us  
manifested in Jesus' gift of the Eucharist.  
Feed us at the table where we long for your  
presence

more than for life itself.

May we cherish the gifts of bread and wine  
and share these blessings with our brothers and  
sisters.

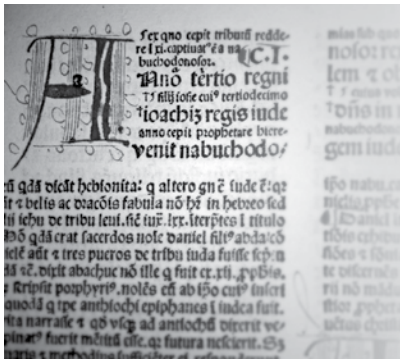
Send us, now, as witnesses of your Gospel  
into a world of fragile peace and broken promises,  
so that, formed into the likeness of your Son Jesus,  
we may worship you in spirit and truth  
and proclaim your mighty deeds throughout the  
world.

All: Amen.

**Closing Hymn** "If You Believe and I Believe"



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## BREAKING THE WORD

# HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

### Time to Eat

In my journey toward religious life and the priesthood, the image that captured my imagination, and has continued to rouse me from sleep each morning to begin a new day's tasks, is one of nourishment: feeding the people of God. The Italian in me turns immediately to the familial supper and the call of *Mangiamo* or "Let's eat."

I find it interesting that often in Sacred Scripture God reminds his people of their hunger pains as a summons to return to him and be fed spiritually and physically. For example, in Deuteronomy 8:2-3, the author puts on the lips of Moses: "Remember how for forty years now the Lord, your God, has directed all your journeying in the desert. . . . He therefore let you be afflicted with hunger, and then fed you with manna."

Hunger is what drives us to the supper table in our community refectories or family dining rooms. It too is what drives us to the altar of God's banquet of word and sacrament, the Bread of Life. "Not by bread alone does man live, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of the Lord" (Dt 8:3; see Mt 4:4). The church turns our attention to the sacrament of charity especially through John's Gospel and the Bread of Life discourse. She summons us to the eucharistic table of our Lord Jesus. *Mangiamo!*

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 in New York City, Father Anthony presently serves the U.S. Province of his congregation as Vocation Director.

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 5, 2015

*For the Sake of Christ*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Ezekiel 2:2-5**

Ezekiel receives his commission to prophesy to the community of God's people. The mission upon which he embarks is a difficult one, and God himself acknowledges this in summoning him. The task of the prophet is to share God's message, whether it is convenient or not: "Thus says the Lord God!"

#### **2 Corinthians 12:7-10**

Paul describes the struggles that he encounters while preaching the Gospel. He willingly endures the many hardships for the sake of Christ, who supplies him with all that is necessary to persevere in ministry (see 2 Cor 12:9).

#### **Mark 6:1-6**

Back in his native place of Nazareth (see Mk 1:9), Jesus finds himself unable to perform the mighty works he accomplished elsewhere (e.g., raising Jairus' daughter [Mk 5:21-43]). Furthermore, the hometown assembly in the synagogue rejects Jesus' preaching, since he is just a "local boy" seemingly known by all.

### *Sharing the Word*

Today's readings are truly human. What I mean to say is that they convey the authentic human struggles in the life of Ezekiel, Paul, and Jesus as they undertook pastoral and prophetic ministry. I am reminded with these readings of the rite of priestly ordination, when the bishop hands the newly-ordained priest the chalice and paten with the gifts of God's people to be offered in sacrifice, and says, "Understand what you do, imitate what you celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross." Understanding, imitating, and conforming are the summons to which our readings invite us.

God's call to Ezekiel was one of hardship. God told him

straightaway that his mission would be difficult: “Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you” (Ez 2:4). Ezekiel had to understand that his task was not easy and needed to be taken seriously. We need a similar understanding, for the task before us as Christians of joyfully proclaiming the Gospel is never easy in any age, but most especially in our own time of rapid secularization and the rejection of religious values. Like Ezekiel, God invites us to speak the truth with integrity and love, with the understanding that our primary task is the proclamation, “Thus says the Lord God.” We entrust the outcome of our preaching and witnessing to the Holy Spirit.

Understanding leads to imitation. Paul is worthy of our emulation as we endeavor to become missionary-disciples of the Gospel, as Pope Francis invites us. Paul recognized his own weakness — “a thorn in the flesh” — and also recognized that Christ had given him the grace he needed to persevere. In the face of opposition to the Christian lifestyle and the demands of the Gospel, we are tempted to water down the teachings of Christ or silence our own preaching. We wouldn’t want to offend anyone is the usual form this takes. On the contrary, in imitation of Paul, we need to courageously endure any and all suffering we encounter for the sake of Christ, knowing that his grace “is sufficient . . . for power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor 12:9).

Understanding our mission and imitating the great witnesses of the past as we carry it out leads us to conform our lives to Jesus Christ. This is why we say “yes” each day to Christ and follow him. With Paul, we want to be able to say “It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). In the Eucharist, Jesus nourishes us with his body and blood and teaches us with his word in order that our lives might conform to his.

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
each Sunday you summon us to the  
eucharistic table of your beloved Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ.  
We acknowledge that it is good for us  
to gather as your people.  
Mercifully shower your Holy Spirit on us  
so that we might listen attentively to your Word  
and faithfully serve him,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 12, 2015

*Called, Gifted, and Sent*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Amos 7:12-15**

The shepherd Amos was busy in Judah tending his flocks when God called him through a vision to the prophetic ministry (see Am 1:1); he was not a guild prophet unlike some others. Amos was called, gifted, and sent to proclaim God's word. Hence, he responds strongly against the condemnation leveled him by Amaziah, the priest of Bethel (see 7:10).

#### **Ephesians 1:3-14 or 1:3-10**

This Sunday we begin reading from Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. The overall theme of the letter is ecclesiology. The pericope in the lectionary is rich in cosmic imagery, a theology of redemption and divine revelation in and through Christ Jesus. If the long version is read, one will discover the promised gift of the Holy Spirit, "which is the first installment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession" (Eph 1:14).

#### **Mark 6:7-13**

Following his rejection in Nazareth, Jesus preached the kingdom elsewhere, and he called, gifted, and sent the Twelve (two by two) to further his own mighty works of healing and mercy. Jesus instructs the Twelve in their missionary endeavors.

### *Sharing the Word*

Our readings point out at least three important points: 1. God calls us to be holy; 2. God bestows his abundant gifts on us; and 3. God sends us forth to build up the kingdom. We are called, gifted, and sent.

Each of us has a common calling from God to be holy. We become holy according to our own respective vocations: as husbands



and wives, priests, religious, and as single lay people. None of us is worthy of such an invitation to be God's friends — which is basically what it means to be holy. That is what the prophet Amos was responding to in our first reading when he described his own calling (Amos 7:14b-15). Amos was a shepherd when the Lord God called him to be a prophet. He was not a scholar of the law or a member of the prophetic guild. God found him, just as he was, to be worthy of his divine friendship and called Amos to be holy in his service.

God showers us with his extravagant gifts. Paul reminded the Ephesians of how God — through Christ — lavished the riches of his grace upon them (Eph 1:7b-8). God has gifted us with the grace of adoption, of being his beloved sons and daughters, through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the sealing of the Holy Spirit (cf. Eph 1:4-5). These immeasurable gifts of God are the graces he pours into our hearts, particularly through the sacraments. These seven, grace-filled encounters with the Holy Trinity are abundant gifts. So, too, are the "milk and honey" of Sacred Scripture and the doctrine of the church.

After having called us and gifted us, God sends us forth to build the kingdom. Mark tells us that Jesus summoned the Twelve, he sent them out on mission: to exorcize demons, to anoint the sick, to bring reconciliation and peace to homes, and to preach repentance since the kingdom of God is at hand (Mk 6:11-13; cf. Mk 1:15). Building the kingdom of God is the primary task of everyone. All who are baptized are called, gifted, and sent forth in Jesus' name and power. We are to glorify God by living holy and virtuous lives. This is our task as Christians and disciples.

### *Praying the Word*

In every age, O God,  
you call men and women to your service.  
With holiness, you equip your people  
to build up your kingdom.  
May your Holy Spirit be our inspiration  
in all that we say and do.  
This we ask through the Jesus Christ our Lord  
Amen.

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 19, 2015

*Who is Jesus Christ?*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Jeremiah 23:1-6**

Jeremiah warns the leaders of God's people, the shepherds who do not tend their flock with God's love. In response to their poor leadership, God promises to "appoint shepherds for them who will shepherd them so that they need no longer fear and tremble; and none shall be missing" (Jer 23:4). The final verses of the text are a poetic promise of a Messiah, born of David's lineage.

#### **Ephesians 2:13-18**

Paul describes the reconciliation wrought by the blood of Jesus Christ. As a result of the paschal mystery, Christians now are restored to God's friendship and "have access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18).

#### **Mark 6:30-34**

These short verses set the scene for Mark's version of the feeding of the five thousand (6:35-44), which we will not encounter in the lectionary; instead, John's version of the miraculous feeding (Jn 6:1-15) is proclaimed next Sunday. In this passage, the Twelve return to Jesus and eagerly report to him their experience of pastoral ministry. Jesus invites them to take some time apart with him, but instead he encounters a vast crowd, recognizes their needs, and responds.

### *Sharing the Word*

My aunt and uncle own a cattle ranch in a town in North Dakota called Ellendale. As ranchers, they are very busy people. For those of you who are ranchers or who grew up on a farm, you know what a busy life ranchers lead. Every day, there is work to be done: fixing machinery, planting, harvesting, birthing the calves, checking on the cows out on pasture, family chores, etc. The list could easily

continue. My uncle and aunt are never at a loss for work. When I describe my uncle as a “cattle rancher,” hopefully people understand that it means more than taking care of cows.

This is sort of what’s going on in today’s readings. When Mark told the story of Jesus, he used different titles, including that of shepherd. And when Mark’s readers heard that Jesus “saw the vast crowd, [and] his heart was moved with pity for them, for they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things” (Mk 6:34), they knew what he meant: Jesus is the shepherd that the people were longing for (see Jer 23:1-6).

Our readings invite us to discover who Jesus is in our life. The liturgy gives us a few worthy recommendations: Jesus is the good shepherd; he is our reconciliation and our hope; he is a great prophet who has arisen in our midst. Nevertheless, the question remains, “Who is Jesus for you?”

Just as married people grow in their knowledge of who their spouse is, so we grow in our knowledge of who Jesus Christ is for us. Our creed is unchangeable, yes, but our relationship with Christ grows and develops if we are open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Our images and our titles for Christ might change as we get older and grow in wisdom, but our faith in Jesus Christ never changes. Our faith is solid; it is a gift from God. It is the faith of our ancestors, the faith of saints who now pray for us in the heavenly realm of God. Our faith in the Trinity and in the teachings of our Catholic Church never changes. But our relationship with Christ changes and develops as we daily draw closer to him.

### *Praying the Word*

Lord Jesus,  
each day you renew us with your mercy,  
and you continually invite us  
to deepen our friendship with you.  
Through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, your mother,  
may we come to know you  
as our Lord and Savior,  
our brother and friend.  
You live and reign forever and ever.  
Amen.

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 26, 2015

*The Hand of the Lord Feeds Us*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **2 Kings 4:42-44**

Elisha the prophet receives a gift of 20 barley loaves along with other foods and orders his servant to feed the people.

#### **Ephesians 4:1-6**

Skipping completely over the third chapter, our lectionary offers us this short pericope from the epistle wherein Paul exhorts his readers to unity in the faith as each one has been redeemed by Christ and confidently recognizes God as Father over all.

#### **John 6:1-15**

With this Sunday, the lectionary shifts from Mark's Gospel to that of John and a focus on the Bread of Life. Today's passage is the evangelist John's version of the miraculous feeding of the multitude, the only miracle story to be related in all four Gospels, albeit with some differences. The mention of barley loaves (Jn 6:9) alludes to the first reading (2 Kgs 4:42).

### *Sharing the Word*

It's Sunday morning. The alarm clock goes off. Time to get up: coffee, shower, perhaps a quick glance at the newspaper, Twitter, or TV, and then out the door to Mass. For those who have children, there is the additional responsibility of getting them up and dressed and ready for church, and this adds to the stress on what is supposed to be a day of rest.

We come to Mass, and we hear stories of ancient peoples; we sing songs whose words are perhaps not as inspiring as what's presently playing on our iPods or radios. We stand, we sit, we kneel, and we stand some more! We pray, we sing; we patiently listen to some old guy (or not so old!) preach a homily — and we all pray that it will be short and not boring. Then we stand to recite an ancient axiom —

a creed — summarizing what we believe as Catholics; we put money in a basket, and then the priest says a prayer, for what seems to be an eternity, before we eventually we receive Holy Communion and then we go our separate ways, some of us even sneaking out early before the final blessing. Does any of this sound familiar? For some of us, it can seem tiresome, routine, and maybe even pointless. Contrast this image with that of the crowd in today's Gospel!

John tells us that "a large crowd followed [Jesus]"; they were *attracted* to him and the twelve apostles "because they saw the signs [Jesus] was performing on the sick" (Jn 6:2). And so they *ran* after to him to hear his authoritative teaching. They ran after Jesus just to be with him! Do any of us so look forward to Sunday Mass that we "run" to church? Perhaps only if we're late, but then we're running out of frustration and not in excitement or attraction.

Let's get back to John's Gospel. The crowd did not feel the pangs of hunger rumbling in their stomachs as they heard Jesus preach that day. But Jesus knew that they were hungry. He knew their needs. So, taking, blessing, breaking, and giving loaves of bread and some fish to his apostles, and through them to the assembled crowd, *Jesus satisfied the hungry with word and bread*. How absolutely incredible was the miraculous incident with the loaves and fish! I know that I would have loved to been among that large crowd with Jesus that day, wouldn't you?

At every Mass, Jesus calls and gathers *us* in his presence, just as that crowd gathered around him. He breaks open for us the stories of our salvation from the Bible and reveals to us who God is and who we are: God's beloved daughters and sons, wonderfully made in his own image and likeness, and mercifully redeemed by his Son. We are so very special in God's eyes. And we are fed with the sacrament of Christ's body and blood — a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. How we approach the wondrous mystery of the Eucharist makes all the difference in our lives.

### *Praying the Word*

O God, who in this wonderful sacrament  
 have left us a memorial of your passion,  
 grant us, so to revere  
 the sacred mysteries of your body and blood  
 that we may always experience in ourselves  
 the fruits of our redemption.  
 Who live and reign with the Father  
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, forever and ever.  
 Amen.

## Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 2, 2015

*The Bread the Lord Has Given*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Exodus 16:2-4, 12-15**

The Israelites grumble against Moses and God because of their sojourn in the desert and lack of food. Moses tells the people that God will provide quail in the evening and manna, the bread from heaven, in the morning to satisfy their hunger.

#### **Ephesians 4:17, 20-24**

Paul reminds the Ephesians that they are to live differently because they are now disciples of Jesus Christ. Christians are expected to live in the truth of Christ.

#### **John 6:24-35**

Continuing with the Bread of Life discourse, Jesus invites his disciples to work not for food that perishes but for the bread that brings life everlasting, "which the Son of Man will give you" (Jn 6:27).

### *Sharing the Word*

For most parishes, this Sunday will simply be another Lord's Day in Ordinary Time, but for communities of Blessed Sacrament religious, August 2 is the solemnity of our holy founder, Saint Peter Julian Eymard. By happy grace, today's readings for the Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time are eucharistic in nature and thus also appropriate for preaching on this feast of the Apostle of the Eucharist.

The account of God's providing the Israelites food for the journey in the desert in the form of quail and manna — bread from heaven — is fascinating. In this short passage from the Book of Exodus, we see another example of God's tenderness — a eucharistic tenderness, so to speak — whereby God cares enough for his chosen people to nourish them and alleviate their hunger. The bread from

heaven thus reveals God's love and mercy. It is a moment of theophany for the Israelites.

In a similar way, the Bread of Life discourse of John's Gospel is also a theophany, whereby Jesus reveals himself to be the Son of God. Hence, many in the crowd will question his identity (see Jn 6:41-42). Only God can provide bread from heaven. How can Jesus self-identify as the bread of life? Jesus describes himself as the "bread of God . . . which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (Jn 6:33).

As believers, we have come to appreciate the awesome truth of Jesus' identity as the Son of God and eucharistic Lord. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, his soul and divinity. The risen Lord offers himself to us as food and drink to nourish and sustain us in our life's journey. The people who heard Jesus' revelation in today's Gospel struggle and seek a sign. They ask what they themselves can do to accomplish God's works (see Jn 6:28). Jesus answered them, indicating that it is not what they can do but rather what God is doing in and through Jesus for those who believe. May our eucharistic faith in the Lord Jesus help us to be ever grateful for the wonders God does in our lives each day.

### *Praying the Word*

Merciful Father,  
you gave us your only-begotten Son  
as bread for the journey of life.  
May we always hunger for the wondrous sacrament  
of Christ's body and blood  
and so come to live  
a eucharistic life of thankful praise.  
This we pray through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 9, 2015

*Food for the Journey*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **1 Kings 19:4-8**

Elijah is on the run because he is a wanted man after having slaughtered the false prophets of Baal (see 1 Kgs 18:40). He is fleeing for his life through the desert and begs God for death. Instead, God provides him with food and drink through an angel to sustain him on the journey that will take him to Mount Horeb (Sinai), where God will reveal himself in the tiny whisper (see 1 Kgs 19:12-13).

#### **Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2**

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to imitate not worldly values but instead to imitate the virtues of God himself, living in love after the example of the sacrificial love of Christ.

#### **John 6:41-51**

Jesus' teachings and revelation as the bread of life causes conflict among the crowd that has gathered to listen to him. The quote referencing Isaiah 54:13, "They shall all be taught by God" (Jn 6:45) is Jesus' response to the crowd. It also points to Jesus being God's mouthpiece (cf. Jn 6:38).

### *Sharing the Word*

As I travel, I find that I often get hungry at the airports or along the road. Traveling takes a lot of energy whether one drives, flies, walks, or takes public transit. It isn't easy being a road warrior!

It is appropriate that today's readings focus our attention on our own spiritual journey. We are all on the road to heaven, to our Father's house. In that new world, there will be no more sadness, suffering, poverty, or injustice. For Christ's victory will be fully realized in our future resurrection in him. But, in the meantime, we journey



along on the road that leads to eternal life.

Our journey began with our baptism. As we travel, we notice dangers and perils, but we can't help but notice and appreciate also the grace-filled moments God gives us daily. There are signs along the way, leading and pointing out for us the sure path that leads to God's eternal dwelling. While there is always the possibility of taking the wrong turn and heading down the road to perdition, through the sacraments we are set on the right path, the highway to heaven.

Like Elijah in the first reading, we might find our journey to be too difficult, too filled with pain and suffering. We might be tempted to lose hope in God's love and mercy as we experience the pain of losing a loved one to cancer, of being unemployed and struggling under a mountain of debt. As we look for justice in our society, we might instead be disappointed because of racism and the effects of sin and evil. And, like Elijah, we might succumb to despair and even wish for death (see 1 Kgs 19:4).

All of this can happen if we do not take the time to rest and eat along the way. Jesus is our nourishment and strength, enabling us to arise from temptation and despair. It is Christ who gives us his body as real food and his blood as real drink. He loves us so much so that he took all of our sins, all of our anxieties and fears, and nailed them to the cross. Jesus Christ is our hope and our future glory. The Eucharist is our food for the journey. "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51).

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
may the love manifested in Jesus Christ  
and celebrated in the Eucharist  
move us to respond to your gift with the gift of ourselves.  
Grant that we may build up one another in love and in truth  
for your greater glory and our salvation.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 16, 2015

*Living and Dying Gracefully*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Proverbs 9:1-6**

Wisdom is personified as a hostess who readies a banquet to which all are invited. Her food will provide sustenance to the simple and a long, fruitful life to those who eat at her table (see Prv 9:6, 11).

#### **Ephesians 5:15-20**

Paul continues exhorting the Ephesians to live a life of grace, which is different from a worldly life. The Spirit inspires believers to joyfully sing God's praises, giving him thanks through Jesus Christ.

#### **John 6:51-58**

Jesus tells the crowd the powerful consequence for those who believe in him and eat the life-giving bread from heaven: eternal life is theirs!

### *Sharing the Word*

The anti-aging industry is flourishing these days. The marketplace is filled with everything from wrinkle-removing makeup to a long list of dietary supplements one can take in an effort to delay the inevitable: old age and death. In his rule, Benedict urged his monks to keep death daily before their eyes (4:47). This is quite a contrast to our culture that wants to keep death as far away as possible. In the Gospel, Jesus promises eternal life for those who eat his flesh and drink his blood (see Jn 6:56-58). We are invited not to run fearfully away from death, but rather to embrace it gracefully with confidence in his promises.

The *Roman Missal* states that for God's people "life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven" (Preface I for the Dead). As the bread and wine are changed at Mass into Christ's body and blood,

in a like fashion, death changes us but does not bring our lives to an end. This is the message Jesus taught his audience in the bread of life discourse of John's Gospel. It is a timely message we Christians need to hear today.

Throughout a lifetime, we will receive many invitations to various events. Some will be invitations we readily accept and eagerly look forward to attending. Others will be responded to as late as possible and dreaded. Proverbs offers us an image of two invitations: one to wisdom's banquet and the other to that of folly (see Prv 9). It is an apropos image for us to ponder. Folly's invitation continues today in the worldly attractions that seek to divert our attention away from our goal of beatitude and a life of joyful grace, as Paul alludes to in the second reading. Christ invites us to the eucharistic banquet where he gives us the gift of himself in Communion and sustains us on our life's journey. Will we respond to folly's invitation or to that of Christ Jesus; to run from death or to live and die gracefully?

### *Praying the Word*

God of wisdom and mercy,  
you free us from all our sinful follies,  
and in Christ Jesus you save us and will raise us up on the last day.  
Help us to be ever mindful of your love,  
living and dying gracefully in this world  
so as to be welcomed by you in the eternal life to come.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time August 23, 2015

*To Whom Shall We Go?*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Joshua 24:1-2a, 15-17, 18b**

This brief and highly edited passage from book of the Joshua portrays the young leader of the Israelites inviting them to choose whom they will serve. Joshua has already chosen to serve the Lord, and the people will do likewise.

#### **Ephesians 5:21-32 or 5:2a, 25-32**

In the complete text, the lectionary offers us Paul's theology of marriage as being a mutual subordination of spouses out of reverence to Christ. The shorter version omits the text asking wives to be subordinate to their husbands. Both versions contain the beautiful summons of husbands to sacrificial love in imitation of Christ who loves his bride, the church.

#### **John 6:60-69**

The Gospel concludes John's Bread of Life discourse. It ends on a note of hope despite the disappointment of many who stopped following Jesus because they found his teachings too difficult to accept. Despite this, the disciples, through Peter their spokesman, confess Jesus to be the Holy One of God and declare that they have no option but to follow him.

### *Sharing the Word*

I am sure that all of us can name at least one food that we really like and another food that we don't enjoy. For me, I love sausage. I don't care what kind of sausage it is — if it is sausage, then I like it! The food I dislike is mushrooms. There is just something about eating a fungus that I can't quite stomach.

The people in today's Gospel are sort of like us when we go to

a cafeteria or when we order pizza and it includes something we like and something we don't like. They liked it when Jesus fed the hungry crowds with the loaves and the fish. They were so happy, in fact, that they wanted to crown him king (see Jn 6:15).

But while the people liked that Jesus fed them, they did not accept his teaching about the Eucharist or the implications of a eucharistic life: "I am the bread of life" (Jn 6:48) and "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day" (Jn 6:54). They ultimately wanted to change Jesus' teaching to suit their own wants and desires. They heard him preach and concluded that his way of life and the demands of his teachings were hard, and so they asked, "Who can accept it?" (Jn 6:60).

That's a good question for us. Can we accept Jesus' teaching? Do we believe that the church speaks and acts authoritatively in his name, so that what the church teaches is what the risen Christ intends for our own eternal salvation?

There are many church teachings that people find hard to accept. Some end up leaving the church, just as the disciples mentioned at the close of today's Gospel did. Our readings challenge us to be faithful disciples and Christians, to recognize the danger in being "cafeteria Catholics," picking and choosing what in Scripture or the teachings of the church we like while ignoring the more difficult and often life-giving ones.

### *Praying the Word*

Lord Jesus,  
help us to hear your word in faith  
and to believe that what your church teaches  
is what you intend for our eternal salvation.  
May your Spirit teach us  
and grant us loving and faithful hearts.  
We ask this in your holy name.  
Amen.

## Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 30, 2015

*Doers of the Word*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Deuteronomy 4:1-2, 6-8**

This passage portrays Moses telling the people of the benefits of following the law of God. A long, fruitful life in the Promised Land is what is given if one adheres to God's ordinances and decrees. God's revelation to Israel surpasses that of any other nation or people.

#### **James 1:17-18, 21b-22, 27**

The lectionary moves from Ephesians to the Letter of James. It contrasts nicely with the first reading and the Gospel. James exhorts his readers to put their faith into action, to be doers of the word and not just listeners to it.

#### **Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23**

Mark offers a glimpse of some of the customs of the Jewish people at the time he composed the first written Gospel (circa 68). Jesus challenges his audience to discern rightly between those things that are merely human customs and those which are of divine origins. He teaches that nothing that God created is unclean.

### *Sharing the Word*

The readings this Sunday are all about being people of integrity. In the Gospel, Jesus says of the crowd that they "honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me" (Mk 7:6-7a). Perhaps what Jesus is saying is that the people claimed to be faithful and pious, worshiping almighty God with their lips, but their hearts weren't in it. In other words, their actions and words didn't match their hearts' true desires, because they weren't people of integrity. The crowd claimed to be God's holy people, but their actions told a different story.

Moses had the same problem with his people. God had freed them from slavery in Egypt, and now they were on their way to the Promised Land. Yet they weren't faithful to the God who had saved them and tenderly cared for them. To remedy this, Moses reminded the people of all the wonders God had done for them in the past: God freed them from Pharaoh's oppression and gave them a land to call their own; God accompanied them along their journey; and he promised to remain with them always. Moses asked them, "For what great nation is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?" (Dt 4:7).

That's a good question for us to ponder. Because of our baptism, we are God's beloved daughters and sons. We bring delight to God's eyes as he gazes lovingly upon us. Sometimes we need to be reminded of this. It is good, for example, to remember how God, the Father of mercies, has reconciled the whole world to himself through the death and resurrection of his Son, and how the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon us for the forgiveness of our sins. Sometimes we need to be reminded of the great gifts that we have in the sacraments of the church, especially in baptism, penance, and the Eucharist.

The challenge to us this Sunday is to be doers of Christ's word and not hearers only (see Jas 1:22). As people of integrity, mercifully redeemed by Christ's precious blood, we eagerly come forward to receive the sacrament of Christ's presence among us: the bread of life and the chalice of salvation. "For what great people is there that has gods so close to it as the Lord, our God, is to us whenever we call upon him?" (Dt 4:7).

### *Praying the Word*

Father,  
we praise you for your goodness and love  
which we experience daily.  
Let us hear your word in such a way  
and take it into our hearts  
that we may courageously carry it out in our actions.  
Through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.





## EUCHARIST & CULTURE

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### Art Review



#### MARK'S SENSES

#5

John Christman, SSS

2010

Oil on canvas

Ambiguity is an important part of art.<sup>1</sup> Too much ambiguity and the artwork is so open to interpretation it becomes practically meaningless. Too little ambiguity and the artwork can become didactic. As an artist, conveying meaning within ambiguity is one of my greatest challenges. It allows for greater freedom and meaning-making on the part of the viewer. It also makes viewing the artwork with others all the more enjoyable as multiple interpretations emerge. Rarely, however, does a painting I've created change meaning for me personally due to ambiguity. I know what I intended to paint. *Mark's Senses #5*, however, is that rare exception.

In the November/December 2010 issue of *Emmanuel Magazine*, I was asked to write an article on a series of five paintings of mine entitled *Mark's Senses*. These five paintings envisioned the Gospel through Mark's intriguing use of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Hands especially became an important leitmotif in the series as Jesus' hands, which opened ears to hearing, eyes to seeing, and fed the hungry, were the same hands that were shackled by Pilate's order and then led to death.

The paintings were intended as a series, each relating to and informing the others. In fact, I even wrote in that article, "... I would never paint the fifth painting of Mark 15:1: 'They bound Jesus' as a stand alone piece. Were it to exist on its own, meaning would be too ambiguous and dark for me. That piece requires the context of the first four paintings to provide it with a clearer substance."<sup>2</sup>

Time and distance does, however, change us. And it certainly changes the way we see and understand the world around us. That is, if we are willing to engage life in a deeper and deeper manner. Pondering the Second Vatican Council's *Dignitatis Humanae* (Declaration on Religious Liberty) has therefore offered me the opportunity to see this painting in a different light.



Clearly, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God in word and deed as the Gospel of Mark so aptly describes. And in a sense, the way he navigated the often contrasting authorities of “God” and “Caesar” is instructive to all Christians.<sup>3</sup> As *Dignitatis Humanae* says, “As the Master, so, too, the apostles recognized legitimate civil authority. ‘For there is no power except from God,’ the apostle teaches, and thereafter commands: ‘Let everyone be subject to higher authorities. . . . He who resists authority resists God’s ordinance’ (Rom 13:1-5). At the same time, however, they did not hesitate to speak out against governing powers which set themselves in opposition to the holy will of God: ‘It is necessary to obey God rather than men’ (Acts 5:29). This is the way along which the martyrs and other faithful have walked through all ages and over all the earth.”<sup>4</sup>

Gazing at this painting now through the lens of *Dignitatis Humanae*, I see an admonition and a warning. The admonition is to stand for the dignity of the human person. That “the human person has a right to religious freedom” without “coercion,” as the council document so clearly argues.<sup>5</sup> To rob the human spirit of this essential aspect of being human is to strip humanity of the possibility of wholeness. It is a harm that strikes to the very heart of humanity, and its consequences are dire, not just for the person but for society as well. The warning, perhaps, could be well summarized in that famous line from Edmund Burke, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.”

Thus, *Dignitatis Humanae* speaks of “martyrs” and “faithful” women and men who have given their lives through the years by standing up for the truth of their faith.<sup>6</sup> Our faith is truly a gift. At its best, it brings hope into the most hopeless of circumstances; love into the most callous and cold environments’ mercy into hearts hardened by hate and apathy. Our faith welcomes the marginalized to the center and creates communion where there is conflict. Indeed, our religious freedom is well worth our sacrifice and witness.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Susan Ross, *Extravagant Affections: A Feminist Sacramental Theology*. (New York: Continuum, 1998), 64-93. I am greatly indebted to Susan Ross for her brilliant reflection of the importance of ambiguity is articulating the importance of ambiguity in art.

<sup>2</sup> John Christman, “Mark’s Senses” *Emmanuel* 116 (2010), 530-531.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *Dignitatis Humanae* [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651207\\_dignitatis-humanae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651207_dignitatis-humanae_en.html) accessed April 27, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.



**WILCO:ALPHA  
MIKE FOXTROT  
– RARE TRACKS  
1994-2014  
Nonesuch, 2014**

John Christman, SSS

## Music Review

Wilco recently made the news when it cancelled a show in Indianapolis in protest to the “Indiana Religious Freedom Restoration Act” which they explained, saying it “feels like thinly disguised legal discrimination to us.”<sup>1</sup> At first glance, not the kind of band one might expect to find reviewed in a religious magazine. But first impressions can often be erroneous. And Wilco’s engagement with religious subjects has spanned its career, just like this new collection of rare and live songs.

*Alpha Mike Foxtrot: Rare Tracks 1994-2014* contains 77 songs and clocks in at an impressive 4 hours and 41 minutes of music. It spans their career thus far from its alternative country roots to their genre skipping through classic guitar rock and experimental music and an assortment of other delightful styles. Each song is imbued with singer/songwriter Jeff Tweedy’s characteristic scratchy-voiced longing. An impassioned music lover and tremendously gifted songwriter, Tweedy has a gift for blending the traditional and the new. Poetic turns of phrase and acoustic guitar intermingle with creative compositions and perfectly chosen instrumentations. The band itself goes through a number of dramatic personnel changes, lending an even greater diversity of sound. Always technically superior without losing their edge, Wilco has garnered much critical and public attention over the years. This new album offers a good opportunity to get acquainted with the development of their sound. Live and acoustic versions of their arrangements of unrecorded Woody Guthrie songs stand out as do the classic rock sounds from their Grammy nominated album *Sky Blue Sky*.

But the religious songs still compel and provide much food for thought. From the edgy live version of “Theologians” with its stinging refrain, “Theologians don’t know nothing about my soul.” to gospel oriented songs like “One True Vine” which the great gospel singer Mavis Staples made her own. What’s impressive is their continued engagement with Christianity and faith on a deeper level. The question becomes not simply whether one believes in God or not...but what comes afterward in a life lived with those choices. Of course, one of their most popular and most religious songs is entitled “Jesus, etc...” which other artists like Norah Jones have covered. This album has an exceptional live rendition of this song. Initially released shortly after 9/11, the song became something of a cathartic meditation on that tragedy. The very first line “Jesus, don’t cry...” sets the heart-wrenching tone. It’s a stunning song with an almost timeless quality. The crowd singing along to its sad lyrics attests to this. Even if one is not persuaded to buy four discs of music... this one track is worth a download. But to the more intrepid music lover, the whole collection will certainly not disappoint.

<sup>1</sup> <http://wilcoworld.net/#!/shows/> accessed March 31, 2015

## Poetry

### Feeding the Five Thousand

barley bread poor,  
they came seeking someone,  
anyone who would feed them  
and, so, ease their survival . . .  
that is what mere surviving does —  
it blots out life like a desert sun . . .  
fed and satisfied  
yet they missed the food of story  
telling now of their passover, their exodus  
thus, there was no question to ask  
what such extravagance might be

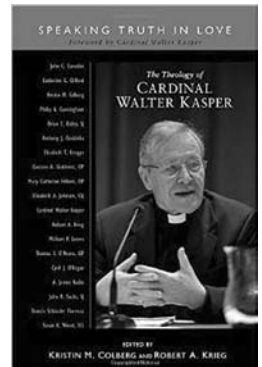
Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

## Book Reviews

The overall impact of reading this book, for this reviewer at least, was akin to what might be appropriately called “an Emmaus experience.” Not until the last 50 of its 300-plus pages does the reader “hear” from Kasper himself. And it’s well worth the wait!

In the first 200 pages of the volume, 15 eminently qualified and well known theologians from North American universities each offers his or her tributes to the enormously rich theological “body of work” that Kasper has compiled during his nearly 60 year academic and ecclesiastical career. The list is a veritable “Who’s Who” of respected scholars — for example, Elizabeth Johnson (Fordham University), Francis Schüssler Fiorenza (Harvard Divinity School), Mary Catherine Hilker (University of Notre Dame), William P. Loewe (The Catholic University of America), Susan K. Wood (Marquette University), John R. Sachs (Boston College), and Catherine Clifford (Saint Paul University, Ottawa). The occasion for the tributes was a conference honoring Kasper, in his presence, at the University of Notre Dame in Indiana from April 25-27, 2013, on the occasion of his 80th birthday.

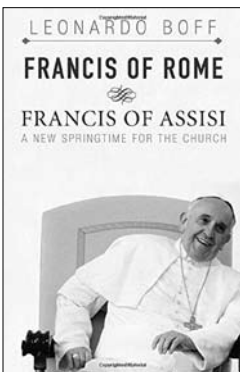
The 15 tributes are almost evenly divided into two sections, the first



**THE THEOLOGY  
OF CARDINAL  
WALTER KASPER:  
SPEAKING  
TRUTH IN LOVE.**  
Edited by Kristin  
M. Colberg and  
Robert A. Krieg.  
Collegeville,  
Minnesota: The  
Liturgical Press,  
2014  
330 pp., \$29.95

titled "God, Freedom, and History," and the second, "The Church, Ecumenism, and Christian-Jewish Relations." Kasper ends the second section with his own reflection on "How to Do Theology Today" and completes the book in Section Three with two poignant essays, "Forgiveness and the Purification of Memory" and "Renewal from the Source: The Interpretation and Reception of the Second Vatican Council," followed by a homily, "Be Joyful in Hope."

As stated earlier, the reading of this book may indeed trigger "an Emmaus experience" for the reader, especially in terms of how Cardinal Kasper's approach to theology may show itself as so much more than one had hoped for or imagined. And even though the Emmaus analogy may seem, to some, to limp, in the view of this reviewer, Kasper's approach can very well be an entry into a rich religious/theological experience. The four contributions by Kasper himself that comprise the last 50 pages of the volume, it should be noted, are previously unpublished texts that, together with the tributes of the 15 theologians, comprise a veritable treasure house of what is the subtitle of the book, "Speaking Truth in Love" on whatever road we happen to be travelling.



Conrad T. Gromada, PhD  
Professor Emeritus  
Ursuline College  
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**FRANCIS OF  
ROME AND  
FRANCIS OF  
ASSISI:  
A NEW  
SPRINGTIME  
FOR THE  
CHURCH.**  
Leonardo Boff.  
Translated by  
Dinah Livingston.  
Maryknoll, New  
York: Orbis Books,  
2014  
168 pp., \$18.00

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In this book, Leonardo Boff, explores what he sees as the close connection between the two Francises — Francis of Assisi and Pope Francis. The present pope had already surprised the world, not only by choosing the name Francis, but also by leading the world into the spirituality of Francis of Assisi with a clear vision, agenda, and a sense of mission. The spirit of Saint Francis calls the church to lead a life of simplicity, poverty, and humility, to promote peace, and to adopt an ecological consciousness. In embracing these values, Pope Francis has unleashed enormous hopes of a new springtime for the church. Coming from outside the framework of European Christendom, Pope Francis goes against all the protocols of traditions, palaces, and internal power disputes, in order to engage in a "re-founding experience" of the simple church of Christ which was established on charity.

Inspired by these connections between the two Francises, Boff engages himself in a project of bringing together these two extraordinary figures. The author must be applauded for this concise but enormous work contributing once again to the world of liberation theology. Boff's unique contribution lies in his historical, theological, and cultural analysis of several ecclesiological perspectives, with the sole purpose of presenting the world with the genuine innovation of two revolutionary men named Francis. Inspired by these two figures, the author also challenges his readers to get away from Eurocentric, ecclesio-centric, Vatican-centric, and papal-centric attitudes.

It is also thought-provoking to note that Boff places his hope and confidence in the church which is accompanied by the work and grace of the Spirit. Jesus, who promised Peter that he would build his church on that rock, will ensure that his church will never fail. Accompanied by Christ and the Spirit, the church is on a pilgrimage, journeying with strength and confidence. Toward this end, the present leadership under the aegis of Pope Francis, it is hoped, will bring about "a break with the past to bring in the new" in our pilgrimage of trust. Coming from the "ends of the earth," Pope Francis is focused on his greater commitment in bringing about the change in the life of the church toward simplicity and humility.

From a critical point of view, in Part III of the book which is entitled, "The Reform of the Papacy by Francis," the author has certain expectations which are perhaps not accessible within the limited space and time available to Pope Francis. A pope who functions on one "lung," with all his weakness and frailties, is expected to achieve a paradigm shift which is not going to happen "overnight." While it is true that nothing is impossible to God, leading the church back to its very initial foundations of the first Christian community is the "unfinished agenda" toward which everyone has a committed responsibility. Pope Francis can be successful only when the cardinals, bishops, priests, religious, and the laity around the world also begin to sense the simplicity and poverty of both Francises, and are ready to live the very life of Christ.

Justin Chawkan, SSS  
Lecturer of Dogmatic and Moral Theology  
Superior, Blessed Sacrament Community  
Colombo, Sri Lanka



## EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

Gloria Jung

I am a lay director for the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament, an animator for Associate formation, coordinator of extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion and facilitator for an adult Catechism study group among other duties. My desire has been to do good and to serve the needs of my family, parish, and the mission of the Catholic Church. Working in many capacities at the parish of Saint Vincent De Paul in Holiday, Florida, I have been challenged at times at how to best balance my life. The decision to surrender and pray to the Holy Spirit and Jesus in the Eucharist to accomplish the work that pleases God was the right decision for me. When life seems crazy, I have tried some combination of work and prayer and to not make them exclusive of each other.

As a pro-life advocate, I pray that my eyes be open to find all things in light of the Eucharist, and the mystery of the cross. In this way I hope that I might see a culture of life, to endure insults happily, be blessed by the rain of a sidewalk prayer vigil, to be protected from objects of harm, and to be blessed for the sake of righteousness in the hope that through my prayers hardened hearts will be softened to experience mercy, forgiveness and peace. The Eucharist challenges me to see the face of God in everyone.

I have also begun to find joy in daily challenges and accepting what Jesus wishes to teach me. I see God's humor more often. I now look for meaning through a Eucharistic lens. Most recently, the Holy Spirit has opened my eyes to the idea of becoming leaven for our brothers and sisters. My encounters with others become a mission to bring God's people to the Eucharist within a parish community living in unity as the body of Christ.

Today more than ever there is a need for a renewed faith in the Holy Eucharist for the whole world. It strengthens our resolve and is a commitment to selfless love.

Let the Eucharist be the heart of our lives defining our actions and emanating from our soul to the people we encounter. The Holy Father tells us, "*The Holy spirit gives us joy.*" Do all things with joy and love in the Eucharist.

*"Happy is the soul that knows how to find Jesus in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in all things!"*  
(Saint Peter Julian Eymard)

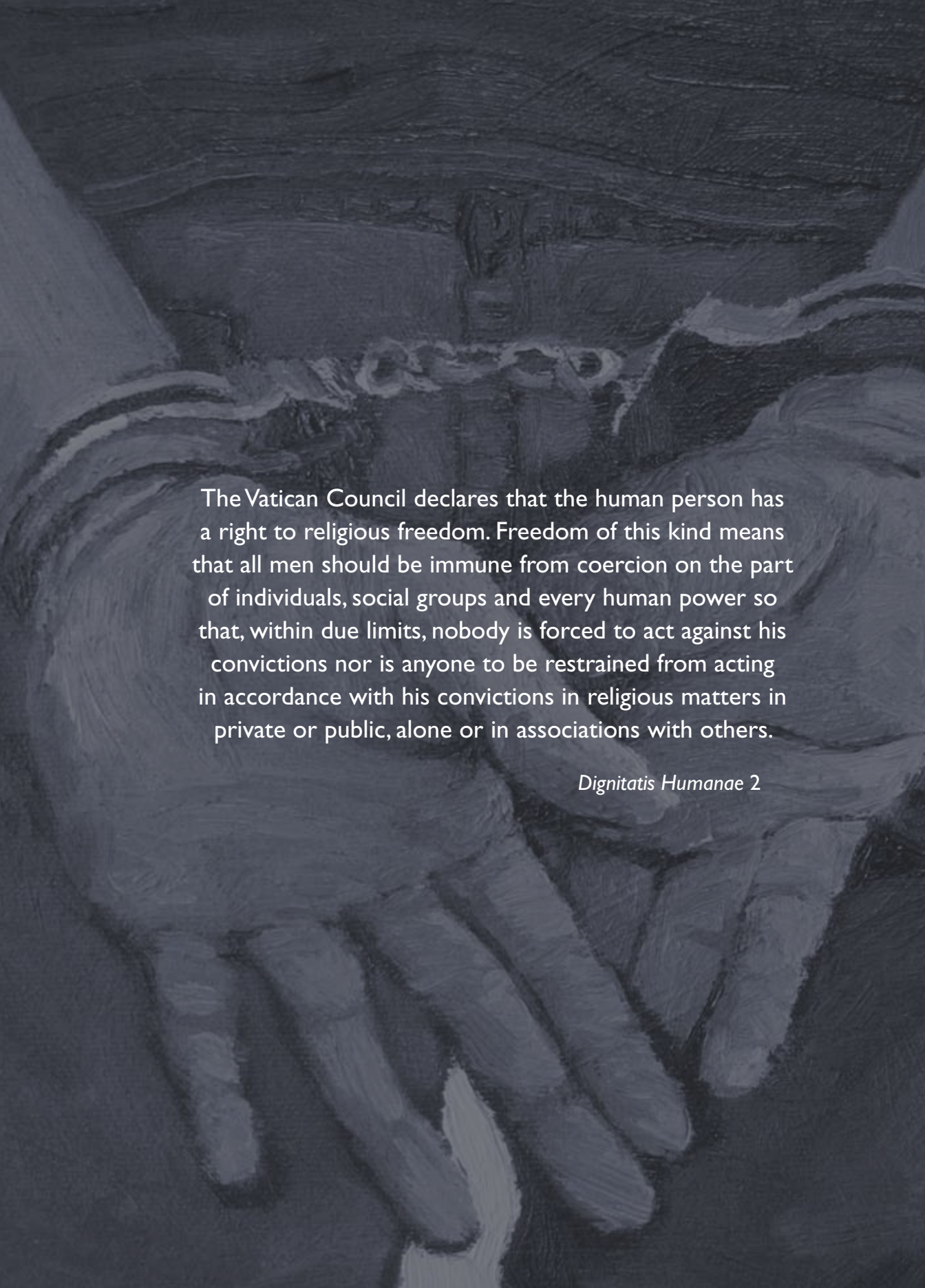




Juan José, dedicated catechist of El Salvador, and his family, representative of so many Salvadorans who still today revere the memory of Monseñor Romero.

We learn to see the face of Christ that also is the face of a suffering human being, the face of the crucified, the face of the poor, the face of a saint, and the face of every person.

Archbishop Oscar Romero



The Vatican Council declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. Freedom of this kind means that all men should be immune from coercion on the part of individuals, social groups and every human power so that, within due limits, nobody is forced to act against his convictions nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his convictions in religious matters in private or public, alone or in associations with others.

*Dignitatis Humanae 2*