

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

November/December 2017



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EDITOR
ART DIRECTOR/MANAGER
LAYOUT
CIRCULATION MANAGER
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

Anthony Schueller, SSS
John Christman, SSS
Kay Vincent
Elizabeth Zaller
Patrick Riley
John Christman, SSS;
Keith Chevalier

BOARD

Lisa Marie Belz, OSU
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BACK COVER

emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 123 Number 6



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FROM THE EDITOR

Emmanuel's late longtime editor Father Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS, often told his audiences with a smile, "My home is in the Gospel of Luke." And then he would add, "But I have a very nice condo in the Gospel of Mark!" That's nice to know as we soon begin a new liturgical year in which Mark will be the principal evangelist for the Church's public prayer and reflection.

Gene, a respected biblical scholar and a cherished confrère, said and wrote many memorable things. One of the recurring themes in the years before his untimely death in November 2008 was "The Word of God made flesh made Eucharist." This sentence touches on a powerful truth: that God redeems through self-emptying love. In the sublime Christmas hymn, we hear:

O magnum mysterium,
et admirabile sacramentum. . . .
O great mystery,
and wonderful sacrament,
that animals should see the new-born Lord
lying in a manger!
Blessed is the Virgin whose womb
was worthy to bear our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Christian soteriology is incarnational. Along with the dying and rising of Jesus, it is the heart of the Good News. Israel's God was not a distant, unmoved being, but one who constantly reached out to his creation in love and mercy. This entailed *a relentless movement downward* on the part of God, as Paul instructs the church at Philippi: ". . . Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even

death on a cross" (Phil 2:5-8).

In a homily in the Square of Our Lady of Loreto on October 4, 2012, Pope Benedict XVI said: "The incarnation of the Son of God speaks to us of how important we are to God and God to us." And elsewhere: "God's dialogue with us becomes truly human since God conducts his part as man" (*Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* (2007)). What was inconceivable to the human mind, that divinity should assume humanity, became crucial to God's plan of redemption.

This *relentless movement of God downward* continues in the Eucharist, where lowly bread and wine, not frail humanity, reveal his presence and his saving power. Pope Francis expresses it in this way: "A God who draws near out of love walks with his people, and this walk comes to an unimaginable point. We could never have imagined that the same Lord would become one of us and walk with us, be present with us, present in his Church, present in the Eucharist, present in his word, present in the poor. . . . And this is closeness: the shepherd close to his flock, close to his sheep, whom he knows, one by one."

As Christ in the incarnation and in the Eucharist empties himself and draws near to us, his grace at work in us enables us to do the same, to be "gift" to him and to others!

In This Issue

I believe you will find this issue to be quite rich. There are theological works, reflections on family life and on priestly ministry in the light of the Eucharist, and meditations for the close of the year, the start of the new liturgical year, and the coming Advent season and Christmas. Enjoy!



Anthony Schueller, SSS



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

The Renewing Power of the Eucharist

by Mark C. McCann

Earthly places and journeys reveal our powerful encounter with God in the Eucharist, where we are sealed as God's own and strengthened for the journey of faith.

Mark C. McCann is a writer and ministry consultant, as well as a former director of religious education and associate director of youth ministry for the Diocese of Norwich, Connecticut. He previously authored "Rethinking Eucharist: A Relational Approach to First Communion Preparation" in the March/April 2017 issue. More information about his work can be found at wordsvisions.com.

Recently my wife, my girls, and I took a little mini-vacation to Newport, Rhode Island, to soak up the sites, smell the salty sea air, and push the reset button on our busy lives. To be honest, all of us really needed this time away. The stresses of school and work, the worries about the fast-approaching future, and the ongoing buffeting of the enemy upon our lives were truly taking a toll on our family. Despite a few bumps along the way, the whole experience turned out to be a time of genuine renewal for all of us.

Our little respite from the woes of the world was a wonderful reminder of the power of the Eucharist. The time together was not just a memory in the making; it was a renewal of the bond we share as a family and an expression of thankfulness for the love we have experienced through the years. Like the Eucharist, it was a moment that tied present to the past, offering hope for the future we share with one another in Christ.

Fading Glory, Eternal Thanksgiving

Like so many visitors to Newport, we decided to tour the famous Breakers Mansion. It was certainly one of the most magnificent buildings we had ever seen, a grand monument to the Gilded Age. Yet as I walked through the many elaborately-constructed rooms, listening to the history of the family who built the mansion, I was reminded of how fleeting is the glory of humanity compared to the eternal glory of the Savior. All the rich and powerful family members had passed into history barely remembered, and the home that once hosted the most opulent affairs of any age had become a relic of a bygone era.

In contrast, the age of our salvation is as eternal as the loving mind of our Creator — the story of the cross never fading from our collective memory and the power of our redemption experienced in every celebration of the Eucharist we share as Church. It is not simply an event we recall with fondness, remembering with love the sacrifice of our Savior. Through the Eucharist, we are reconnected to the once-for-all sacrifice that took away our sins and opened the gates of heaven for us. We experience the eternal presence of Christ in our midst each and every time we come to the table. As Pope Francis has said:

“When we celebrate the Mass, we don’t accomplish a representation of the Last Supper: no, it is not a representation. It is something else: it is the Last Supper itself. It is to really live once more the passion and the redeeming death of the Lord. It is a theophany: the Lord is made present on the altar to be offered to the Father for the salvation of the world. We hear or we say, ‘But, I can’t now. I have to go to Mass. I have to go to hear Mass.’ The Mass is not ‘heard,’ it is participated in; and it is a participation in this theophany, in this mystery of the presence of the Lord among us” (“Rediscover a ‘Sense of the Sacred’ at Mass,” excerpts from February 10, 2017, homily).

The story of the cross never fades from our collective memory and the power of our redemption is experienced in every Eucharist.

I have no need for an earthly mansion, for I look forward one day to seeing the mansion that Jesus has reserved for me, constructed by the love that bled and died on that cross over two-thousand years ago. There, I and all who believe will share forever in offering eternal thanks to the God who loved us to the full. And each time I partake of the Eucharist, I am transported to that heavenly place where my resurrected Savior has set me free by his perfect sacrifice.

A Walk of Faith, A Flesh and Blood Reality

Newport is known for “The Cliff Walk,” a 3.5-mile trail that borders the shoreline and offers peeks of the mansions and magnificent views of the bay. It was a peaceful trek along the paved walkway as we watched the tourists snapping selfies and sneaking down to the rocks to get closer to the water.

The most wonderful sight for me, however, was seeing my teenage daughters walking hand in hand, talking, laughing, and singing together as we made our way on the path along the shore. I am sure many have wished to live in one of the huge homes bordering the walk with perfect views of the clear blue waters, but I was captivated



by the grace of a family moment so overwhelming that it satisfied my deepest longing for peace and contentment.

The Communion table offers us a walk along the path of heaven's shores, with views of our eternal home and a glimpse into the moment when heaven touched earth in the purest and most profound way. In the Eucharist, this grace-filled act of love becomes our hearts' deepest desire as the simplest objects touch our souls in a place no earthly wealth could ever reach.

Bread and wine, broken and poured out, are transformed into the very person of Christ, whose body and blood were offered in sacrifice for all our sins. In the act of offering and transubstantiation, we are captured in the holiest of moments as heaven's satisfaction for sin becomes our greatest gift.

Faults Forgiven, Memories Sealed

It is the simple joy of being together and building memories as a family that means so much to me. But in those times when tensions flare and we find ourselves at a bump in the road on the journey, it can seem that the beautiful moments are overshadowed by pain and division. But then a short drive in silence to give us time to cool off leads to reflection and reconciliation, and we find ourselves wrapped up in the sweet surrender of fellowship where harsh words spoken too quickly give way to laughter and warmth once more.

There is power in those Smartphone camera shots of pancake breakfasts and crispy chicken dinners. There is joy in recalling a funny moment from the past that allows us to laugh at our humanity. And there is contentment in knowing that the within the arms of our family there is a safe place where our flaws are forgiven and our strengths can be celebrated with joy.

In the Eucharist, we are part of a family of faith where we are accepted despite our faults and frailties, where brothers and sisters encourage us to be all that we can be in Christ, and where together, as the people of God, we are strengthened by grace for our earthly journey toward heaven. In this shared experience, we meet the one who walks the road of life with us, touching our lives with his perfect presence. As our Holy Father has said:

"Jesus, this evening . . . gives himself to us in the Eucharist, shares in our journey, indeed he makes himself food, the true food that sustains our life also in moments when the road becomes hard-going and

obstacles slow our steps. And in the Eucharist, the Lord makes us walk on his road, that of service, of sharing, of giving; and if it is shared, that little we have, that little we are becomes riches. For the power of God — which is the power of love — comes down into our poverty to transform it” (excerpts from May 30, 2013, Corpus Christi homily).

The Eucharist and Coming Home

On the drive home from Newport, we had to pass through the little town where my wife and I lived when we were first married. It evoked a number of feelings: joy in remembering those precious early years when we were just beginning to get to know each other, sadness in seeing how much things had changed over the years, regret over decisions we had made that closed some doors in order to open others, and determination to fill the time before us with greater purpose and joy.

At Eucharist, we are part of a family of faith where we are accepted despite our faults, where we encourage each other to be all that we can be in Christ.

The experience made me realize that the cherished lean years had taught me powerful truths: that I am blessed by my family; that no matter what happens in life God is there to see us through; and that in the end, I am left with gratitude for all I have been given.

It is overwhelming that we refer to the Lord’s Supper as *Eucharist*, “thanksgiving.” In remembering the perfect act of love by Jesus Christ, in experiencing our salvation as a Church, and in reconnecting to God’s love story that began in eternity and continues into time without end, we experience a joy that is so complete, so perfect, and so wonderful that the only response possible is thanksgiving and gratitude.

In the Eucharist, we find tender meaning in our past, heavenly power in our present, and unwavering hope in our future. Just as I need to renew my appreciation of and my commitment to my family through times of reflection and recommitment, so, too, must I and all of us renew the bond we share with one another and with Christ through the Eucharist each time we celebrate the sacrament.

My prayer is that we will forever treasure our families, our life journeys, our Church, and our faith-filled participation in the Eucharist. And I pray, too, that our response will always be what Eucharist is all about — thanksgiving and gratitude.





EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

See You in the Eucharist

by Damian J. Ference

Through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, Christ relates to us in and through our senses. And where he is, there is the Church.

Father Damian J. Ference is a priest of the Diocese of Cleveland. He serves at Borromeo Seminary, Wickliffe, Ohio, as director of human formation and assistant professor of philosophy. He has published articles in many periodicals, including *America*, *The Priest*, *Pastoral Life*, *U.S. Catholic*, and *Worship*. He is the founder and director of the Tolle Lege Summer Institute and a lifetime member of the Flannery O'Connor Society. He can be reached at @frference.

I made my 2017 annual retreat in the Arizona desert at Our Lady of Solitude Monastery. It was day four of a five-day retreat, and I was making my second holy hour of the day. It was around noon. The next day would be the one-year anniversary of my dad's death, and Reverend Mother told me that she would switch the Mass intention for that day so that I could offer the Mass for my dad. My dad was almost 92 when he died. He lived a good life and died peacefully in his sleep, but I still missed him.

Human Need and Longing

Not wanting to keep anything from the Lord who was before me in the Blessed Sacrament, I started to tell him about my grief, my longing, and my heartache. And when I say that I started telling him, I mean it. No one else was in the chapel but me, and some of my best prayer happens when I speak to the Lord about what's actually going on in my heart, aloud, just like I would speak to you if I were in your presence. So I began telling Jesus about my troubles.

My dad spent the last few years of his life in a good Catholic nursing home. I would visit him at least twice a week, sometimes more. But I was always there on my day off and Sunday afternoons. During the baseball season, he would sit in his wheelchair, about eight inches away from the television due to his macular degeneration, and I would take a nap on his bed while he watched the Cleveland Indians.

I didn't have to say much. Simply being in my dad's presence was comforting to me, and I believe that my presence was comforting to him. But now I missed his humor, his kindness, his patience, and

his love. I missed telling him about all the things that I saw that he couldn't see for himself, due to his poor vision. I missed shaking his hand, giving him a hug, and hearing his voice. And that day, during that holy hour, I was really missing his physicality, his bodily presence in my life. If you've experienced the death of a loved one, you know what I'm talking about.

So I was telling Jesus about how badly I missed my dad when it occurred to me that I also missed my friends and my family. After all, I was alone in a chapel in the middle of the desert, two-thousand miles away from home. Again, I told Jesus that I longed for physicality, incarnate love, and flesh, not some abstract, impersonal, spiritual consolation. I am a human being, not an angel, and the way human beings come to know the world and come to know love is first through the senses.

The way Jesus makes himself known to us in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, is never simply spiritual. It is always incarnational.

So, I wanted that, and I told the Lord as much. Here's what I wrote in my journal, "I don't need any more abstract love; I need flesh!" After all, he's the one who instructed us, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Lk 11:9). And I wanted to take him at his word!

God's Response in the Sacraments

The Lord answered immediately. "What am I?" he said. It didn't take me long to figure out what he meant. Who was I crying out to anyway? It's not as if my eyes were closed as to cut myself off from the world and distance myself from my body. No, I was sitting in the third pew, looking up to the monstrance with tears in my eyes and a tremble in my voice. And the Lord was looking back to me and speaking to me.

Again, here's what I wrote in my journal after the fact: "I was speaking to Jesus in the flesh — in his body and blood in the Eucharist. No, he didn't come down and hug me at that moment, but he was here, and he is here. He's always here. I've known this fact, but I've forgotten it, or at least I didn't think about it in this way before."

Here's what I meant. The way that Jesus makes himself known to us in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist, is never simply spiritual. It is always incarnational. His sacramental presence is for human beings with bodies, not for angels, which are pure spirits. We human beings



come to know the spiritual through the material, which is why the sacraments all have some material quality to them — be it water, oil, bread, wine, or human bodies. (The ability to speak and to hear also hold privileged places in the sacramental life as well, as words are spoken and heard for baptism, absolution, consecration, confirmation, and making vows or promises.)

Jesus promised that he would always be with us, and he has kept that promise in a unique and incarnate way in his eucharistic presence. He's not just present spiritually, but sacramentally, that is, in a way that can be known by the senses, a bodily sort of knowing.

But why is this bodily knowing so important? Because it offers us proof that God is with us. That Emmanuel isn't a fabrication or a joke. That afternoon on retreat I needed something that I could see, feel, and touch that would let me know that I wasn't alone and that I was loved. And that "something" was God truly present in the Eucharist. His presence was real and tangible, not to my senses necessarily, but through my senses absolutely.

Wherever Christ the head is, there is the Church also.

Then I started thinking more about Jesus and his eucharistic presence and how the body of Christ "thing" works. If Jesus is the head and we are his body, then somehow every part of his body is somehow connected to him. And if we use the traditional categories of the body of Christ — *militant* (the church on earth), *suffering* (those being purified by Christ's love in purgatory), and *triumphant* (those who are in union with God in heaven) — and if we believe that Christ is always with his Church like a bridegroom is always in union with his bride, then it must be the case that somehow, wherever Jesus is, so, too, is his Church.

This means that when I am at Mass or in the presence of the Eucharist in adoration, somehow, whether my dad is in purgatory or in heaven, I am connected to him in a very real, sacramental way, as the Eucharist is our participation here on earth of the wedding feast that is heaven itself.

And there's more. I have a friend who discerned a vocation with the Dominicans for about a year. She wasn't able to talk on the phone much and rarely could have visitors during that year of postulancy,

but she could write letters. And when she wrote me, she would end her letters by saying, "I'll see you in the Eucharist!"

I always liked when she wrote those words to me, but on that afternoon of my annual retreat, in the middle of the Arizona desert, those words convicted me of a profound truth about the Eucharist that I had not yet considered. That is, wherever the Eucharist is offered, celebrated, adored, and lived, both Christ and his Church are present. And if you listen closely to each of the Eucharistic Prayers, you will hear it.

We always pray for the living and the deceased, and we ask for the intercession of the angels and saints. It's all there. We are all there. It's the furthest thing from lonely. It's the furthest thing from isolation. It's the furthest thing from abstraction or depersonalization. It is God. It is family. It is comfort. It is intimacy. It is the Eucharist, Christ's real presence, along with his Church.

And I'll see you in it.



In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with W, V, X, Y, and Z are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during November and December.



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Archbishop Oscar Romero: Martyr of the Order of Zechariah

by Carlos X. Colorado

Archbishop Oscar Romero was martyred for his courageous witness to the Gospel call for justice and reconciliation in his native El Salvador.

Carlos X. Colorado is an U.S. attorney of Salvadoran ancestry who maintains a blog on the cause of canonization of Archbishop Oscar Romero, *Super Martyrio* at policarpi.blogspot.com.

The two times that Jesus mentions the figure of Zechariah in the Gospels, he emphasizes his death *“between the sanctuary and the altar of the sacrifices”* (see Mt 23:35 and Lk 11:51). Likewise, when Pope John Paul II referred to Blessed Oscar Romero, he emphasized that he had been *“murdered at the altar during the celebration of the eucharistic sacrifice.”* His death before the altar of the Lord eternally unites the Salvadoran martyr with the ancient Hebrew prophet and highlights the example cited by Christ: the line of martyrs of the order of Zechariah.

This year of the centenary of Romero’s birth also situates him in the context of millennial figures who cast their shadows across the ages.

It helps to recall the context in which Christ mentions Zechariah. He cites his name admonishing the Jews for the injustices they have committed against the prophets sent by God, asserting that they must answer for their blood, *“from righteous Abel to Zechariah”* (Mt 23:33-36).

Like the assassination of Blessed Romero, the death of Zechariah had been left in impunity, but he was still alive among the people of the time of Jesus. In current language, we would say that his name persisted in *“historical memory,”* just as Romero, whose death has never been adjudicated but whose name inspires the popular imagination.

Both cases are intimately connected with justice — whether divine or human. When Zechariah was stoned by agents of the king, whose sins the prophet had denounced — his last words were an exhortation *“that the Lord may see and avenge”* (2 Chr 24:22). His blood boiled in denunciation of the crime. In the case of Romero, his last words asked for mercy for the assassins. The two prophets show us the two sides of

divine justice, which cannot be separated from mercy.

In citing the example of Zechariah, Christ also warns of Christian persecution: "Some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city" (Mt 23:34). Blessed Romero similarly preached: "Christ invites us not to be afraid of persecution because . . . he who commits himself to the poor must suffer the same fate . . . to be disappeared, to be tortured, to be captured, to turn up as a corpse" (February 17, 1980).

There are multiple parallels between the two cases: Zechariah came from a family that favored the king, but had a change of heart when the king abandoned the faith; Romero came from a Church historically allied with power, but that changed when the government took up an unjust path. Like Romero, Zechariah was a reforming prophet, a prophet who sought to unmask idolatries, and who warned of the consequences of profaning religion. In Jesus' time, Zechariah was the most prominent "new martyr" in the Hebrew Bible as Romero is today.

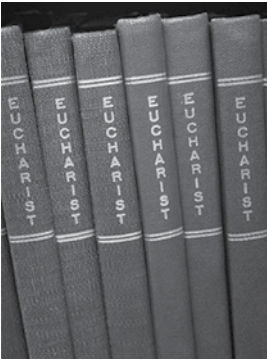
Romero's death before the altar of the Lord eternally unites the Salvadoran martyr with the ancient Jewish prophet.

Zechariah was a "millennial" martyr whose impact resounded in Jesus' time 800 years after his death. Three aspects of martyrdom produce the same effect in Romero: 1. *The place*: we have already seen how both characters were killed in the sacred space of the temple; 2. *The time*: Zechariah on the Day of Atonement and Romero during the Mass, "the sacrifice of forgiveness and reconciliation" (Saint John Paul II); 3. *The person*: Zechariah was high priest, judge, and prophet; Romero, as archbishop, exercised a triple function: priestly; hierarchical-episcopal; and he became "the conscience of the country," in the words of Salvadoran President Jose Napoleon Duarte.

Romero is among only three bishops killed at the altar. The other two, Stanislaus, the bishop of Krakow (1079), and Thomas Becket, the archbishop of Canterbury (1170), have been canonized already. Both became patriarchs of their churches and heroes of their nations, whose legacies have reverberated through the centuries in society, culture, and religion.

Martyrs like Romero, who are also prophetic characters eliminated due to their inconvenience as witnesses for the kingdom in the sacrosanct space of the temple, have earned their place in the tradition of Zechariah.





EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Romano Guardini on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

The Eucharist is an action of the risen Lord and his mystical body, the Church. Guardini brought this all-important dimension of Catholic sacramental worship back into focus and helped pave the way for the liturgical reforms of Vatican II.

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

Romano Guardini (1885-1968) has been called the “father of the twentieth-century Church.”¹ He was a German Catholic theologian whose writings on the liturgy in many ways set the stage for the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Guardini was born of Italian parents in Verona, Italy, immigrated with his parents to Mainz, Germany, at an early age, and became a German citizen in 1911. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1910, received his PhD in theology in 1915, and spent the next five years in pastoral care and hospital work. In 1920, he began writing his *Habilitationschrift* in dogmatic theology, a second dissertation necessary to teach in a German university. In 1923, he began teaching theology at the Friedrich Wilhelm University in Berlin and continued in that position until the Nazis dismissed him in 1939. After the war, he accepted a position at the University of Munich in 1948 and taught there until his death in 1968.

A prolific author, he wrote on a wide range of topics such as meditation and prayer, literature and art, education and philosophy, dogmatic and liturgical theology. His many writings include *The Church and the Catholic* (1935), *The Death of Socrates* (1948), *The Lord* (1954), *The End of the Modern World* (1956), and *The Wisdom of the Psalms* (1968). His first book, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (1918), offers much wisdom and insight into the nature of the Eucharist.²

Guardini's Spiritual Outlook

Guardini's spiritual outlook can best be understood by looking at the distinction he draws between personal and liturgical prayer. "Personal prayer and the liturgy are the two main spheres of religious life, each one having its own roots and character and each its unique significance. In personal prayer, man is alone with God and himself. The liturgy, however, is a united prayer of the Christian community. In the liturgy, it is not *I* but *we*; and the *we* does not merely signify that many individuals are congregated. It is not a sum of individuals but a wholeness: the Church."³ Man's spiritual life, in other words, possesses both personal and corporate aspects.

As human beings, we relate to God both as unique individuals and as members of a corporate body, the Church. The liturgy, Guardini maintains, is not the locus for personal prayer but for the worship of the entire Christian community. Nor is it a mere gathering of individuals who come together to pray to God in their own private ways. It is a formal act of worship of the Church, the body of Christ, who, united with the glorified and risen Lord, renders praise and adoration to the Father in heaven.⁴

This insight into the communal dimensions of the liturgy permeates Guardini's spiritual outlook. Although he recognizes the dignity of each human being, he understands that this dignity is not denigrated but elevated in the Church's liturgical worship. This idea may not seem new to those of us who have gone through the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In his day, however, it was considered innovative, since the liturgy was popularly thought of as a personal matter between the individual and God and placed on the same footing as private devotions. That most of the faithful could not understand what was going on because Mass was said in Latin and because the priest recited the prayers *sotto voce* with his back to the people reinforced this tendency (at least in the popular mind) to look upon it as a work of the priest and a time when the faithful could concentrate on their own private prayers and devotions.

In his book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Guardini focuses on the nature of the Church's liturgical worship. Written at a time when the Church was dealing with the secularizing tendencies of the Modernist controversy, he takes pains to distance himself from this theological movement and seeks to preserve a sense of the sacred in Catholic belief and worship. For him, the prayer of the liturgy "is the supreme example



of an objectively established rule of spiritual life,"⁵ the primary aim of which is not "the individual's reverence and worship for God."⁶

"In the liturgy," Guardini says, "God is to be honored by the body of the faithful, and the latter is in its turn to derive sanctification from this act of worship."⁷ "Non-liturgical prayer," for him, "must take the liturgy for its model and must renew itself in the liturgy."⁸ The fellowship of liturgical worship, its universality in style, its potent symbolism, its measured playfulness, as well as its seriousness, are expressions of the entire body of believers mystically united to Christ by means of his redeeming action taking place in the liturgy.

In his spiritual outlook, Guardini also emphasizes "the primacy of the *Logos* over the *Ethos*," meaning that the moral life has its roots in truth and therefore presupposes a primacy of reason over the will.⁹ "The Church," he maintains, "represents truth — dogma — as an absolute fact, based upon itself, independent of all confirmation from the moral or even the practical sphere. Truth is truth because it is truth. The attitude of the will to it, and its action towards it, is of itself a matter of indifference to truth."¹⁰ The spiritual life, in other words, is not a matter of what the will says it is, but must be rooted in objective truth.

The liturgy renders glory and praise to God; in the process, it shapes the Christian soul and moves the person toward the good.

"In the liturgy, the Logos has been assigned its fitting precedence over the will. Hence, the wonderful power of relaxation proper to the liturgy, and its deep reposefulness. Hence, its apparent consummation entirely in the contemplation, adoration, and glorification of divine truth."¹¹

The liturgy may seem removed from the troubles of everyday life because it is primarily concerned with shaping what Guardini calls "the fundamental Christian temper."¹² Through the liturgy, a person is led "to determine correctly his essential relation to God and to put himself right in regard to reverence for God, love and faith, atonement and the desire for sacrifice. As a result of this spiritual disposition, it follows that when action is required of him he will do what is right."¹³ The liturgy renders glory and praise to God; in the process, it shapes the Christian soul and moves the person toward the good. For this reason, "the Catholic liturgy is the supreme example of an objectively established rule of spiritual life."¹⁴ This claim holds true especially for

the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Guardini's Teaching on the Eucharist

Guardini's views on the Eucharist flow directly from his understanding of the nature of the liturgy. The Eucharist is the liturgical action of the Church *par excellence* and embodies all that the liturgy is meant to be. By its very nature, it is a common act of the entire community of believers, living and dead. The worship of the Church is an action of Christ manifested in a formal, objective manner through his mystical body, the Church.

The Eucharist is not the place for individual expression, but a sacred moment both in and out of time where the body of believers whole expresses its faith and offers its official worship to God. Ritual plays a very important role in the celebration of the Eucharist: "From long experience . . . and by repeated examination and revision, the Church has shaped and reshaped the liturgical order. This order is more than a guide; it is a ruling which it is our duty to obey."¹⁵

As the corporate worship of the Church, the Eucharist manifests the depths of God's mercy, as well as the demands of his justice.¹⁶ It manifests emotion, but under strict control so that it will speak to the body of believers as a whole and not to a select few.¹⁷ As the sacrament of the New Creation, it builds on the created order. As grace builds on nature and as philosophy prepares the ground for theology, so does the Eucharist rely on civilization and all that it has to offer — poetry, literature, music, sculpture — to give voice to humanity's worship and praise to God.

The Eucharist establishes a bond of fellowship. It gathers all that is genuinely human and places it in the hands of Christ to offer to our Father in heaven. It asks us to sacrifice our individuality, without denying it and placing it in the service of community:¹⁸"The individual is, it is true, a member of the whole — but he is only a member. He is not utterly merged in it; he is added to it, but in such a way that he throughout remains an entity, existing of himself."¹⁹ Such an action requires humility, the same humility manifested by Christ in becoming man and in becoming our food and nourishment.

The Eucharist, for Guardini, is a place where the natural and supernatural, the human and divine, meet and interact. As an offering



to God, it takes the best of human culture and presents it as a symbol of our deep desire to give glory, honor, and praise to God. For this reason, it seeks to engage every aspect of the human person and lift him up to the level of the universal: "The Church's directions on the adornment of the sanctuary, on vestments and altar vessels, with popular methods of decoration, and of dress on religious occasions; and the Gregorian chant with the popular hymn — we shall always find, within the sphere of the liturgy, that medium of spiritual expression, whether it consists of words, gestures, colors, or materials, is to a certain degree divested of its singleness of purpose, intensified, tranquilized, and given universal currency."²⁰

The universal character of the Eucharist, its very catholicity, rests on its capacity to engage the person on this level. The Jesus of the Eucharist, for him, "is the sovereign mediator between God and man, the eternal High Priest, the divine teacher, the judge of the living and of the dead; in his body, hidden in the Eucharist, he mystically unites all the faithful in the great society that is the Church. He is the God-man, the Word made flesh. . . . He is truly God and truly human, with a body and a soul which have actually lived. But they are now utterly transformed by the Godhead, rapt into the light of eternity, and remote from time and space. He is the Lord 'sitting at the right hand of the Father,' the mystic Christ living on in his Church."²¹

As a genuine and effective symbol, the Eucharist, Guardini maintains, rises above the purely individual to deal with life in all its wholeness.²² The bodily movements, actions, and material objects involved in its celebration have real significance, for they go beyond the particular and speak to the universal meaning of human destiny.²³ It is, at one and the same time, both playful and serious. Its purpose is to put those participating in touch with the basic questions of human existence and to place them face to face with the risen and glorified Lord. In doing so, it immerses us in a spiritual world where our souls can live and flourish: "The liturgy means that the soul exists in God's presence, originates in him, lives in a world of divine realities, truths, mysteries, and symbols, and really lives its true, characteristic, and fruitful life."²⁴

It also gives expression to the inner life of the believer: to "the assimilation, through the Holy Ghost, of the life of the creature to the life of God in Christ; the actual and genuine rebirth of the creature into a new existence; the development and nourishment of this life, its stretching forth from God in the Blessed Sacrament and the means of

grace, towards God in prayer and sacrifice; and all this in the continual mystic renewal of Christ's life in the course of the ecclesiastical year."²⁵ He goes on to say: "The fulfillment of all these processes by the set forms of language, gesture, and instruments, their revelation, teaching, accomplishment, and acceptance by the faithful, together constitute the liturgy."²⁶

The Eucharist, for Guardini, represents all these things — and so very much more: "When we assist at Holy Mass, we must know that we are close to the font of all grace."²⁷ This sacrament, for him, is the primary means by which Christ and his Church shape the Christian temperament.

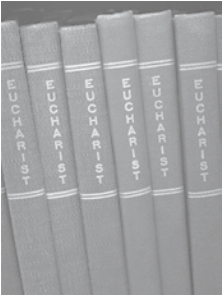
Observations

The above presentation of Guardini's teaching on the Eucharist, while in no way exhaustive, offers many unique insights into its meaning as a liturgical action and its significance for the community of believers. His views toward the liturgy as a whole and the Eucharist, in particular, invite a number of remarks on the nature and scope of the sacrament.

As the corporate worship of the Church, the Eucharist manifests the depths of God's mercy, as well as the demands of his justice.

1. Guardini's distinction between personal prayer and liturgical worship highlights the individual and communal dimensions of the human person. These dimensions are found in every eucharistic celebration. When at Mass, each person participates in the corporate prayer of the Church without losing his or her identity. The highly individualistic character of modern Western culture makes it easy for believers to lose sight of the communal nature of the sacrament and to focus solely on their private, personal concerns. The Eucharist does not neglect the private concerns of believers but elevates them by assimilating them into the concerns of the Church universal.

2. The communal nature of the Eucharist lies at the very heart of its identity. The sacrament and indeed *all* liturgical celebrations are actions of the risen Lord and his mystical body, the Church. Guardini brought this all-important dimension to Catholic sacramental worship back into focus and, in doing so, helped pave the way for many of the



liturgical forms of the Second Vatican Council. When seen in this light, the Eucharist encompasses but goes far beyond an act of private worship. It is the corporate worship of the people of God who, with Christ as their Head, render thanksgiving, glory, and praise to God.

3. For Guardini, the liturgy is an established rule of spiritual life rooted in the objective order that allows God's people to honor him and be sanctified by him. Of these two aspects of worship, the latter presupposes the first. That is to say that those gathering for Eucharist should not be concerned with what they receive or "get out of" the Mass, but concentrate instead on their participation in the corporate worship of the Church. The Eucharist is the worship of the Church *par excellence* and should not be diminished by placing it on the level of private devotion, even those that focus more on adoration and praise. At the same time, it is the source of all genuine devotion, both personal and communal, for our voices are heard only because of the redemptive action of Christ that is both memorialized and realized in its sacred action.

4. The Eucharist, for Guardini, makes us fully human by continuing in us the process of divinization begun at baptism. It embraces our deepest aspirations and transforms them into the something far greater than we could ever imagine. At Mass, the priest takes bread and wine, the work of human hands, and transforms them through the work of the Holy Spirit into the body and blood of Christ. The gifts offered by the priest represent everything offered up by the believing community. God accepts the humble work of human hands and transforms them into something truly worthy of the kingdom. As grace presupposes and builds on nature, so the Eucharist builds on the work of human civilization and transforms it. As the sacrament of the New Creation, it is an action of Christ and his body, the Church, and continues in time and space the gradual process of turning the city of man into the city of God.

5. For Guardini, the Eucharist's symbolism is a genuine expression of our human condition and the destiny toward which we are headed. It avoids any dualistic tendencies that would place matter in opposition to spirit or the material against the immaterial, and does so by embracing the material world and elevating it to a higher level, one that does not deny its material properties but transforms and glorifies them. As such, it points to the ultimate transformation of humanity into a new humanity — one rooted in Christ, the new Adam

— and of Jerusalem into the heavenly Jerusalem. The symbolism of the Eucharist effects what it signifies. When seen in this light, the Eucharist and the other sacraments represent the first fruits of the world's transformation in Christ.

6. Guardini claims that the Eucharist shapes the Christian temperament. Its goal is to root us in Christ so that his attitudes, dispositions, and attitudes become our own. The moral life flows from this gradual process of assimilating the mind of Christ. This process comes about not through human effort alone but primarily by the grace of God. The Eucharist is a major means by which God's divinizing grace transforms us and molds us into a likeness of his Son. The moral life is not something we create through an act of the will, but the fruit of our participation in the divine nature, the *Logos*. The moral life, in other words, flows from life in Christ, not vice versa. The Christian moral life is all about putting on the mind of Christ and allowing him to act in and through us. We need to be aware of "putting the cart before the horse" and thinking that it is the other way around.

The elements and actions of the Eucharist go beyond the particular and speak to the universal meaning of human destiny. They bring us to encounter the risen and glorified Christ.

7. Finally, according to Guardini, the Eucharist makes sense only when viewed through the eyes of the Church's faith. Those who see it otherwise may speak of its lack of utility and perhaps even complain that it is a throwback from the past and strangely out of place in today's world. Its purpose lies precisely in that it has no this-worldly purpose. It delves beneath appearances and puts us in touch with our deeper intuitions that are so often buried beneath the concerns of daily life. It focuses on the one thing that matters, our relationship to God, and in doing so brings meaning to all of life's activities. It looks to the questions of ultimate meaning, those related to the purpose of our existence, our origins, and our destiny.

Conclusion


Romano Guardini was a profound thinker whose ideas anticipated the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In his earliest work, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, he emphasizes the corporate character of the Church's



liturgical celebrations and sets them apart from mere private devotions. As the corporate worship of the body of believers, the liturgy embraces the universal aspirations of humanity and emphasizes its objective grounding in the truth. The Mass is the highest expression of the Church's formal worship and shapes the character and temperament of the believing community.

The Eucharist, for Guardini, has many facets: it is part of the official prayer of the Church; it engenders fellowship; it employs a style that highlights the universal aspects of the Christian message; it is rich in symbolism that effects what it signifies; it has an air of playfulness about it, yet is serious about the truth it celebrates of humanity's redemption in Christ Jesus; it generates the *Ethos* of Christian morality; it exalts in all things the primacy of the *Logos*, who is Christ himself.

These many facets combine to preserve its sacramental mystery and point to something that is, at one and the same time, both within its grasp and far beyond it. The Eucharist, the official, formal worship of the Church, is rooted in the objective order. The Church celebrates it because it longs for the fullness of this order and the transformation of all humanity (and, with it, all creation) in Christ.

Guardini's views on the Eucharist underscore that the liturgy is, first and foremost, a communal action whereby Christ and his body, the Church, give glory, praise, and thanksgiving to God. We go to Mass to worship God and to be sanctified by the redemptive grace made possible as a result of Christ's sacrificial offering. We go not to "get something out of it" (although *that* we do), but to offer ourselves to the Father as members of Christ's mystical body. Guardini's views anticipated the liturgical reforms that took place in the Second Vatican Council and continue to this day. As a precursor of these reforms, he helped to shape Catholic thought for years to come and the trajectory it would take after his death and into the new millennium. 

Notes

¹ See Silvano Zucal, "The Intellectual Relationship between Joseph Ratzinger and Romano Guardini," at <http://www.ewtn.com/library/Theology/ratzinguardini.HTM>.

² The biographical information comes from Joanne M. Pierce, "Introduction" in Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. Ada Lane (New York: Crossroad, 1998; originally published in German in 1918 as *Vom Geist der Liturgie*), 7-8. See also Robert A. Krieg, "A Precursor's Life and Work," in Robert A. Krieg, ed., *Romano Guardini Proclaiming the Sacred in the Modern World* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1995), 15-29.

- ³ Romano Guardini, *The Art of Praying: The Principles and Methods of Christian Prayer*, trans. Prince Leopold of Loewenstein-Wertheim (Manchester, NH: Sophia Institute Press, 1957, 1985; originally published in German as *Vorschule des Betens*), 174.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 174-75.
- ⁵ Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 18.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, 85.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 91-92.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, 94.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 86.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.
- ¹⁵ Guardini, *The Art of Praying*, 175.
- ¹⁶ Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 24.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 57.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 60.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 66-67.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 82.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, 82-83.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

To the Higher Shrine of Love Divine: Reflections on Sixty Years of Priestly Ministry

by Michael Levy, OMI

*To the higher Shrine of Love Divine, my lowly feet have trod.
I want no fame, no other name than this: a Priest of God*

Oblate Father Michael Levy, assigned to San Antonio, Texas, celebrated his 60th anniversary of priestly ordination on June 1, 2017. The following is excerpted from his homily for the occasion.

After years and years . . . of praying . . . and waiting, one day Zechariah, the priest-father of John the Baptist, by drawing lots won the (once in a lifetime) highly-privileged duty of entering the Holy of Holies to offer incense and offer prayers on behalf of the people (Lk 1:5-25).

Simeon, the temple priest at the time of the presentation of Jesus, patiently waited a veritable lifetime for the opportunity to hold Jesus in his arms just one time (Lk 2:25-35).

Since my ordination 60 years ago, unlike Zechariah, every day of my priestly life I have been given the unequalled privilege to enter the sanctuary to offer sacrifice, the sacrifice of the Mass, and, like Simeon, the temple priest, to hold Jesus in my hands.

A Sacrifice for the Forgiveness of Sins

What makes the sacrifice of the Mass so important, so special? Our Catholic theology teaches that at each Mass, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit become uniquely involved; in fact, it is the very action of the Holy Trinity that brings the saving event of Calvary to the altar, that makes the Mass the same sacrifice of Christ on the cross.

The priest, standing at the altar *in persona Christi*, offers Christ to God the Father as a sacrificial oblation for the sins of the world. This sacrificial oblation of Jesus is the same as that offered on the cross on Calvary. As on Calvary, God the Father, in turn, receives the offering of Jesus and sends the Holy Spirit with power to make Christ present by changing the bread into the body of Christ and the wine into the

blood of Christ. The sacrifice of Calvary and the sacrifice of the Mass are one and the same.

When we say that the Mass is the same sacrifice as that of the cross, we must not expect to experience at Mass what occurred on Calvary: the Roman centurion on horseback shouting orders to his soldiers; the ruthless mob clamoring for Jesus to come down from the cross, crying out, "You saved others; save yourself"; or the darkening of the sky, the shaking of the earth, and the splitting of the temple veil. Nothing at all like this occurs.

Why not? These dramatic happenings were not essential to Calvary. Jesus' sacrificial death on Calvary had its fullest meaning without them.

The Mass is the same sacrifice of Calvary — without the soldiers, the mob, the disturbances in the sky. There is only one essential difference between Calvary and the Mass, and that is the sacrifice of Calvary was a bloody sacrifice; the sacrifice of the Mass is an unbloody sacrifice.

A Reenactment of a Saving Mystery

Let me relate a simple story which illustrates what I am saying.

Once there was an almost five-year-old boy who asked his mother where she went all dressed up every Sunday morning. She explained that she went to Mass each Sunday and that when he was five-years-old, she would take him to Mass with her.

The day finally arrived, and on the Sunday after his fifth birthday, Johnny excitedly put on his favorite clothes and went off to the church with his mother. Johnny was extremely attentive all during the Mass. He was intrigued right from the beginning: the parade of ministers marching down the main aisle (cross bearer, lighted candles, book held high, loud singing and music). He watched every movement of the priests and ministers at the altar.

Then the offertory procession with the beautiful goblet of wine and the single large host on the golden paten. Then the final procession with everyone standing and singing enthusiastically. Boy, he thought to himself, what a wonderful show!

Now let's fast forward to the next Sunday.



Johnny woke up early, very excited. He went off to the church, literally ran to his pew, and waited with anticipation. As the Mass proceeded, though, he became fidgety and noticeably began to lose interest.

Over subsequent Sundays, he grew less and less interested. Finally, Johnny refused to go to Mass again. "Why?" his mother asked? Using his best "TV language," he told his mother that Mass was nothing more than a "repeat." A repeat Sunday after Sunday.

Little Johnny had discovered something theologically correct. The Mass is precisely that: a repeat of last Sunday's Mass . . . and the previous Sunday's . . . and the previous Sunday's . . . all the way back through the ages to Calvary.

An Encounter of Faith

This leads to another occurrence that takes place during Mass.

Jesus once made an incredible statement: he said that on the third day after his death, he would rise from the dead (Lk 18:31-34). How incredible was that? With all their wealth, power, and influence, no Egyptian pharaoh ever rose from the dead; no Roman emperor ever rose from the dead; no Jewish king ever rose from the dead. Yet, on Easter Sunday, Jesus fulfilled what he had predicted, indeed promised, and he rose gloriously from the dead.

Our Catholic belief holds that at each Mass, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit become uniquely involved; in fact, it is the very action of the Holy Trinity that brings the saving event of Calvary to the altar.

This same Jesus said that he would give his flesh to eat and his blood to drink. So shocking was this assertion that some of his disciples concluded, "This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?" And they no longer walked in his company (Jn 6:51-66).

In Holy Communion, Jesus keeps his promise. He gives himself to us under signs of bread and wine. One who does not believe might say, "I tasted the host before and after the consecration, and it felt, looked, and tasted the same to me. How can that be the flesh of Jesus? I tasted the wine before and after the consecration, and it tasted like wine, smelled

like wine, and looked like wine. How is that the blood of Jesus?"

The consecration does not bring about a change in the outward appearance of the bread and the wine but changes their reality. Through the power and action of the Holy Spirit, the substance of the bread and the substance of the wine are changed into the body and the blood of Christ.

In encountering the eucharistic Christ, "Sola fides sufficit"; faith alone must suffice.

Human reason cannot resolve the mystery. The great theologian Thomas Aquinas makes this abundantly clear. All of our senses, and not just those of sight and taste, will fail to recognize Christ in his self-gift. "*Sola fides sufficit*," Aquinas says, "Faith alone must suffice."

The apostle Thomas, absent when Christ appeared to the apostles in the Upper Room on Easter night, wanted sensory proof before believing in the resurrection. He wanted to see the risen Christ with his eyes and to touch the Savior's wounds with his hands (Jn 20:24-29). In encountering the eucharistic Christ, "*Sola fides sufficit*; faith alone must suffice."

Our eyes can at times play tricks on us and even confuse us. Once, while in a boat on the Sea of Galilee, the apostles looked toward the horizon and saw what appeared to be a ghost. In reality, it was Jesus walking toward them on the water. In the garden of the resurrection on Easter morning, Mary Magdalene saw what appeared to be the gardener. In reality, it was the risen Lord greeting her and speaking her name tenderly and reassuringly.

In the moment of Communion, you will see what appears to be only bread and wine, but faith will allow you to recognize Christ. Your eyes will see one thing, but faith will bring you to fall before the Lord whose body was given up for us and whose blood was poured out for us and for the many for the forgiveness of sins.

An Abiding, Intimate Presence

As Jesus was walking through Jericho, he saw the tax collector Zacchaeus up in a tree (Lk 19:1-9). Jesus called to him and went to his home to have a meal. Other times, he knocked on the door of



his friends' house — Martha and Mary of Bethany — and shared the warmth of their hospitality and love. We can imagine Mary telling her sister Martha, "Put some extra water into the soup. Jesus has come to dine with us."

In Holy Communion, Jesus knocks at the door of our hearts, hoping that we will open and welcome him. He shares his flesh and his blood with us as nourishment, inviting us to abide in him and to remain close to him always. In this moment, we are nearer to Jesus than was the woman in the Gospel who reached out to him to touch the tassel on his cloak (Lk 8:40-48), seeking to be healed. In this moment, we are as close to Jesus as was the beloved disciple at table beside Jesus (Jn 13:23-26).

This closeness to Jesus is a union closer than that of two hands locked together in a single handshake; it is a love deeper than that of a mother for the child in her womb. Christ brings to the seeking soul an indescribable spiritual and sacramental union.

In Holy Communion, Christ brings to the seeking soul an indescribable spiritual and sacramental union.

The Easter liturgy proclaims, "*Haec dies quam fecit Dominus: This is the day which the Lord has made*" (Ps 118:24). Holy Communion is the special moment the Lord has made for us. Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

When Moses encountered God atop Mount Sinai, the mountain was enveloped in a cloud, lightning flashed, thunder rolled, and the earth shook. When we encounter Christ in Holy Communion, "*sola fides sufficit.*"

When Mary Magdalene and Thomas encountered the risen Christ, they saw the Lord, spoke with him, touched him, and acknowledged him. When we encounter Christ in Holy Communion, the encounter is no less real and transforming, but "*sola fides sufficit.*"

To the higher Shrine of Love Divine, my lowly feet have trod. I want no fame, no other name than this: a Priest of God.





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Mustard Seed

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

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

There are in this Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mk 4:30-32) two pictures that every Jew of Jesus' day would readily recognize. First, in Palestine a grain of mustard seed, though not the smallest of seeds, stood proverbially for the smallest possible thing. This very small seed did in fact grow into something like a tree, attaining a height of seven or eight feet. Also, birds were very fond of the little black seeds of the shrub, and a cloud of birds hovering over and settling on a mustard plant was a common sight.

Second, in the Old Testament, one of the most common ways of describing a great kingdom was to depict it as a tree; and subsidiary nations within it were said to be like birds finding shelter within the shadow of its branches (see Ez 17:22ff; 31:1ff). However, the parable's mention of the tree as the greatest of all "plants" (or "shrubs") may contain a hint that God's kingdom is not like a mighty tree, i.e., like a great empire established through military power.

In comparing the kingdom of God to a tiny mustard seed, Jesus is telling his hearers, and especially his disciples, that they must not be daunted by small beginnings. Even the kingdom of God begins by producing only a small effect; but if that effect is repeated many times over, it will become very great.

Jesus' small band of disciples, called upon to announce and promote God's kingdom according to Jesus' teaching and example, were people of ordinary social status and of limited means; yet the cumulative effect of their small but dedicated efforts would ultimately produce an amazing result. Jesus' disciples are to understand that the kingdom

Blessed Sacrament Father Bernard Camiré is the parochial vicar of Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City. This series on the parables of Jesus originally appeared in the parish bulletin and is being serialized in *Emmanuel*.



of God must begin in a very small and almost hidden manner, but its eventual growth will be greatly disproportionate to its beginnings and will bring forth surprising results.

Christian history offers an astonishing commentary on this parable. The Church, the historical embodiment of God's kingdom, had a tiny beginning: the work of an obscure itinerant preacher named Jesus and of a small group of disciples, twelve very ordinary men; yet this small entity has become "the greatest of all shrubs." No limits can be set on the accomplishments of a small group of individuals whose lives are imbued with the grace of God's kingdom, possessed by the Spirit of God, and dedicated utterly to the person of Jesus Christ.

For nearly two thousand years, we see in history the divine impulsion upon humanity and the world. We can see the tiny beginnings in the apostle Paul, journeying to Athens and Rome, face to face with the overwhelming intellectual and political powers of his time. We can see it also in the Church's great missionary saints: Patrick, Boniface, Cyril and Methodius, Isaac Jogues, Junipero Serra — to name only a very few.

In comparing the kingdom of God to a tiny mustard seed, Jesus is telling his hearers, and especially his disciples, that they must not be daunted by small beginnings.

Jesus' Parable of the Mustard Seed was evidently given to reassure his disciples that the apparently meager results of his preaching and ministry are no measure by which to judge the greatness of the kingdom of God that he proclaims and that will come increasingly to realization in the future. The growth of this kingdom is of God's determination and providence, but that it will grow and come to fulfillment is certain.

From our historical vantage point we are heartened to see Christ's Church, the temporal expression of God's kingdom, implanted in every part of the world and encompassing every race and nationality. Also, like the birds of the parable, we delight in having spiritual nourishment, protection, and refreshment in the "shade" of his Church.





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

Advent and Christmas

The Apostle of the Eucharist was also a guide to the interior life and to eucharistic spirituality for many. Sister Catherine Marie Caron, SSS, who has translated thousands of Saint Peter Julian Eymard's letters, offers these notes from a conference he gave to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament on December 10, 1861.

"Here we are . . . [in Advent]. Let us enter into the sentiments of the Church. The best of all pieties is that which is in relation to the spirit of the Church because each liturgical feast has its own grace and virtue. The object of the Church's worship is to honor our Lord in his various mysteries, then the Blessed Virgin and the saints. . . . Each season has its grace; each day has its mystery. Pious souls follow the devotion of the Church.

"My dear sisters, if you could only appreciate the beauty of the Office during Advent! There we see the Church gathering all the prophecies referring to the Messiah, the writings of all the scholars and saints who waited for him and desired him. How they described his glory, his majesty, his reign, glorifying him in advance. The Church puts all that into this prayer. When we have the happiness to understand it, truly this prayer elevates us to God and seems to make the mystery come alive again. And there's more! There's something so joyful that it feels like receiving good news.

"Advent and Christmas, followed by Lent with its sadness, then Easter! Do what the Church does; better still, what the Blessed Virgin did. . . . She prepared herself for the birth of her divine Son. . . . Just as the Blessed Virgin carried him and offered herself to serve him, we should do the same and with the same joy.

"What was the Blessed Virgin Mary doing? She was recollected. Therefore, recollect yourselves fully in the Lord, since you are his living tabernacle. Recollect yourselves in him. Since he loves, you should love. Since he works, you should work. He is invisible, but find a way to be with him. This is how to live Advent."





PASTORAL LITURGY

Making Connections— Preparation of the Gifts

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

The presentation and preparation of the gifts of bread and wine is an important moment in the liturgy. What are some best practices?

In his 25th year of priesthood, Father John Thomas Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio. He is one of the authors of *Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays 2017* and also wrote *Guide for Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, both published by Liturgy Training Publications. Questions or further materials may be obtained by contacting him at jtlanesss@gmail.com.

In the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)*, 73 we read:

“At the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the gifts which will become Christ’s body and blood are brought to the altar. [After the altar is prepared] the offerings are then brought forward. It is praiseworthy for the bread and wine to be presented by the faithful.”

I am witnessing a trend in the Western world (Europe and North America), especially for weekday Masses. The gifts are being placed on a credence table near the altar and brought to the altar by servers, deacons, or the priest himself. Why are pastors of souls omitting this important and significant piece of the eucharistic liturgy, the preparation of the gifts? This cultural phenomenon is in sharp contrast to the practice in other parts of the world. Let’s examine this other “extreme” as is practiced by other liturgical conferences around the world.

In Sri Lanka, it is common for the priest’s livelihood, his food that he will eat for the day or the week, to be brought forward with the gifts of bread and wine. The wine is rationed and only the priest is able to consume the precious blood, because like India, the government regulates how much alcohol a religious minister is able to have. In certain African countries (Cameroon, South Africa, Namibia, and those that celebrate the Zaire Rite), the preparation of the gifts is an important processional piece in the liturgy, lasting for some time. Everyone in the congregation comes forward in a rhythmic dance to offer “their gift” of money. In some places, they bring food or other items for the parish before presenting the bread and wine for Mass. GIRM, 73 says:

“Even though the faithful no longer bring the bread and wine intended for the liturgy from their own possessions, as in the past, nevertheless the rite of carrying up the offerings still retains its force and its spiritual significance.”

Worldwide, our Church is a picture of contrasts. And I worry that the emphasis Western society places on efficiency erodes certain pieces of the eucharistic liturgy. Why is it that we stress the time element of the Mass? And why are not the parishioners in our parishes bringing up the gifts? Some bulletins even publish a stark comment: “You must be in the state of grace to bring up the gifts.” I know ushers who beg people to assist in this very “spiritual” moment in the Mass. I know priests who also feel burdened by this moment of the liturgy.


Let’s take some time to breathe and recapture the importance of this ritual that underscores a truly significant reality: we present *ourselves*, represented in the gifts of bread and wine, to be transformed! Not bringing anything forward, having the gifts already on the altar, or using liturgical ministers to simply transport the bread and wine from the credence table to the altar glosses over the connection between the offering of ourselves along with the bread and wine.

Let’s recapture this connection that gives deeper meaning to the Eucharist; and not worry about efficiency. Walking and processing are of special theological significance to our faith: “Take up the cross to follow me.” Gifts are offered and transformed in order that God might change and transform us — priest and assembly. Let’s retrieve this important connection in our Eucharist.

Reminders for September and October

- Have a special *Book of the Dead* available for parishioners to remember their loved ones beginning on **All Saints** (Wednesday, November 1) and **The Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed** (Thursday, November 2).
- In most parts of the United States, **Daylight Saving Time** ends in the early morning hours of Sunday, November 5. Remind your parishioners in advance to change their clocks.
- **Thanksgiving Day** (United States) falls on Thursday, November 23. Rituals may be found in the *Book of Blessings*.
- **The Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the**

Universe falls on Sunday, November 26, during the Thanksgiving Day holiday weekend.

- **Advent** is the shortest it can be this year! It begins on Sunday, December 3, and ends on Sunday, December 24, at 4:00 p.m. Take some time to think through decorating for the entire period, Advent and Christmas Time.
- Note that the new **Lectionary Supplement** has special readings for the following feasts in the United States:
 - **Friday, November 24:** Saint Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions. Some were Vietnamese. Some came from other countries, notably Europe.
 - **Saturday, November 25:** Saint Catherine of Alexandria.
 - **Saturday, December 9:** Saint Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin.
 - **Tuesday, December 12:** Our Lady of Guadalupe. 



PASTORAL LITURGY

On Liturgy and Transformation

Advent, the Eucharist, and Hope

Fans of sports teams, young lovers longing for a special relationship, and people living with illness and pain are among those well versed in the power of hope. It is one of the strongest forces in life. I have noticed, however, a certain lack of hope among many in our world today. Analysts believe that this was a determining factor in last year's presidential campaign. The loss of hope among so many is real.

At the start of Advent, the season of hopefulness and expectation set against the backdrop of Israel's intense longing for the Messiah, we might ask ourselves if the Eucharist can transform this present reality and help restore a sense of hope. Hope is one of the virtues which most reflects the life of God in us and deepens our union with the divine.

Jewish messianic hope was forged in the crucible of suffering. There can be no doubt about that. Their status as God's covenanted people did not shield them from the difficulties of the human condition. This included homelessness, a harsh desert climate, forced separation from land and temple, corrupt kings and religious leaders, foreign occupation, warfare, etc.

What tempered the rigors of their life was a hope rooted in a shared relationship with God and a belief that the day of God's rule would change everything and usher in the messianic age of justice, peace, holiness, and abundant blessings.

The prophets kept hope alive by their words and actions. Their role was to interpret the events of the day in the light of God's word and Israel's covenant and to call the people back to fidelity as they awaited the Messiah.

The first followers of Jesus lived in a profound spirit of hopefulness. Not only did they accept his proclamation of the coming reign of God and believe him to be the Christ, they also believed that the risen Lord would return relatively quickly to inaugurate God's rule on earth. Constantly on their lips and in their hearts, therefore, was the prayer "Marana 'tha! Come, Lord Jesus!" His advent in glory would be the fulfillment of their hope. Hopefulness and confidence permeated their lives and their Eucharists.

As we seek to bring a renewed sense of hope to the world around us this Advent, how can the Eucharist inform our practice and transform hopelessness into hope? I suggest three ways.

The Eucharist creates community.

We live in an age when differences among people (e.g., race, culture, religion, social class) are cast as intractably at odds with each other and divisions are exploited for political or ideological reasons.

By contrast, the Eucharist fashions unity from diversity. The Eucharist proclaims and witnesses to the powerful truth that Jesus gave his life for all out of love on the cross.

Let me share a simple illustration of this. Several months ago, I concelebrated Sunday Mass in a small multicultural parish in the Chicago area. It was a joyous event and a true experience of cross-cultural communion. Afterward I thought to myself, what a witness of hope to our fractured world!


The Eucharist teaches sharing.

In the story of the feeding of the multitude, the miracle most recounted in the Gospels, an important detail is often overlooked: Jesus used the offering of a few fish and some bread to satisfy the hunger of thousands! As the Son of God, he could have done so by simply willing it; instead, he graciously received a small offering to do a great deed. This miracle has eucharistic undertones. In sharing our gifts, however modest, God can accomplish wonders.

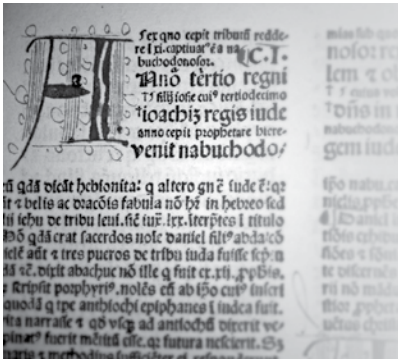
The Eucharist reminds us that we are stewards of all we have been given. Hope grows in people's hearts when they are moved to share freely and generously with others.

The Eucharist calls forth compassion.

The Gospels state that the heart of Jesus was stirred with pity as he looked on all who came to him. He saw their many needs. Compassion impelled him to act on their behalf.

Similarly, the Eucharist impels us to be compassionate toward others. We no longer see them as “other,” as different from us and thus undeserving of our time and attention. The recognition of our common needfulness before a loving and provident God creates hope. 

Anthony Schueller, SSS



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections— Homiletics

by Barbara Shanahan

Barbara Shanahan is an alumna of Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, Illinois. She has led the Buffalo, New York, Catholic Bible Studies Program since 1992.

November 5, 2017 Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time

Malachi 1:14b-2:2b, 8-10; Psalm 131:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13; Matthew 23:1-12

The readings for this week form a kind of sandwich: the text from Malachi and the Gospel point up the negative traits of religious leaders while Psalm 131 and the passage from 1 Thessalonians (the meat of the sandwich) demonstrate the attitude that enables one to exercise leadership in a humble, gentle manner that is expected of one who oversees God's own people. Should we focus on criticism or encouragement?

Malachi reminds the priests of his day of the great privilege and dignity that is theirs in serving God in the temple. But they stand accused of cutting corners, slighting the sacrifices offered in worship, not being consistent in handing on the traditions of the Torah, and failing to set an example for the people by rendering such half-hearted service. The end result, keenly evident to the prophet, is that God is not revered, so the priestly ministry is ineffective and the people suffer for want of direction (see Mal 1:6-2:9).

In the Gospel, the leadership style of the scribes and Pharisees is criticized by Jesus: "Do as they say, but do not follow their example." Earlier in the Gospel of Matthew, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his followers: "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (5:20). They are recognized as knowledgeable in matters of the law, but they are sorely lacking in compassion and concern for others, the "weightier things" according to Jesus' way of thinking.

The meaning of righteousness here is the way one lives out God's faithfulness in his or her own life. Jesus consistently exemplifies and teaches a way of leadership that should earmark his followers when he teaches that "the last shall be first and the first last" and "the one who exalts themselves will be humbled and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

There is a place for servants but not for half-hearted leaders who simply know definitions and rules but fail to lead the people by teaching them and inviting them to be better. Both Malachi and Matthew agree on this. Leaders carry great responsibility for others. We have experienced those who have guided us well. They do not ask of us what they themselves are unwilling to do. Their place in our life makes us more than we would be if left to ourselves.

The readings between Malachi and Matthew offer an alternative way of relating to others. Here, we can find valuable thoughts to consider as we seek to discover and form attitudes within ourselves that make for a good leader (or pastor, parent, or teacher). In praying with the text from 1 Thessalonians and Psalm 131, the qualities and attitudes set before us are humility and gentleness, gratitude and respect. Set these alongside peaceful contentment and trust in God, and you find a challenging way of life that keeps us honest before God and our own self. The formation of these attitudes, living and responding out of the way of thinking they espouse, is more than developing a skill set that makes one an effective leader. Indeed, this calls us to follow the example of Jesus.

Following the verses of today's gospel passage, Jesus prophetically speaks a series of woes aimed at the scribes and Pharisees (Mt 23:13-33). Here, we find biting criticisms of how they fail to lead, specifically pointing out what in their behavior needs correcting and why their thinking is so wrong-headed. An example of this is 23:23-24 where he cites them for worrying about tithes due on herbs but challenges them for neglecting mercy and fidelity. "Blind guides who strain out the gnat but swallow the camel!"

What do you think are the most important qualities of good leaders? What do you hope for from those who lead us? What is lost when leadership is wanting?

November 12, 2017
Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 6:12-16; Psalm 73:2-8; 1 Thessalonians:4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

Take note of the way Lady Wisdom is described in today's first reading! She is resplendent, desirable, and attentive. Finding her brings prudence, the fullness of life, and freedom from cares. The encounter with Wisdom is not beyond our grasp; rather, she desires to give herself graciously to us. Those who love her watch for her, keeping vigil. She, in turn, will be readily found as she makes her rounds. As eager as Wisdom is to give of herself, possession of her will demand a committed effort, but the seeker won't be disappointed as Wisdom lavishes her gifts generously.

Once one grasps Wisdom, what is it one possesses? In biblical thought, Wisdom has many facets. Wisdom, first, has a direct link to God. In some instances, Wisdom is a dimension or extension of God (see Prv 8:22ff). Wisdom is frequently referred to in the feminine or personified as a woman as in this passage. The simple explanation for this is that in both Hebrew and Greek, the word for Wisdom is a feminine noun (*Hokmah* in Hebrew and *Sophia* in Greek). In the text for today, we can see both of these aspects: the desirable, attentive woman and the one offering us the fullness of life in a way that God alone can do. Biblical writers are always trying to help us imagine, in human words, what God is like!

Wisdom can also be a quality possessed by a human being. The "wise person" is one who is in right relationship with God and one's world, who makes wise choices and establishes priorities in keeping with God's ways, one who develops his or her full human potential and God-given skills to enhance life. Such a righteous person is grateful and humble, acknowledging God as the source of all that is possessed.

Wisdom is multifaceted and at times raises questions that as yet have no answers. Here, we might listen to the voice of the one who initially prayed Psalm 73. The world in which the psalmist lived was supposed to have a predictable order: the good were to prosper and the wicked were to get their due. But that world is on its head! The one who prays this psalm struggles, questions, and stops short of abandoning the

faith tradition altogether because it does not provide an answer to the fundamental question about why the wicked are successful. But wisely, the answer is sought in the mysterious presence of God. You have to read more of the psalm to find this resolution. But here we see the humble person seeking Wisdom where Wisdom resides: in God's presence.

We can trace the path of Wisdom in today's Gospel. Have you ever been troubled by the response of the five bridesmaids who refuse to share their reserve of oil? Do they strike you as selfish and unkind? But Matthew is making a point by gathering together here (Chapters 24-25) a number of parables with a similar message: "Stay awake and alert, be prepared! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come" (Mt 24:42). The urgency of the message found in these parables is that we need to be watchful and prepared.

Here, the "oil" is essential to fulfilling the task of the bridesmaid, which is to welcome the groom. Nothing is more important; nothing should distract from this moment that may only come once! If we are not attentive, the opportunity may pass us by. All the bridesmaids were prepared for the groom, but five went the extra mile and prepared for his potential delay in coming.

Does the "oil" represent our deepest self that must always be prepared for the moment of God's coming or delay? Are we "foolish" if we give away our deep peace, our sense of inward quiet and inner strength, depleting our own reserves? Can anyone ask this of us? Is there something of ourselves that we must guard and not give away to another because if we do, we have surrendered our very self? Discerning this is also Wisdom!

November 19, 2017 Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Proverbs 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31; Psalm 128:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:7b-9, 13; Matthew 25:14-30

If we would search out one line of thought in the readings for this week it might be an answer to this simple question: "How would you describe the life of the righteous person who is entitled to receive the blessing of happiness?" However varied the context, what would

ensure such an outcome?

Recall last week and the text from the Wisdom of Solomon where Wisdom is described as desirable and multifaceted, seeking those who would pursue her. Finding or being found by Wisdom assumes becoming learned in the ways of God. One is wise who allows this to happen and who carefully maintains that relationship. This involves making right choices, following a way of life that reflects godliness.

What is the core of Israel's belief about godliness, about God? It is not so much about God's demand for strict justice, or God's power, or even God's holiness, although each of these is very important in the biblical tradition. When all is said and done, Israel believes that God is compassionate, faithful, merciful, and steadfast. These insights are all gathered together in the concept of the covenant love that binds God to his people. The truly wise person then replicates the ways and deeds of God. One needs to know the story of the God of Israel's origin and identity!

So we have our starting point! In the reading from Proverbs, the wise person is a "worthy wife" whose value is beyond jewels. Why? What makes her so? She is described as enterprising, provident, and trustworthy. These are human qualities admired in a wise person. But what completes the portrait is that she is compassionate and generous . . . as God is. She "fears the Lord," which brings together both reverence and humility. She knows who she is before God. Truly, this is a portrait of *any* wise person — woman or man.

The psalm for today keeps us situated within the family setting with a portrait of peace and simplicity. Here, the husband receives praise for directing life as the wife was so honored in Proverbs. Wisdom is right order and harmony, the end product of those who "fear the Lord" and "walk in God's ways." Life is blessed in such a nurturing home.

The Wisdom we find in 1 Thessalonians reminds us that we are children invited to walk in the sunlight, who must be alert and awake because the day of the Lord will surprise us! It will not come as we might plan. Often the moment will come like labor pains presaging the birth of something unknown and new, demanding that we be watchful, prepared, and open to God's mysterious plan that will likely be different from anything we might expect!

Turning to the Gospel, what threads of Wisdom do we find? This is the final parable of six that are gathered here. Each of these gives instruction about waiting, watching, and preparing for the coming of the kingdom of God. Last week in the parable of the ten bridesmaids, preparation and planning ahead were key. This week, it is about a very human reaction to the responsibility assigned to us. Some take up the challenge and run with it; others, for whatever reason, hold back. Is it out of a crippling fear of failure, is it doubting one's ability to succeed, is it laziness and lack of enthusiasm? What makes the "mouse minded" servant so unproductive?

We can look within ourselves today as we reflect on this familiar parable. Parables are supposed to invite us to identify with characters or elements of the story. Few of us really want to claim identification with the servant who buries his master's money. Clearly, his actions are subject to criticism in the text. Whether doubt, fear, pride, or laziness, the Gospel does not allow us to be unproductive or fearful. Our response must at least bring "interest"!

November 26, 2017
Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe

Ezekiel 34:1-11; Psalm 23:1-3, 5-6; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26, 28; Matthew 25:31-45

The title "King" weaves throughout Matthew's Gospel: "Where is the child who has been born King of the Jews? We have observed his star and have come to pay him homage" (Mt 2:2). This passage is from the beginning of Matthew's Gospel. Near the end, the leaders and elders taunt Jesus saying: "So he is the King of the Jews? Let him come down from the cross" (Mt 27:42). Today's feast of Christ the King brings us to the end of the liturgical year and near to the end of Matthew's account of the public ministry of Jesus. The readings invite us to reflect on the manner of kingship demonstrated and taught by Jesus and left as an example for the community.

Ezekiel and Psalm 23 draw on shepherd imagery. Flocks were important to the way of life in biblical times, providing milk, food,

wool for clothing, and skin for shelter. The task of the shepherd, the guardian of the sheep, also figures into the story. Israel's ancestors were shepherds: Abraham and Sarah had flocks and herds; Jacob met Rachel by a well as she was watering her flocks. Moses encountered God while tending the flocks of his father-in-law Jethro. David was a young shepherd who learned to be fearless when it came to defending those in his charge against a bully (or a giant).

Sheep shared a close bond with the family. Nathan spoke a parable to David about "a poor man who had one little ewe lamb who ate at his table and slept in his bosom" (2 Sm 12:3-4). It is easy to see why the image of God as Israel's shepherd was expressive of the people's faith in who God was for them. Israel found here a rich metaphor for the loving, intimate, and dependent relationship between themselves and God.

Israel's kings were also called "shepherds" who were to govern the people in God's stead, after the compassionate manner of God. Most often, their leadership left much to be desired. So God had to step in when the people seemed lost "like sheep without a shepherd" (Ez 34:5; Mt 9:36). Shepherds held a position of trust and responsibility toward God's own flock. Ezekiel's words are addressed to those who failed in this trust and responsibility, those who take but have not a thought of how to give. They do not feed the flock but take, making themselves fat, leaving the flock scattered and lost.

By contrast, the Good Shepherd takes nothing for himself; he gives all he has for the well-being of the flock. The shepherd nurtures, protects, and ennobles, literally, laying down his life for those in his care.

This checklist of qualities and attitudes may tempt us to have in our sites Church or civil leaders as those who should take heed. This is true, but what meaning do these words have for us? Can they guide us in the way we exercise responsibility for others? How would you summarize the attitudes and responses required of a "good shepherd"?

The readings from 1 Corinthians and Matthew share a common link in that both describe a scene that is rich in eschatological significance. In 1 Corinthians, Jesus, the firstborn from the dead, hands over the kingdom to his Father, subjecting himself and all creation to the Father so that "God may be all in all." Christ is exalted but is also subject to his Father for the accomplishment of a single goal: God's glory! He has fulfilled his mission of restoring all creation to God.

The scene of the last judgment in Matthew depicts Jesus as a shepherd, a king, and the Messiah. Jesus summons the righteous who have acted compassionately toward “the least.” Jesus, here as elsewhere in the Gospel, identifies himself with the suffering and the vulnerable, the “little ones” (see Mt 10:42 and 18:1-4). Jesus as King is also a humble servant who becomes the compassion of God for us to model. Is this passage a checklist of things for us to do? Or is it important for us to keep our eyes on the Shepherd, forming attitudes that influence how we respond to others?

December 3, 2017 First Sunday of Advent (Year B)

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:1-9; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44

Soon we will welcome a New Year. We celebrate and mark the procession of time by making resolutions to help us live more fully and develop our human potential. This weekend, we enter the season of Advent and turn the page to begin a new liturgical year. This is no ordinary time, but the opportunity to look back over the past year and forward to the unwritten pages of the 365 days to come.

How will we experience God during this year? Sometimes, we may want to keep God in the background because his coming can surprise us, and surprises have a way of shaking up our world, rearranging the furniture of our lives. God’s coming can be like this.

The important question for us as people of faith is, are we willing to take the risk and welcome the coming of God? We daily pray, “Your kingdom come,” but do we really welcome this coming? Perhaps we have all lived long enough to know that when God comes and shakes our world, in hindsight we realize that, unwelcome as it was at the time, things worked out in amazing ways we could not have planned or foreseen. This requires a lot of faith from us!

The Gospel sets before us three short parables from the Apocalyptic Discourse (Matthew, Chapters 24-25) that we have been reading in recent weeks. You will recognize a familiar theme: preparedness and watchfulness. What would Noah’s neighbors have thought as he

diligently attends to building an ark while the sun shone brightly? How many people install an alarm system after the thief has stolen their valuables? How diligent we must be, how attentive and receptive to the surprise of God in our lives!

People of Noah's day are not faulted because of wrongdoing or sin; they are just preoccupied with ordinary life. How do you tell good people they need to be better? Do the demands of ordinary life deprive us of time to think about where God is in each day, filled as it is with demands, challenges, and blessings?

The passage from Romans states this in a different way: Do you know what time it is? Wake up! How old are you anyway? Time has passed, the night is far spent the day is upon us! Let the new year of grace not leave you as it found you! Dare to let God surprise you! What will this take? Attentiveness to how close our salvation is!

Isaiah is often called the "Advent prophet." We will hear readings from Isaiah throughout Advent and the three Masses of Christmas. The name Isaiah means "God saves." And all 66 chapters of the book describe how God's salvation was experienced over these 200 years of Israel's history. The book is not the work of one person, but of three writers from three periods from the eighth to the sixth centuries BCE. An editor gathered the work of each of the three writers and gave a unity to the entire Book of Isaiah.

One of the themes that weaves like a thread through the Book of Isaiah is "Jerusalem." It is always in the background or in the mind's eye! What is Jerusalem for Isaiah and for Israel? It represents the promise of God's abiding presence. It is the place where God dwells! Jerusalem experiences the fate of the people: whether it is First Isaiah who lives within its walls or Second Isaiah who remembers Jerusalem from exile or Third Isaiah who looks on her ruins. Jerusalem is on the horizon as a tangible sign of God's promise of presence, sometimes experienced in peace, sometimes in pain.

The passage we listen to this week begins with an important phrase, "in those days," meaning "in God's time," a time when the world will be restored, when all people will be drawn to God, looking to Jerusalem and all she represents. Then people will learn the ways of God and walk as God would hope, in peace and in harmony. Such a brilliant hope is realized in Christ! The possibilities are within reach!

December 10, 2017
Second Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2 ,7-8, 12-13, 17; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12

Isaiah is a “seer.” This week again, as last week, he has a vision of a kingdom of peace and harmony. The word “seer” is sometimes applied to a prophet. It does not mean that Isaiah sees into the future, predicting what is to come. That is not the task of a prophet. A prophet possesses an inward vision, the ability to see with God’s eye, to perceive the divine plan. Within his own reality, Isaiah is inspired to speak of God’s promise to Israel that will unfold mysteriously over time.

Among the Christmas greetings you will receive, it is safe to say there will be at least one depicting the scene we find in today’s reading from Isaiah: the peaceable kingdom. The familiar and beloved text from Isaiah, however, begs us to take a step behind it to understand something of God’s hopes for humankind and the way these are fully realized.

To grasp the impact of Isaiah’s words, go back one verse before the assigned reading to Isaiah 10:34: “The forest thickets are felled . . . the splendor of Lebanon falls.” We are told that the majestic forest and strong cedars of Lebanon are cut down. But then a shoot sprouts from a stump! How unlikely and fragile a possibility, but this is God’s way! The contrast is important. The shoot grows up, possessed by the Spirit of God, becoming a leader who will care for the people with justice and faithfulness, especially for the poor and the afflicted of the land.

The important words here are “justice” and “faithfulness.” Oftentimes, these are interchangeable terms in biblical thought. God is just when he is faithful to his covenant commitment to Israel. Social justice is a theme heard loud and clear in prophetic writing. But the basis of this demand is the very commitment God made to the Israelites when they left Egypt, themselves poor and vulnerable. Israel must never forget. They must do to others as God did for them.

Then this “shoot” that flourishes will establish peace not with force, but with respect. The scene of the lion and the lamb, the bear and the cow, suggests that innate differences will exist, but these will not

undermine the harmony. One would hope that the lion will not lose his majestic ferocity nor will the lamb surrender gentleness to take on the qualities of a lion. Gentleness and strength must live side by side in this kingdom. All this will be realized if and when “the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord.” Without understanding and knowledge of God, how can there be respect, reverence, and love among people?

Psalm 72 reinforces what we have said. This beautiful psalm is really the job description of the King who rules all the people “from sea to sea.” Embodied within the words are hopes expressive of what Israel believed God had promised to them. The words of the whole psalm help shape the way the gospel writers tell the story of Jesus, and they help us envision what the kingdom of heaven will be like. Again as in Isaiah, it is an inclusive vision with special care extended to the poor of the land.

The Gospel begins: “In those days,” a phrase suggesting a decisive moment in time. John the Baptist appears near the beginning of each of the four Gospels. His appearance on the periphery of the desert, on the periphery of time, calls people to turn to God. John’s demeanor and dress evoke the character of Elijah, the “disturber of Israel.” So is John! We are called to attention by his words. A new age is dawning! The kingdom of heaven is at hand!

We can hear in John’s address what is required. It is not about one’s origin, position, or ritual observance, but who is willing to take up the work that needs doing to make the kingdom a reality. Who possesses the heart of a disciple who daily listens and responds?

December 17, 2017 Third Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 35:1-6a; Psalm 46:6-10; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11

“Are you the One who is to come or shall we look for another?” John’s question may seem puzzling to us because earlier in the narrative (refer to last week’s Gospel) John seemed very certain about who Jesus was and that his coming indicated a turning point in history.

Perhaps John, now in prison, experiences a natural reaction of fear that can at times make us question things we know and call out for reassurance.

When the gospel reading for today is proclaimed alongside the text from Isaiah, an assumption is being made about Jesus' identity within the larger story of Israel, and as such assigns to his life and ministry messianic significance.

This is what Chapter 35 of Isaiah intends to communicate: "Here is your God. . . . He comes to save!" A new age has dawned that brings an end to exile and a joyful return to Zion. The sorry state of all weary and frail people is reversed as the desert will also bloom with abundant life. All things are as they should be; the impossible is possible! One cannot miss the connection between the healing stories in the Gospel (especially Chapters 8-9 of Matthew) and what Isaiah says will happen when God comes to save.

There is another way we might consider the question posed by John and Jesus' response. At that time, there were varied expectations attached to the title "Messiah." Many were expecting a military leader with the power to throw off the yoke of Roman oppression and restore Israel. The question posed by John seems open to both options: "Are you the One who is to come?" What is your agenda?

Jesus' response reveals how he understands his mission. He will not be a Messiah equated with the yielding of power and military rule. This is not the reason for his coming. But he understands that the task given him by his Father is to restore people to wholeness and life and union with God.

Jesus then asks his own question, "What did you go out to the desert to see?" Were you simply curious? Did you go there only to see the reedy waterscape of the Jordan River where John was preaching or were you really committed to what was happening there? The reference to luxurious dress is a contrast with the way John was described for us last week, wearing camel hair, not luxurious clothing, and eating bugs! John evokes the memory of earlier prophets, especially Elijah. Jesus goes on to state that given all John was privileged to see and do, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he! Does this astound us? Well, it should!

A fitting response to what we have heard and pondered is summed up in Psalm 146 assigned for the liturgy this weekend: "My soul gives praise to the Lord" (verse 1). The rest of the psalm offers significant reasons why we are drawn to praise God. The compassionate goodness of God reaffirmed throughout the Bible is reason enough. Again, our God is on the side of the lowly ones and those bowed down by life's burdens; the stranger, the orphan, and the widow are all within his watchful gaze.

When, we might ask, will such a transformation spoken about in today's readings take place? During the final weeks of the Church's year and spilling over into the Advent readings, we have been reminded to stay awake, keep watch and possess a willingness to listen, be wise and act. The advice we hear today from the Letter of James adds patience to the list. All of these warnings and attitudes are part of our faith response.

To believe without question that God has already transformed human existence calls forth from us trust that God will lead us and all will unfold as it should. But how often does God come to us in totally unexpected ways? Acceptance of this brings the kingdom of God to reality within us. Stay awake! Be patient!

December 24, 2017 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-6; Romans 1:1-7; Matthew 1:18-24

In the biblical world, names were significant indicators of the identity, dignity, and role of a person. Joseph the "dreamer" of Genesis may come to mind as we meet Joseph of Nazareth, another "dreamer" through whom God communicates his message. Life unfolds for Joseph, the son of Jacob, who was sold by his brothers into slavery in Egypt. Eventually, he had two sons. Their names are significant: one son was named Manasseh, meaning "God has made me forget [the sufferings I endured at the hands of my enemy]," and the second was named Ephraim, meaning "God has made me fruitful [in the land of my affliction]" (Gn 41:51-52). Names carry a message.

The naming of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew is a task assigned to

Joseph. In Luke's account, Mary is told by the angel to name the child. Each account is unique and different, but we are listening to Matthew who ever so simply states the heart of the matter: "You are to name him Jesus because he will save his people from their sins." Identity and mission are clearly set forth. This is who this child is and what he will do! This is the message of the entire Gospel and of the life of Jesus. It is the crux of our faith and a reminder of Jesus' complete acceptance of the Father's plan to restore us to himself.

The angel's message to Joseph ends with the words "he will save his people from their sins." Matthew continues to reflect on what it all means, and he typically turns to something familiar to give some context to what is taking place around him. He turns to his tradition and to the Book of Isaiah, who also wrote about an expected birth of one who would bring deliverance to the people. Isn't this what Joseph has also just been told?

When Isaiah writes his words in the eighth century BCE, they were intended to give hope to a desperate people. When would they be free of oppressive conquerors? God answers with familiar advice: trust, watch for the signs, the enemies you fear will not have the final word. Matthew applies the message of Isaiah to what is happening in his world: trust in God's abiding presence and faithfulness and his promise to bring peace. Are these not perfectly realized in unexpected ways in Jesus who comes "to save his people from their sins"?

Each week in the readings assigned, there are many points to ponder and various mysteries to consider. These texts are no exception. We might focus on the reading from Isaiah and the great prerogatives of Mary, the virgin and mother. Rightly we render her honor and praise as the one favored by God to bear Jesus in her womb and give birth to the Son of God. Such is the mystery beyond comprehension as we ponder her participation in God's loving plan of which her Son is preeminent.

Fruitful meditation on Mary and her role in salvation coupled with what we have said about the naming of Jesus invite us to enter into the mystery of the incarnation and the One who is about to come to birth in time. Both these points, not one without the other, will establish us firmly where we need to be on this day before Christmas as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the One who has come to free us and restore us to God.

December 25, 2017
The Nativity of the Lord
Christmas

Mass at Midnight: Isaiah 9:1-6; Psalm 96:1-3; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-4

Mass at Dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12; Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-14

Mass of the Day: Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98:1-6; Hebrews 1:1-6; John 1:1-18

The readings for the three Masses of Christmas set before us a particular insight into the meaning of the feast we celebrate. Each of the Mass settings shines a light on the hopes that Israel has treasured for centuries, hopes which are based on the promises God made to them. When we link these hopes with the birth of Christ, we see how his coming brings to full realization everything God has promised. This event is the conclusion of a very long story! It is helpful to be familiar with this long story that precedes Christmas.

Time and space do not permit our considering in any depth the readings for each of the three Masses. Not wishing to reduce the rich significance of each one, let us focus on one common thread that weaves throughout the readings for all three Masses of Christmas.

In each reading, something is being announced or made known or decreed. We detect the idea of a "proclamation" or a "revelation" that carries with it great significance or that announces a change in the way things once were perceived. There has been a shift in reality, and it makes a difference to those who take note of it. During Advent, we were reminded of the importance of being attentive and alert. Now, we are invited to focus more on the need to tell the story, to be part of the announcement, to own what has been revealed and tell others.

In the Gospel of Luke, we read that a decree goes out from Caesar. . . . And thus begins a journey for Joseph and Mary! God unfolds his plan in the midst of human history. It is always thus. In the Gospel for the Mass at Dawn, we hear more of the birth story that includes the announcement made by the angels to the shepherds. The message announces praise to God and peace on earth! The incarnation and birth of Jesus accomplish this!

Both readings from Titus (Mass at Midnight and Mass at Dawn) reveal that the experience of God's presence now takes on a new, tangible form: "the grace of God has appeared, saving all" (Ti 2:11) and "the kindness and generous love of God our savior has appeared . . ." (Ti 3:4). Essentially each reading is saying much the same but in different ways. God's life (grace) and his generous love now have a human face!

In each of the three readings from Isaiah, salvation is announced. Recall we said in an earlier reflection that the name Isaiah is taken from the root word meaning "salvation." The name Jesus also is from that same root and likewise means one who saves. In Isaiah 9, the reading for the Mass at Midnight, we hear a proclamation that darkness has ended and people now walk in the light.

There is a historical context for what Isaiah says here, but the words are fully realized in the new age ushered in by the birth of Jesus. The land in question: "the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" (Is 8:23) refers to the region captured by the Assyrians, a fruitful and productive land, and therefore desirable. This is the same region that centuries later received the preacher from Nazareth who made his home on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. Indeed, a light shone in this region for the world to see!

"The Lord proclaims to the ends of the earth . . . your Savior comes!" (Is 62:11). "How beautiful on the mountains the feet of one who brings good news announcing peace and salvation" (Is 52:7). There is something to tell, and whether proclaimed by God or God's messenger, the good news must go forth!

The readings for the Mass of Christmas Day set before us the beginning of the Letter to the Hebrews and the Prologue from the Gospel of John. Sublime in their message, both speak of a revelation from God through the Son who is the "imprint of the Father's being" (Hebrews) or the Word spoken by the Father from all eternity (John). John the Baptist will bear testimony to the light of revelation in Christ so that all might believe.

The importance of proclaiming the good news of salvation! How is one to come to faith unless one hears the story proclaimed with enthusiasm and deep faith? Emmanuel! God is with us! Rejoice, it is Christmas!





EUCCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Art Review



NATIVITY



THE PRESENTATION OF JESUS IN THE TEMPLE

GIOTTO

John Christman,
SSS

Even for a religiously-minded person, walking through the medieval Christian art collection of any major art museum can be a daunting task. Room after room of Byzantine influenced, golden-backed images of saints staring dispassionately back at you can be monotonous and, unfortunately, tiresome. Our twenty-first-century brains, so inundated with the constant clamorous flow of seemingly any and all imagery is poorly equipped to register, let alone appreciate, the subtleties of such art.

These paintings seem almost lost in history, torn as they are from their original liturgical contexts where their full theological impact could be deeply intuited, even by those unfamiliar with their precise meaning. The eschatological wonder they attempt to impart would seem to fail to register in a society so obsessed with tweets and YouTube sensations.

Perhaps this is one of the contributing factors to the profound and enduring allure of the art of Giotto di Bondone (1266-1337). Against the backdrop of this Byzantine-influenced Italian art that immediately preceded his painting, Giotto's art must have been earth-shattering for its day. Art historians through the centuries have marveled at his insight, ingenuity, and the contemporary feel of his paintings.

The great Victorian art critic John Ruskin once spoke of the "April freshness of Giotto."¹ The great twentieth-century Renaissance art historian Fredrick Hartt named Giotto, "one of the most influential artists who ever lived."² Even our modern eyes tend to feel quite at home within the world of Giotto's paintings. We love his simplicity and clarity of form, his vibrant palette. More than this, our narrative minds are easily pulled into the dramatic scenes he creates.

Speaking of Giotto's frescos, art historian Arthur Pontynen approvingly

observes, “. . . we see the figures presented as real people within a somewhat naturalistic landscape. But it is a naturalism that is informed with divine purpose. It is a fictional composition, but one grounded in experiential truth: it refers to a historical event that occurs within a divine drama.”³

Giotto’s great contribution, as Pontynen intimates, is not simply an aesthetic leap of perception. Giotto is not celebrated simply because he observed nature in greater detail than his European artistic predecessors. Nor is his contribution simply cultural, as his imagery helped open the gates to the Renaissance. Giotto’s contribution is greater still. His aesthetic and cultural contributions were also in deep harmony with a theological worldview: a Bonaventuran scholasticism that invites the viewer, beginning with creation and experience, to ascend to God through the senses, especially through the concepts of harmony, proportion, and light.⁴ Such a nuanced and synthesized worldview expressed in painting is breathtaking, to say the least, and his art a joy to behold.

Of all of Giotto’s art, perhaps his greatest masterpiece is the interior of the Arena Chapel (also known as the Scrovegni Chapel) in Padua, Italy. Giotto was commissioned to paint scenes of the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of the life of Christ. Indeed, he was commissioned to fill the entire chapel with his artwork, much as Michelangelo was commissioned to fill the Sistine Chapel with his artistry; and it is debatable which artist realized the greater achievement.

The Arena Chapel is stunning. Masterpiece after masterpiece fill its walls, from the heart-warming reunion of Saint Joachim and Saint Anne at the news of her long-hoped-for pregnancy, to the heart-wrenching anguish of the angels lamenting the crucifixion of Jesus. Giotto has created a visual narrative so engaging we simply lose ourselves in the dramatic unfolding of salvation history.

The early life of Jesus receives much attention in the cycle of Jesus’ life. We see the visitation of Elizabeth and Mary, the nativity, the adoration of the Magi, the presentation in the temple, the flight into Egypt, the massacre of the innocents, and Jesus in the temple. Throughout this Advent and Christmas season, each of these frescos would be a rich source of prayer and meditation as a type of *Imago Divina*. The humble Christmas Eve, shorn of any affectation or pomp, save the celebratory angels. A fatigued Mary reaching for her newborn Son. Joseph’s countenance registering the full complexity of the moment . . . tired, poor, relieved.

Consider also *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple* with its prophetic grandeur. The prophet Simeon awestruck, beholding with scrutiny the Savior of the world; the prophetess Anna pointing on in wonder to the fulfillment of her dreams. The outstretched hands of Anna, Mary, and the angel, all directing the viewer's attention to the infant Jesus.

And, impressively, in a scene so emphatically presenting Jesus' divinity, Giotto chooses to depict the baby Jesus reaching out for his mother. It's a familiar gesture of a child desiring reassurance amidst all this attention. The divinity and humanity of Christ so subtly and lovingly rendered by Giotto's inspired artistry. As we once again begin our journey through the story of salvation history, one would be hard put to find an artistic guide as absorbing as this 750-year-old Italian artist: Giotto di Bondone.

Notes

¹ Frederick Hartt. *History of Italian Renaissance Art: Painting-Sculpture-Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 1994), 78.

² Hartt, 76.

³ Arthur Pontynen, *For the Love of Beauty: Art, History, and the Moral Foundations of Aesthetic Judgment*. Vol. 4, (London: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 201.

⁴ Cf. Umberto Eco, *History of Beauty*. Ed. Umberto Eco (New York: Rizzoli, 2007). And Umberto Eco, *Art and Beauty in the Middle Ages*, trans. Hugh Bredin (London, Yale University Press, 1986). Cf. also Charles Mitchell "The Imagery of the Upper Church at Assisi" in *Giotto and the World of Early Italian Art: Vol. 4, Franciscanism, the Papacy, and Art in the Age of Giotto*. Ed. Andrew Ladis (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

Poetry

Angels at the Consecration

More numerous than fields
before harvest bread
fills souls longing for light,
the angels gather within a flame

around the banqueting table
singing hosannas in silence,
eternity's pure language of love.
These unseen choirs

with wings bowed down
overwhelm earthly space
awed by their presence.
As Melchizedek's sons

raise the host of life
congregations of tongues
and hands come forward to receive
heaven's brightest gift.

Unaware that angels sweep
all around the sanctuary today,
parishioners walk up
and down aisles of faith.

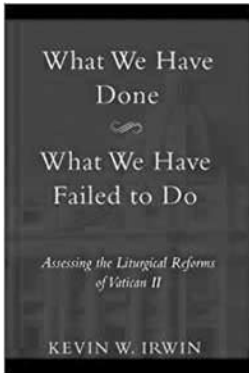
Philip C. Kolin

A Christmas Prayer

Child of Bethlehem, House of Bread,
Man of Jerusalem, City of Peace,
you have blessed us
without limit or condition,
in our greatness and in our misery,
in our folly and in our virtue.
May your heart be within us,
so that we, too, may become
bread and peace for one another.

Author Unknown

Book Reviews



**WHAT WE HAVE
DONE,
WHAT WE HAVE
FAILED TO DO:
ASSESSING THE
LITURGICAL
REFORMS OF
VATICAN II**
Kevin W. Irwin
Mahwah, New
Jersey: Paulist
Press, 2014
272 pp., \$24.95

On pages two and sixteen of this book, Father Irwin shares its purpose: “. . . to shed light on, and to invite discussion about, the experience in which Catholics have been engaged since the Second Vatican Council in implementing and praying the liturgy as reformed after the council.” He begins by focusing on ten specific questions in a reverential tone, “yet not uncritical of what has been done to implement the reform rites.” Irwin cites examples of what we have done very well; I hoped he would have shared a deeper insight into what we have not done well, or “failed to do.”

The title is something I struggle with, for I come from a more positive approach; it is nice for him to focus on the “Confiteor” text, yet he writes, “This book will, I hope, be of particular benefit for all those involved in preparing and leading us in the reformed liturgy: bishops, priests, deacons, readers, servers, cantors, musicians, [Communion] ministers, and the variety of pastoral ministers whose daily efforts shape how and what we celebrate.” The book is of great value for those familiar with a working history of liturgy and would help inform those new to the Church to understand the liturgical transition since the Second Vatican Council.

The book is divided into ten chapters focusing on areas the author deems most important: Church renewal, active participation, making memory together, the sacramental principle, liturgical translations, the proclamation of the word and the liturgical homily, liturgical roles and presiding at liturgy, the arts, liturgical education and mystagogy, and devotions and spirituality. Each chapter is a good assessment of the topic and offers key insights. Irwin highlights that the objective of the liturgical reforms was the renewal of the Church, particularly at the intersection of Church life and liturgy. He cites exposure to the RCIA, the lectionary cycle of readings, the improvement of the liturgical year, especially the Triduum, the anointing of the sick, the liturgy of the hours, and the restoration of evening prayer as examples of this renewal. He offers an excellent reflection on symbol and the history of translating liturgical texts. Irwin carefully points out inconsistency and redundancy in the Church’s language, specifically in the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, about our liturgical life, such as “active participation.” The section “Questions for Liturgical Preaching” should be mandatory reading for preachers.

While I hoped for more insights into the future, this book is an excellent assessment of the history and present reality of liturgical celebration. Irwin is noted for his fine writing, his excellent observations, and his devotion. His on-target analysis reminds us of the prime importance of celebrating the liturgy well, allowing it to become the “source and summit of our lives” and revealing a foretaste of the heavenly banquet.

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

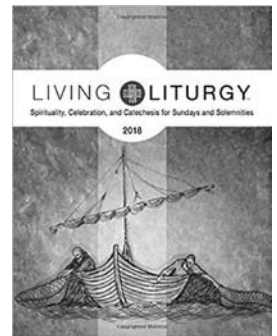
Living Liturgy has been a popular resource “to help people prepare for liturgy and live a liturgical spirituality...” For 18 years, Sister Joyce Ann Zimmerman, CPPS, and Sister Kathleen Harmon, SNDdeN, guided this resource with another rotating author. The publisher, Liturgical Press, wished to “freshen” the look and add a new team of authors for this new liturgical year and the re-launch of this resource.

The layout is similar to past editions, but much easier to follow: the collect, all the readings (including the psalm) are treated, which is an update and helpful to this series. There is a short commentary on each piece of Scripture, sample homily points, reflection questions for small groups, music highlights, a sample Penitential Act, and Universal Prayers. Many of these features have been mainstays and are better crafted than ever.

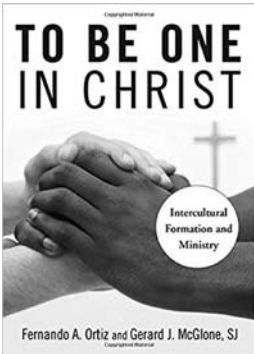
The art each week is too good to have in monochrome. There are three new artists: Deborah Luke, Tanja Butler, and Ned Bustard. In the Preface, there is no mention if the art is available on a website or in color, but one would hope that in later editions it could be, as well as the texts be made “downloadable” for use in parish notebooks.

This is a well-deserved update that I will find helpful in beginning homily and liturgy preparation each week, and I highly recommended that it be added to the pastoral team’s materials for the Eucharist.

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



**LIVING LITURGY
2018:
SPIRITUALITY,
CELEBRATION,
AND CATECHESIS
FOR SUNDAYS
AND
SOLEMNITIES**
Brian Schmisek,
Diana Macalintal,
and Jay Cormier
Collegeville,
Minnesota:
Liturgical Press,
2017
320 pp., \$16.95



**TO BE ONE IN CHRIST:
INTERCULTURAL
FORMATION
AND MINISTRY**
Fernando A. Ortiz
and Gerard J.
McClone, SJ
Collegetown,
Minnesota:
Liturgical Press,
2015
264 pp., \$24.95

This book was a pleasure to read as I have worked in Hispanic communities since 1980 and have read as much as I could about their history and the culture. I think this book begins a new stage in multicultural ministry.

In 1993, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger spoke to the Asian bishops and used the term “interculturality” to explain the dynamic that occurs in working in ministry and is not defined by “interreligious” communication but by interculturality — because the dynamic that occurs between cultures, religious beliefs, and actions only describes a part of what is really taking place.

In 2008, Pope Benedict XVI described his vision of the relationship between Christianity and other faiths in terms of interculturality rather than interreligious. Interculturality is a more wholistic description of what is taking place and what needs to be taking place as people seek to live more dynamically in our multicultural world.

To Be One in Christ is geared toward seminary staffs, including seminary spiritual directors. It examines all aspects of the intercultural preparation needed by those preparing for ministry in order to have the competency necessary to serve people in today’s global environment, which is present in communities everywhere. These aspects include theological, sociological, psychological, and cultural perspectives. The second last chapter describes and explains intercultural immersions and cultural competency — preparing seminarians to minister in today’s global reality. The book ends with a chapter describing the goal of today’s seminary: “A Theology of Intercultural Competence: Toward the Reign of God.”

There are charts in several of the chapters that add to the explanations of the perspectives and are very clear and helpful. Chapter 10 examines several stereotypes and myths about international priests and priests from Latin America, such as cultural diversity does not exist in Latin America, Latin Americans are always late, Latin Americans are less capable of academic excellence and more inclined to manual labor, and Latin Americans are aggressive.

The text looks at training for competency in both Catholic and Protestant contexts and chose seminaries because there are smaller groups studying, but many cultures are represented. The authors place special importance on the need for the seminarians to have a lived experience in different communities around the county — a variety

of cultural experiences. They assert that an eight-week experience is better than a two-week immersion.

This book is a valuable tool to understand that we are more than multicultural. We need to relate to many different cultures and not only to learn about each other, but to learn how to relate to each other and how to live comfortably in a global community. It is about forming community in our fast-changing, multicultural world.

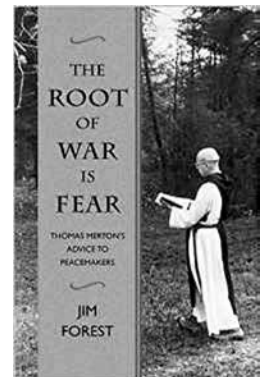
For this reason, the book is just a start, a very good start, on how to educate seminarians for competency in various communities. It would also be a valuable tool for colleges and universities, which are more and more representative of our global world, so that instead of just understanding differences, we might learn how to truly interact and form communities that are inclusive.

Marie Vianney Bilgrien, SSND
Graduate Theological Foundation
Mishawaka, Indiana

Reading *The Root of War Is Fear* is like running into an old friend, Tom, on the streets of Manhattan and inviting him in for a cup of coffee and a chat to “catch up on things.” The thing you will catch up on here is the most serious social issue of the ‘60s, nuclear war. It was not only the then-present threat of the bomb, but Thomas Merton also brings up the unsettling question of Catholic social conscience, the ethical implications of the incarnation and the meaning of human nature and its significance spiritually.

The focus of the book is singularly narrow in content and literary genre. In regards to the latter, it is Merton’s letters which are in the form of personal communication. Merton wrote ten thousand pieces of correspondence — amazingly voluminous. One wonders how all those writings may be related, the seeds of both his art and his books.

As for the content, Merton explores the dimensions, especially from a spiritual perspective, of personal conscience and conscientious objection; and for a mind as bright as Merton’s, it is about everything going on in the world. Merton corresponded with the leading figures of his time regarding these issues.



**THE ROOT OF
WAR IS FEAR:
THOMAS
MERTON'S
ADVICE TO
PEACEMAKERS**
James Forest
Maryknoll, New
York: Orbis Books,
2016
240 pp., \$25.00

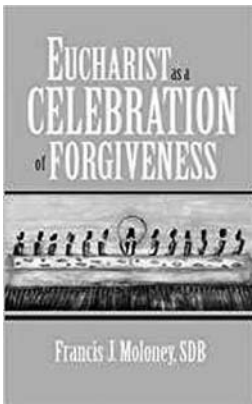
He paid dearly for his public statements on violence and war. He was silenced by the Abbot General of the Trappists. Pressure was brought to bear on the General by the powerful and influential Cardinal Terence Spellman of New York, who was also the chaplain of the United States military services. Abbot Fox allowed Merton to mimeograph the book and mail it to some of his friends.

Reading the book sparks a personal memory of my participation in peace marches at Columbia University in New York City. After the march, there were two FBI agents at my door. They wanted explanations.

The book carries some secondary benefits. The author of the book, James Forest, delves into the birth of the Catholic Worker Movement and a description of Dorothy Day and her friendship with Merton. For me, a most interesting aspect of the book is the witness of the growth of Merton's conscience on nuclear war and the bombing of cities as well as his understanding of the nature of violence itself.

Finally, Pope Francis has called both Thomas Merton and Dorothy Day prophets, an honor both deserve.

Dennis Ruane, SSS
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
Cleveland, Ohio



**EUCHARIST AS A
CELEBRATION
OF FORGIVENESS**
Francis J. Moloney,
SDB
New York, New
York: Paulist Press,
2017
160 pp., \$15.95

Key to an understanding of this book and the theology of Father Moloney is a clear grasp of the concept of doctrine and the concept of teaching. Doctrine is related to creed and faith. Teaching is related to magisterium and teaching authority.


Also important to the theme of this book is the tendency to exclude people from the Eucharist contrasted with the more generous view of the Eucharist as a spiritual food and something needed for the very life of Christians. Pope Francis has pointed out in this context that the Eucharist is not a reward for one's holiness or good works, but a necessary nourishment for sinners, which all Christians are except for Jesus Christ and the Immaculate Virgin Mary.

Moloney introduces his theme in the book's preface and spends two of the four chapters comprising the book on scriptural texts, beginning with the Gospels and followed by the Acts of the Apostles and the

letters of the apostle Paul. A third chapter richly makes the historical argument for the more inclusive origin of eucharistic theology in the patristic writings of the Christian churches of the East and West. This *ressourcement* supports the author's thesis.

The fourth and last chapter makes a final argument from the liturgy (*lex credendi statuat legem orandi*) and the kerygma of the Church for a thousand years before the Gregorian reform under Pope Gregory VII. Finally, pages 101-124 are devoted to endnotes and pages 125-132 to bibliography.

The author served on the International Theological Commission of the Holy See (1984-2002) formerly was the dean of the School of Theology and Religious Studies of the Catholic University of America. He is currently Senior Professional Fellow at Catholic Theological College in the University of Divinity, Melbourne, Australia.

Father Moloney has published numerous scholarly and popular works on the New Testament. A renowned biblical scholar with expertise in the theology of the Eucharist, he wrote *A Body Broken for a Broken People*, which was released by Paulist Press in 2016. 

Ernest Falardeau, SSS
Ecumenist and Senior Associate
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
New York, New York



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

Darren Maslen, SSS


“Eucharist: Living Integrity in the Face”

Integrity has suddenly gained a sense of the sacred through which people are exalted or fall. In politics, public service, the Church, or everyday life, it matters incredibly that what one says corresponds to what one does. Of course, the virtue of integrity has always been honored; it is the state of being whole and undivided. There is a very natural sense of reticence that extends to repulsion, to those who are duplicitous and hypocritical. In my own country, I’ve heard a few times the saying, “That person has more faces than Big Ben!”

Saint Peter Julian Eymard is known as the “Apostle of the Eucharist.” I have come to believe that he is a prophetic voice for our contemporary listening as the “apostle of integrity.” Entering into his interior, private world through writings that were never meant to be published reveals a fascination with one place: The Upper Room, or “Cenacle.”

The Cenacle is the “capitol” of Jesus’ integrity! It is where what he gives as a perpetual memory, the Eucharist, is authenticated in both words and actions. Feet-washing as a practical demonstration of service in his own name; teaching through an extended allegory of vine and branches that image of profound belonging to God. Judas could not be part of it; he leaves the moment of the animation of God’s memory to us, precisely because of his lack of integrity. Subsequently, after a final solution, the attempt to eradicate God’s anointed by torture, resurrection appearances through locked doors, and Pentecost — a participation in the Spirit of God, no less.

The Upper Room is the place of integrity; actions, promises, and life stories weave together in memory, and the Eucharist becomes the action of the divine weaver in us.

A recent visit to our scholastic community in Kandy, Sri Lanka, brought me to the visualization of the truth of the integrity of the Eucharist for the first time. Father Dilan Fernando, SSS, had asked a Buddhist friend of his to read the Bible and narrate what he perceived. What he saw was the absolute undividedness of human stories, into God’s continuing story of triumph over and above the fragility that evokes both Jesus’ story and ours. The same hand giving bread, then nailed, and suddenly pierced, but free. The important word is “same”; that’s the integrity of the celebration of the death and resurrection of the Lord, the Eucharist. 

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Anthony Schueller, S.S.S.

(Signed) Anthony Schueller, S.S.S., Editor, Emmanuel.

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“Jesus was born in Bethlehem, house of bread. It is a temporal birth to reach the spiritual birth in our souls, where it is conceived by the faith of holy baptism. Hence, this admirable definition of the Eucharist by the Church Fathers: an extension of the incarnation. Jesus is incarnating and living in man.”

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

