

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

September/October 2017



Website and Digital Edition

On our website, emmanuelpublishing.org, you will find current short scriptural, theological, and cultural reflections, all from a eucharistic perspective. Information as to subscribing to our digital edition can also be found at emmanuelpublishing.org.

If you are a current subscriber to the print edition of *Emmanuel*, you can request free access to the digital edition. Please send your name, address and account number (as it appears on your mailing label) to emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. We will then send you instructions on how to obtain your digital edition. Thank you for subscribing to *Emmanuel*.

EMMANUEL MAGAZINE (ISSN 0013-6719) is published bimonthly with 6 issues a year, by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. Phone (440) 449-2103. E-mail: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, Ohio and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS (print subscription includes access to digital edition): individual (U.S.) \$35.00 one year/ \$65.00 two years; Canadian and foreign \$40.00 one year/ \$75.00 two years, U.S. currency; single issues \$8.00 plus postage. EDITOR: 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland OH 44143. POSTMASTER: send address change to Emmanuel Magazine, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. ©2017

©2017 BY THE CONGREGATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

EMMANUEL MAGAZINE is a member of the Catholic Press Association. Indexed by The Catholic Periodical and Literature Index.



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
Thomas Dragga
James Menkaus
Gilbert Ostdiek, OFM

COVERS: FRONT/BACK

PHOTOGRAPHS OF
POPE FRANCIS:
Stefano Spaziani 2015, 2017

emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

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



Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 123 Number 5



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

- Answering the Dubia:
Sense and Sensibility in Amoris Laetitia
by Gerald J. Bednar 284

EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

- The Eucharist: Sacrament of Healing
by Justin Chawkan, SSS 294
- M. Eugene Boylan on the Eucharist
by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR 308

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

- Finding the “Gold” in Others:
The Often Missing Yet Necessary
Thread of Religious Life
by Richard Gribble, CSC 319

EUCHARIST & CULTURE

- Art, Music, Film, Poetry, and Books 346

COLUMNS

- From the Editor 282
- Pastoral Liturgy 326
- Breaking the Word 333
- Eucharistic Witness 356



FROM THE EDITOR

People in public life — actors, television personalities, politicians, and the like — often keep their religious beliefs private or, at the opposite end of the spectrum, sometimes become outspoken critics of organized religion and its adherents. For this reason, it was refreshing to run across Sam Polcer’s interview of the noted British actor Ian McShane some months ago in United Airlines’ onboard magazine *Hemispheres*.

After reflecting on various aspects of his profession, McShane moves on to “the power of religion”:

“It’s man’s eternal question: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Is it a joke being played by a higher power? Is life Hobbesian — nasty, brutish, and short? Should it be a thing of beauty? There’s a line of Mr. Wednesday’s [the character McShane portrays in *American Gods*] that amused me: If you have a faith and can smile about that faith, you’re more likely to have a good time than if you’re miserable the entire time or don’t believe in anything at all. And you can argue all you want for or against religion, but without it you wouldn’t have half the great art in the world, or half the great music, or have the great ideas.”

Readers of *Emmanuel* can certainly appreciate McShane’s take on the artistic, aesthetic, and philosophical-theological contributions of religion to human history. And we can acknowledge, too, that at times religion has been used in horrible ways to hurt and do unspeakable violence to others. We see this even in our own day.

As ministers of the Gospel, and as members of a Church whose worship and thinking and acting are shaped and formed by the encounter with God in Christ’s gift of the Eucharist, what exactly are we called to give witness to before the world?

We give witness, of course, to God's truth as we know and understand it as it has been revealed to us by Jesus Christ in his teachings and example. This is important in an age when falsehood often presents itself as truth. In 1 Peter 3:15-16, we are told: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence. . . ." It is *God's gift* of truth and light; we are but instruments.

We witness to integrity of life. In the ordination rite of priests, the bishop instructs those who are being called to the presbyterate: "Your ministry will perfect the spiritual sacrifice of the faithful by uniting it with Christ's sacrifice, the sacrifice which is offered sacramentally through your hands. Know what you are doing and imitate the mystery you celebrate. In the memorial of the Lord's death and resurrection, make every effort to die to sin and to walk in the new life of Christ."

We witness to the transcendent. It is often said that many today have an attention span of about ten minutes and little or no sense of history beyond their immediate experience and context. It is a challenge, then, to invite people to consider something greater than self — God — and to invite them into a relationship with the author and goal of our human existence. The paradox, however, is that the meeting point with the transcendent, the divine, is for us as Catholics the very intimate act of sharing word, and bread and wine, Christ's body and blood, at the table of the Eucharist. May this issue of *Emmanuel* strengthen your faith and your witness!



Anthony Schueller, SSS



Answering the Dubia: Sense and Sensibility in *Amoris Laetitia*

by Gerald J. Bednar

Can mercy and the law exist close to each other, even support one another?

Father Gerald J. Bednar is professor of systematic theology at Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology in Wickliffe, Ohio, and a frequent contributor to *Emmanuel*.

I.

POPE FRANCIS' 2016 PUBLICATION OF THE APOSTOLIC EXHORTATION *AMORIS LAETITIA* (AL) has stirred anxious discussion concerning whether it contains a new doctrine on second marriages. One group maintains that it proposes nothing new. At times, its vague and ambiguous language might seem to suggest a new practice, but these people contend that those passages can be interpreted in ways that have been accepted as common pastoral practice since at least the 1950s.

Another group reads the document differently. For them, AL proposes radical new thinking on second marriages and eucharistic participation. This group complains about the vagueness and ambiguity of critical passages and discerns a definite push forward beyond current doctrinal teaching.

Discussion has grown tense, particularly when people suggest that it can cause a schism in the Church. Issues don't cause schisms. People do. The Catholic Church has emphasized over many years the importance of unity in the Church. Clearly, Catholics are the ones who stay and fight — not the ones who cut and run. Any discussion remains viable and relevant only as it takes place within the Church.

II.

It seems that both the pope and his opponents have serious points to make on the issue of second marriages. I have divided their claims (with apologies to Jane Austen) into two categories: sense and sensibility. Relying primarily on sense, opponents of AL emphasize rational discourse and a dispassionate reading of the law. Although acknowledging the sense of the law but relying primarily on sensibility, the pope emphasizes mercy and compassion. Finally, I will consider whether sense and sensibility can be united so closely as to appear to

be two sides of the same coin.

a. Sense

On September 19, 2016, four cardinals privately issued a set of five questions seeking clarification on issues raised in AL, the so-called “*dubia*” that require “yes or no” answers. After receiving no reply from the pope, they made their letter public and disclosed the five *dubia*, together with an explanatory note.¹

The first of the *dubia* asks how the document can be squared with Saint John Paul II’s *Familiaris Consortio*, 84, which imposes three conditions on couples living in an invalid second marriage. The couple may live together if: 1. the persons concerned cannot separate without committing new injustices; 2. they abstain from acts that are proper to spouses; and 3. they avoid giving scandal. The teaching is based on Matthew 19:3-9, where the Lord proclaims, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for *porneia*, and marries another commits adultery. . . .”

Second: “Does one still need to regard as valid the teaching . . . on the existence of absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts and that are binding without exceptions?” Intrinsically evil acts bind a person in all circumstances without exception. Does AL now claim there are no intrinsically evil acts?”²

Third: “Is it still possible to affirm that a person who habitually lives in contradiction to a commandment of God’s law . . . , finds him- or herself in an objective situation of grave habitual sin. . . . ?” In other words, AL seems to allow for mitigating circumstances for at least some couples living in irregular marriages. Their objective circumstances seem no longer to count. Such couples may still enjoy sanctifying grace, with the right to receive Communion. The cardinals rely on, inter alia, Canon 915, which states that people who “obstinately persist in manifest grave sin are not to be admitted to Holy Communion.” Unable to detect a person’s subjective state of grace, the minister of Communion must rely exclusively on publicly known, objective criteria when denying Communion.

Fourth: Does one still need to hold that “circumstances or intentions can never transform an act intrinsically evil by virtue of its object into an act ‘subjectively’ good or defensible as a choice”? Similar to the second *dubia*, this question asks whether circumstances can transform an intrinsically evil act into something that is “commendable or at



least excusable.”

Fifth: Can conscience assume the role of granting “exceptions to absolute moral norms that prohibit intrinsically evil acts . . . ?” Some priests have fashioned creative pastoral solutions based on the supremacy of conscience. In their view, a person may know very well that he is engaged in adultery on the objective level, but it is possible that God may really be calling him to commit adultery. Of course, the role of conscience is never to remake the moral law, but only to judge the morality of a particular concrete act in light of existing ethical norms.

Sin has terrible consequences, whether one has repented or not; and those who engage in invalid second marriages must suffer the consequences. Mercy is powerless to alter the results of this sin. As one cardinal remarked, “How can we be more merciful than the Lord?” Mercy cannot excuse an invalid marriage, or make it valid.

Given the premises adopted by the cardinals, these arguments make a certain amount of sense. Can sensibility contribute anything to the discussion?

b. Sensibility

Pope Francis has yet to reply to the *dubia*, but that neglect does not imply acquiescence. Famously, Pope Francis has championed mercy as the forgotten virtue in Christian thought and practice today.

Although aware of abstract principles, mercy attends primarily to concrete circumstances. There is no law of mercy. No recipe exists for when and how it should be applied. Mercy subsists in a different realm. It pertains to concrete circumstances that need individual assessment. Mercy resists legal formulation. Nor is mercy an alternative to law. *Mercy is, rather, a way of applying laws.* Jurisprudence that attends only to abstract principles, therefore, can result in a mean-spirited application of the law.

In *Crime and Punishment*, Fyodor Dostoevsky wrote of the villain, Raskolnikov, that “. . . he was young, abstract, and therefore cruel . . .” (Part 4, Chapter 4). Those who do not value experience sufficiently grow too confident in abstract principles. They simply do not appreciate the concrete dilemmas that people can face. For them, the abstract

application of principles tends to cruelty. Mercy, on the other hand, listens for the voice of Jesus in the particular circumstances it faces.

Mercy is so central to the Gospel that Saint Paul doubted that law retained any relevance at all (Rom 10:4; Gal 2:16). Francis understands that in certain circumstances people can paint themselves into a corner. The response that “sin has unfortunate consequences” pays too little attention to the power of mercy.

Francis proposes that in appropriate cases, partners in a second marriage may enter a period of discernment, accompanied by an experienced priest, so they can reflect on relevant issues. After a suitable period of time, they may celebrate a sacramental confession in which they accept an appropriate penance and receive absolution. Communion may follow that discernment and penance (AL, 305).

Discussion around Amoris Laetitia has grown tense, particularly when people suggest it can cause a schism in the Church. Issues don't cause schisms. People do.

Such a case may involve, for example, a man who selfishly leaves his wife early in a valid marriage. He obtains a civil divorce and marries another. Years go by. Eventually, after the second marriage produces four children, the man comes to his senses about the first marriage. He admits his earlier selfish ways and seeks pardon and forgiveness. What does conversion require of him? Is he supposed to leave his second wife and their children to return to his first wife? That would constitute a sinful refusal of his duties to the four children. What if his first wife will not have him back? What if she has remarried? Is there no way for the repentant husband to stay in the second “marriage” and still receive Communion?

As indicated in the first of the *dubia*, the traditional response to this unfortunate circumstance requires him and his second wife to live in a “brother-sister” relationship — denying to each other normal conjugal relationships. Some circumstances may indeed call for such an arrangement. Some may not. Can nothing be done?

Each of the *dubia* submitted by the cardinals revolves around the notion that these second marriages always constitute adultery, and



are, therefore, intrinsically evil. Let's explore that notion.

First, as noted in the *dubia*, an intrinsic evil has no exceptions. But in the very scriptural passage cited in the *dubia*, the Lord mentions two exceptions. First, Moses allowed divorce because of the stubbornness of his people (Mt 19:8). Second, Jesus himself grants the exception of "*porneia*" (Mt 19:9). Most likely, *porneia* refers to null marriages, which should never have been contracted in the first place. But here the issue becomes murky. Null marriages are not really marriages. Well, then, what are they? No one would say that such couples lived in sin before the annulment. Those marriages certainly looked valid at the beginning. They are certainly treated as marriages until a final declaration of nullity is issued. Oddly, the canonical validity of a marriage can coincide with its existential nullity.

Joseph Fitzmyer claimed that most biblical scholars would say that the more primitive form of Matthew 19:8-9 is found in Mark 10:11-12 where the Lord's prohibition against divorce takes an absolute form ("Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery"). Matthew reformulates the question in a way that looks for an exception, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife *for any cause?*" (Mt 19:3). When Matthew reports the Lord's reply, he feels free to add the *porneia* exception.³ While the change leaves the prohibition against divorce intact, it renders it more complex and nuanced. Are such changes legitimate?

It is not as if this sort of solution were without precedent. Paul did the same sort of thing approximately 30 years before Matthew even wrote his Gospel (see 1 Corinthians 7:12-15). The Pauline privilege allows the dissolution of valid non-sacramental marriages, and it constitutes another exception to the rule against divorce and remarriage. If a married man wishes to convert to Christianity and his non-Christian wife wishes to separate from him or will not let him practice the faith in peace, the Pauline privilege permits the man to divorce and enter a second marriage to a Christian woman (see Canon 1143). The privilege has long been recognized as an exception to the ban against second marriages.

Fitzmyer raises an important point: "If Matthew under inspiration could have been moved to add an exceptive phrase to the saying of Jesus about divorce that he found in an absolute form in . . . his Marcan source . . . , or if Paul likewise under inspiration could introduce into his writing

an exception on his own authority, then why cannot the Spirit-guided institutional Church of a later generation make a similar exception in view of problems confronting Christian married life of its day. . . ."⁴

In fact, that happened in the so-called the Petrine privilege (which applies to marriages in which only one person is baptized). The Petrine privilege is given at the discretion of the pope. Both Pauline and Petrine privileges originate in circumstances where pastoral mercy seems to warrant the dissolution of the first non-sacramental (but valid) marriage in favor of a second marriage, which is sacramental.

Mercy is the sensibility with which Christians interpret the sense of the law.

Nor will it avail opponents to claim that such exceptions apply only to non-sacramental marriages. Jesus did not limit his prohibition against divorce to sacramental marriages. That category did not exist in his day. Truth be told, the Pauline and Petrine privileges, as Fitzmyer claimed, are exceptions that arise from the "Spirit-guided institutional Church of a later generation." In these cases, the exceptions are not so much a commentary on the indissolubility of marriage as they are affirmations of the centrality of mercy. Furthermore, the Church has long recognized that, if a just cause exists, the pope may grant a dispensation even from a valid sacramental marriage if it has been ratified but not consummated (Canon 1698). If the dispensation is granted, the partners are free to remarry without fear of committing adultery. Matthew offers a surprisingly positive characterization of a divorce involving a non-consummated marriage when he reports Joseph's intentions in 1:19.

It seems that in AL the pope continues a practice that has not only historical warrant, but a biblical basis as well.

c. The Unity of Sense and Sensibility

Is it possible to bring together the concerns of both sense and sensibility? Are the two necessarily at loggerheads with each other?

The problem may not be as difficult as it sounds. Law and mercy belong together in the Christian dispensation. One need only perceive the two correctly to discover their unity.



The Christian never needs to choose between mercy and the law. Rather, mercy constitutes *a way of interpreting and applying the law*. One can enforce the law with mercy or with harshness. Mercy is the sensibility with which Christians interpret the sense of the law. Sometimes mercy will produce a hug, and sometimes a kick in the pants. It depends on the circumstances.

The *dubia* treat the pope's exhortation on mercy as if he were trying to fashion a new doctrine. He is not. He is trying to incorporate the correct way of interpreting and applying the law, and *that* cannot itself become a law. It is not as if the pope were making a new law, but refusing to say clearly what it is. The part of AL that looks like new doctrine is really the application of mercy, which cannot be "doctrinized."

Matthew showed how Jesus kept sense and sensibility together in his Gospel. He consistently features Jesus as applying the law, but with nuance. Mercy informs his use of the law. Matthew protects against legalism and authoritarianism by insisting that the voice of Jesus be heard in the application of any law.⁵

Matthew consistently reports Jesus mercifully relaxing the application of the law in appropriate circumstances. For example, he will not allow a strict observance of the Sabbath laws to prevent a simple act of mercy that dispels the hunger of his disciples (see Mt 12:1-12). Moreover, mercy sometimes demands more than the law. So Jesus will not allow the son to bypass his obligation to his parents by declaring certain property as dedicated to the Lord (Mt 15:3-6; Mk 7:11). *Mercy in both of these circumstances overrides the law without overturning it*. Pope Francis seeks to do the same in the context of the law regarding some second marriages.

The *dubia* need to be reformulated in view of the above discussion. The issue is not whether adultery is permissible. Clearly it is not. More accurately stated, the issue is whether a second marriage must always be characterized as adultery in every circumstance. That precise question has not been addressed before, not even in *Familiaris Consortio*. The Church has a history of crafting merciful exceptions to accommodate difficult cases.

To answer the *dubia* directly, Pope Francis would not deny the existence of absolute moral norms, nor would he claim that circumstances can

permit one to commit intrinsically evil actions, nor does he think that one who lives continuously in adultery can simply live in the state of grace, nor does he think that conscience can change moral norms. He also thinks that the brother-sister relationship can be useful in the right circumstances.

The problem is whether a second marriage, even if initially invalid, necessarily results in an adulterous relationship. All agree that soon after a divorce from a valid marriage and upon remarriage, the guilty party should repent and reconcile. If there is no reconciliation, as years pass, the situation of the parties may change. Might this mean that a canonically invalid marriage may become existentially valid? Or that perhaps a new category must be devised to cover this situation?

Sinners sometimes have no choice but to live with the consequences of their actions. Where it is within the power of those who care, relief ought to be given simply because Christians strive to imitate their merciful God. Both Tradition and Scripture appear to give the Church such power.

Through prayer, Scripture, and experience with those who suffer, attentive pastors can maintain merciful hearts.

Francis agrees with the sense of the prohibition against divorce, but thinks that the sensibility of mercy must be added to avoid a one-sided misapplication of the law. The result looks confusing because opponents try to force sensibility into a rule that is compatible with the rest of the rules. They assume that Francis is trying to formulate a new law or a new principle when in fact he is only trying to incorporate compassion into the application of the old rules.

The pope's position should not be viewed as a softening of the law — as if permission for divorce were being granted. AL does not treat divorce as any more virtuous or permissible than present laws allow. It does not look forward to declare some divorces as “tragic but good” and others as evil. It looks backward to see the mess caused by the sin, and to see whether mercy to contrite parties might make reconciliation and Communion possible again. It tries to help couples pick up the pieces, and resume the Christian journey. Divorce is not only tragic, it is wrong; and mercy shown to those guilty of divorce



does not make it right.

Both the sense of the law and the sensibility of Jesus must be preserved and unified. Jesus does not abrogate the law, but neither does he use it simply to condemn those who run afoul of its requirements.

III. Pastoral Challenges

More severe problems concern AL's implementation and its presentation to the public.

In a sense, these issues do not present a "public" problem, but one that concerns very particular and private pastoral circumstances. The application of AL's exhortations will likely be inconsistent and sloppy, but at least they will encourage pastors to interpret laws mercifully, and not "as if they were stones to throw at people's lives" (AL, 305). The Church should not be intimidated by the potential for irresponsible reporting by the media.

A further issue concerns admission to Holy Communion. Currently, those who are conscious of mortal sin need to refrain from Communion until they have received absolution. Is this a matter of "divine law"? If so, on what grounds? AL adopts an approach to 1 Corinthians 11:27 (concerning those who receive Communion "unworthily") that is far more informed than previous magisterial treatments (AL, 185-186). Jesus did not exclude properly disposed people from table fellowship. Nor should we. While Francis J. Moloney correctly warns that Scripture does not endorse a "free for all" at Communion,⁶ might the current practice be a matter of Church discipline that can be changed at the discretion of the pope?

As the pope wrote, ". . . the Eucharist is not a prize for the perfect, but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak" (AL, 305, note 351). People who join the Communion line at Mass quietly but inevitably declare their state of grace to the shame of those left behind. Was Communion ever meant to feed the potential *hubris* of those standing in line, or to call attention to the apparent sinfulness of those left kneeling in the pews? Wasn't it intended to nourish one back to health, and to avoid creating scandalous divisions, as the pope noted?

Vatican II's *Lumen Gentium* (8) describes the Church as "embracing sinners in its bosom." A Church that holds at arm's length couples caught in these bleak circumstances can hardly be described as

“embracing sinners in its bosom.” Pastors should not be made to feel as if they are cheating when their counsel permits couples to decide to receive Communion in proper circumstances.

Although mercy cannot be codified, it can be learned. Through prayer, Scripture, and experience with those who suffer, attentive pastors can maintain merciful hearts. The most difficult aspect of AL consists in its reliance on the expertise of the pastor. Perhaps bishops in each diocese can identify talented pastors who might serve well in assisting people who must make the very difficult judgments required under AL.

IV.

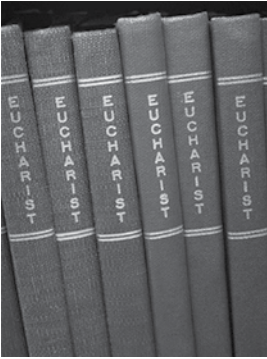
At the conclusion of *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen portrays the two Dashwood sisters, Elinore and Marianne (representing sense and sensibility, respectively), as both married, and “living almost within sight of each other, . . . without disagreement between themselves. . . .”

The Church needs to do more than have sense and sensibility reside “almost in sight of each other.” It must hear the voice of Jesus within the application of its laws, as Matthew insists. It must strive for the unity of Christ’s sense and sensibility so that both may not only avoid disagreement, but also support one another — with mercy informing the application of the law. Only then will marital realities come closer to reflecting the kingdom.



Notes

- ¹ Cardinal Walter Brandmüller, Cardinal Raymond Burke, Cardinal Carlo Caffarra, Cardinal Joachim Meisner, “Seeking Clarity: A Plea to Untie the Knots in *Amoris Laetitia*,” *Catholic Register*, catholicnewslive.com/story/601268, accessed on March 17, 2017.
- ² See Brandmüller et al., “Seeking Clarity,” “Context,” Doubt Number 2, Paragraph 3.
- ³ Joseph Fitzmyer, SJ, “Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence,” *Theological Studies*, volume 37:2 (June 1976): 223.
- ⁴ Joseph Fitzmyer, SJ, “Matthean Divorce Texts,” 224.
- ⁵ Raymond Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (New York: Paulist Press, 1984), 136.
- ⁶ Francis J. Moloney, SDB, *A Body Broken for a Broken People: Divorce, Remarriage, and the Eucharist* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2015), 229, 231.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

The Eucharist: Sacrament of Healing

by Justin Chawkan, SSS

Can we say that the Eucharist is a sacrament of healing as well as nourishment?

Father Justin Chawkan is the vicar provincial of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Sri Lanka. He teaches at the National Seminary in Kandy and Aquinas College in Colombo, and is a resource person to the National Liturgy Commission.

THEOLOGY IS A LIVING REALITY AND HAS TO DO WITH HUMAN BEINGS AND CREATION. Insofar as it is a human reality, it embraces them in a context. It is concerned about situations of life, being also dynamic to changing circumstances. Divorced from historical events and daily life, it remains abstract, making little sense to us. For theology, context, then, is "a key to describe historical events which the Church and its theologians could not avoid to interpret in order to discern God's hand in them and to define the stand they had to take."¹ The aforementioned text has clearly emphasized the importance of theology being contextualized in a human history.

This perspective is true and manifested deeply in sacramentology. For that reason, Karl Rahner has emphasized that in sacraments there is an abundant offer of grace and that grace is "made manifest in the concrete conditions of history and of human life."² For Rahner, as Leijssen has pointed out, "Daily life is never a graceless reality. Starting both from creation and from its final destination, this life is already radically deep in the root of its being (*Daseinsgrund*), permeated with grace and divine life."³ It is, then, clear that the sacraments embrace human beings just as they are, with "their laughter, tears, loving, living and dying."⁴ In this article, I would like to explore the sacrament of the Eucharist and how it embraces our humanity with its special power to heal.

In order to achieve this purpose, there are two major concerns: First, we need to establish the historical background of sacraments so as to understand its early Christian perspective although there was no generic name as such. The nature of sacraments as signs will then be developed with the contributions of patristic and Thomist thought.

We will also include some reflections on sacraments as encounters with Christ and the transformation of human realities. Second, the sacrament of the Eucharist will be looked at in its powerful capacity to heal. These aspects of the Eucharist will prepare the way to experience Christ as the healer through the gift of himself.

Sacraments: From the Early Christian Point of View

Paul, in his letters, does not use a single word like “sacraments,” although the reality is very much embedded in the early Christian community. The early Christian community continued the mission of Christ, proclaiming the Good News. Schanz maintains that the apostles and fellow preachers not only announced that the eschatological kingdom had arrived in the person of Jesus, but they were the messianic community on its way to the kingdom. It is exactly here, in the community of faith that the ritual communal celebrations could be located and become meaningful.⁵

Greek Christians employed the term “mysteries” to refer to the sacramental rituals. *Mysterion*, which was applied to liturgical celebrations, propagated the understanding of the celebration of sacraments as mysteries (cf. 1 Cor 2:7-13). It is to be noted that the mysteries of God which the early Christian community celebrated, in return, made an impact on the lives of the people. We can, therefore, conclude that in sacraments the early Christians not only celebrated the mysteries of God and thereby worshipped God, but also understood that these sacraments were meant to benefit the human beings who took part in them.

The ancient principle *sacramenta pro populo* confirms the belief that in the sacraments were means through which the people benefitted. They experienced God’s blessings, nourishment, and healing through sacramental celebrations and began to believe that salvation came through sacraments and that they were to overcome sinfulness and come close to God by means of sacraments.

We must keep in mind that at this time the term *sacramentum* or *mysterion* never referred to Christian rites. There was sacramental sharing as an expression of oneness in the Lord when the community gathered “to hear the apostles’ teaching and for fellowship, for the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). There was sacramental preaching of the word which was often followed by a ritual washing in order to expressively show the change of heart. The rituals repeatedly performed among Christians were expressions of inner conversion.



These rituals and the realities were not mere human performance. They were, as rightly stated by Joseph Martos, signs of graciousness, “free gifts of divine grace.”⁶ One could, therefore, observe the deep sacramental theology behind the Scriptures and the simple lifestyle of the early Christian community. While the Scriptures furnish basic principles for a later theological understanding of the sacraments, one must remember the progressive changes sacraments have undergone.

Sacraments: A Historical Perspective

For the fathers of the Church, the Bible was the word of God, and the words were very effective. They, therefore, took the Bible very seriously and in many cases followed it literally: “If the Scriptures said that baptism forgives sins, then it must be so. If at his Last Supper Jesus said, ‘This is my body,’ then the eucharistic bread must indeed be his body. And if in imposing their hands, the apostles conferred the Holy Spirit, thus when the successors of the apostles did the same the Spirit must be conferred.”⁷ In addition to the Bible, they also took their daily experiences into account. The theological conclusions they derived from the Scriptures were in conformity with their daily experiences. What is evident here is the connection between sacramental rituals and the realities they symbolized. For them, the *sacramenta* were effective symbols, causing what they signified. The effects of the sacraments were real because through them they entered into mysterious realities where they encountered God. In this way, there was an opening to the deepest meanings and values in life.

Apart from their knowledge of the Old Testament, the fathers of the Church were also convinced of the sacramental practices which were coming from the traditional background of the apostles. For instance, whereas the Bible was vague about the baptism of infants, the accepted belief was that it was not improper. Influenced by Greek philosophy, they were able to develop a philosophical faith in the rational order. While believing that there was a dimension of reality beyond the visible world, they were confident that the mysteries could partly be understood.

In the patristic period, just as it was during the apostolic period, there was no general term to cover the sacramental reality. However, the fathers of the Church developed the Christian sacraments into richly symbolic rituals. For example, in the second century, a ceremony of Christian initiation was developed in comparison with the rituals of

the pagan religions. Non-Christians were not allowed to take part in the final part of the ritual. Clement of Alexandria explained this ritual in terms of religious secrecy. Having known both the pagan and Christian rites, he developed Christian initiation, in terms of pagan rites, as “representation of sacred realities in signs and symbols, metaphors, and allegories which only the initiated could understand.”⁸ Later, even the Christian rites were referred to as mysteries. When Christianity became the dominant religion of the Roman Empire, the pagan roots of the word *mysterion* were also forgotten. Eventually, the Christian rituals were referred to as mysteries.

In each sacrament, in particular in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, there is an encounter with Christ.

Tertullian speaks of sacraments as “covenanted channels of divine grace.”⁹ He employed the term *sacramentum* in order to speak to his Latin audience. It is said that he was the first one to use the word *sacramentum* of both baptism and the Eucharist.¹⁰ Originally, the word *sacramentum militiae* referred to the oath of allegiance by which a soldier pledged his services to the Roman Empire. So, when Tertullian called Christian baptism a “sacrament,” he based his understanding on this original meaning of the term and thereby underlined the commitment of a person. However, the commitment was not to the Roman Empire but to Jesus Christ. In other words, Tertullian illustrates baptism as a loyalty pledge and consecration to Christ. He developed the doctrine of the Eucharist as a signifying reality. He spoke of the bread and wine in the Eucharist as “symbols” that represent the body and blood of Christ. He specifically stated that these were not the literal body and blood of the Lord. Tertullian maintained that when Jesus said “This is my body,” he was speaking figuratively and that he consecrated the wine “in memory of his blood.”¹¹

The sacramentology of Augustine is of utmost important, not because it provided a definition, but because it led us to the heart of the sacramental mystery. His writings on sacraments were so important that in the subsequent centuries, especially when new questions came up, theologians kept repeating what Augustine said and elaborated it in their theological perspectives. He called *sacramentum* a sacred sign, a sign of a sacred thing. The words *mysterion* and *sacramentum* were not distinguished by him. The meanings of *sacramentum-mysterion* were in a broader context.



For instance, the baptismal ceremony was a sacrament. At the same time, the baptismal seal was also a sacrament. He thus affirmed that if one was baptized validly, there was no need for repetition. If one is a Christian once, she or he is a Christian always.¹²

According to Augustine, the sacraments as signs do not have a saving effect unless they are linked to the word of God. That is why, for Augustine, the word comes to the element and becomes sacrament. This approach results in his concept of a sacrament as a “visible word,” *verbum visibile*.¹³

In brief, Augustine does not offer a definition of a sacrament in the precise terms. However, Thomas Aquinas took up his opinion that a sacrament was a sign and further developed it in his sacramentology. For him, a sacrament was a sign which has a threefold function: “It is at once commemorative of that which has gone before, namely, the passion of Christ, and demonstrative of that which is brought about in us through the passion of Christ, namely, grace, and prognostic, i.e., a foretelling of future glory.”¹⁴ Based on the cause analysis of Aristotle, he illustrated sacraments as the instrumental cause. He said that if grace is in the sacraments, it is in virtue of a certain instrument power transient and incomplete in its natural mode of being. Accordingly, sacraments were not the ultimate cause. They were external rituals described as signs of God.

A question now arises: If sacraments were the instrumental cause, why did Aquinas claim that they were necessary? Why couldn't God bring people salvation without gestures? In other words, if God can communicate directly, what is the need of sacraments?

Thomist understanding on the *incarnate word* defended sacraments as signs under observations. The first is the characteristic of human nature which is led to the spiritual reality through bodily and sensible reality. The second is based on the sinful nature of human being. The same bodily realities inclined to sin can be transformed to be realities for healing and remedying. Thirdly, human activities are centered on bodily realities. You cannot divorce the spiritual realities from the bodily reality. Indeed the spiritual realities are mediated in the bodily.¹⁵ Thus, he proved signs to be part and parcel of human life. Signs, then, are instrumental causes, but necessary for communication.

In a similar manner, sacraments are also instrumental causes, but

necessary for God to communicate to his people. It concluded that without signs such as the sacraments, people would not experience God. Having developed sacraments as signs, Thomas further sees that faith and sacraments are inseparable. "Faith makes the symbols, the sacraments, known and understood and through them unites men to Christ. There can be no part in the mystery of the sacrament without faith; faith alone enables us to interpret these signs."¹⁶

By the early Middle Ages, the emphasis was on the divinity of Jesus. This was partly because the Church wanted to react to heresies such as Arianism, which denied the divinity of Jesus totally.¹⁷ In the process of defending herself, the Church overemphasized the divinity of Jesus. With this background, there was a stress on *ex opere operato*, neglecting *ex opera operantis*. That is to say that importance was given to the work done by its nature, while neglecting the conditions of persons who performed them. In other words, God works simply through the act or deed of administering the outward element.

Due to the overemphasis on the objective power of grace received through sacraments, the celebration of the sacraments was seen as almost automatic and magical. The reformers, mainly Martin Luther opposed to this magical and automatic idea as it had no reference at all to the spiritual disposition of the recipient. Luther, while agreeing that a sacrament was a visible sign of an invisible reality, argued that the sacramental power came through God and was released only through the faith of the one received it. Thus, he placed an emphasis on the faith of the believer which was necessary for the effectiveness of sacraments.

Against the Lutheran Reformation, the Council of Trent reiterated the Catholic teaching on sacraments. While acknowledging the primacy of faith, it endorsed the view that the sacraments contain the grace they signify. It is observed, however, that since the time of Trent there had been more emphasis on the effectiveness of the sacraments, creating a separation between the sacramental doctrine and the mystery of Christ. As a result, sacraments continued to be interpreted as magical and mechanical. The term *ex opere operato* thus deteriorated from its original conception in scholastic theology.

Sacraments: A Contemporary Perspective

Contemporary sacramentology does not do away with the traditional



understanding of sacraments which we have, so far, seen. Instead, in contemporary sacramentology, there is a rereading of the traditional words and the explanations of those words in the light of new experiences of sacraments. A critical development of contemporary sacramentology is achieved by an entry into the "heart of the Church's mystery."¹⁸ The shift of emphasis is from looking at sacraments as "channels of grace" to describing them as "actions of the Church" in which Christ and the Spirit are operative. Moreover, it gives space for the expression of experiences and cultures through which one can comfortably embody his or her faith, while those signs become means of grace.

Convinced by the essence of the teaching of Thomas Aquinas who built up his sacramental rituals in philosophical terms of Aristotle, Schillebeeckx followed a different path, defining sacraments as encounters with Christ. To explain this reality, he finds a close equivalent in human encounters. Accordingly, every human exchange proceeds in and through the body. When there is a spiritual influence on another, encounters through the body are also necessarily involved. So, the human encounter proceeds in the visible body.

In a deep encounter, two persons experience the mystery of the other. Schillebeeckx connects this existential encounter of persons and argues that if the human love and all the human acts of Jesus possess a divine power, then the realization in human shape of this saving power necessarily includes the manifestation of salvation. In other words, salvation includes sacramentality. In sacraments, therefore, we encounter the divine reality: "Through the sacraments, we are placed in living contact with the mystery of Christ the High Priest's saving worship. In them, we encounter Christ in his mystery of Passover and Pentecost. Sacraments are this saving mystery in earthly guise. This visible manifestation is the visible Church."¹⁹ According to Schillebeeckx, sacraments as encounters with Christ are fruitful since they communicate God's grace.²⁰ To my eyes, he has been very successful in reexamining the traditions and reinterpreting them in modern language, while being faithful to the essence of Church teaching.

The Second Vatican Council followed an experiential approach to sacraments, relating them to basic human experiences such as celebrations, sharing, caring, forgiveness, sickness, etc. Karl Rahner, the most influential theologian of Vatican II, based his sacramentology on existentialism and phenomenology. According to him, there is self-transcendence in being human. Each human action symbolizes

who we are. Sometimes, we tend to do something new, go beyond or transcend who and what we were before.

Sacraments are actually part of a larger cosmic history of grace. The whole world is charged with God's power, his presence to humankind. In sacraments, one receives the life of grace that permeates and guides the history of the world. When our daily life is thought to be relatively unholy, secular, and profane, the purpose of the sacraments is to gain strength, health, and grace in order to lead our existence toward God.²¹ Sacraments, thus, accompany human persons in various stages of their life, from birth to death, from womb to tomb, giving a significant moral and social support to individuals.

Through a creative remembrance of the paschal mystery of Christ, we are able to stand in the garden of Gethsemane and place our sickness and pain, suffering, and hurt along with the suffering of Christ.

Scholars observe that one of the valuable insights which entered sacramentology during and after Vatican II is the understanding of sacraments as a language which speaks and conveys meaning. Toward this end, David Power observes that the sacramental language consists of sounds that speak to the human being in the world while completely being in relation to transcendent reality. In the words of Power, "What the ritual, the word, and the prayers do is to open up the space for the reception of this gift and for the recognition of its presence. The sacrament names this gift as God's self-gift, and as the gift which forms and shapes the Church."²² In sacramental celebrations, the gifts of Christ and the Spirit touch the very lives of the people within the ritual actions and prayer.

In celebrating the fruits of the Second Vatican Council, contemporary sacramentology looks at sacraments as communal. The emphasis is placed on the assembly that celebrates the sacraments actively and meaningfully. People at the celebration of sacraments are not only participants, but are celebrants. In the act of coming together, the paschal event of Christ is recalled and re-presented. When celebrated meaningfully, the sacraments create a special relationship between God and believers. Through sacraments, believers experience the presence of God in the world and celebrate it in sacramental symbols. On the one hand, God's offer of salvation is assured and celebrated.



On the other hand, the acceptance and acknowledgement of that offer is “proclaimed, made real, and celebrated in ritual actions.”²³

The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist

On the night before his death, Jesus had supper with his disciples, during which he gave them, and us, the everlasting memorial of the gift of his body and blood. Since that night, Christians have remembered and celebrated Christ’s risen presence in their lives through participation in the Eucharist. As the apostle Paul reminds us, every time we eat and drink of the Lord’s body and blood, we remember (1 Cor 11:23-27) Christ’s giving of himself in bread and wine. Our reception of this precious gift allows us to share in the saving mystery of Christ.

This is the sacrament in which God’s gift, together with the Holy Spirit, is communicated again and again in the various circumstances in which the Eucharist is celebrated. In uniting with Jesus’ actions while at table with his disciples, the community actualizes in the celebration the full meaning of this precious gift of his body and blood. The celebration finds its climax in the communal action that shows acceptance to the revelation of the sacramental elements of bread and wine.

The sacramental elements may be looked at as though they were the presence of Christ and the salvific action. But the immediate significance of the elements is to represent the communion initiated with others. In the words of Power: “The bread and wine are filled with the presence of earth and human hands and with the presence of table companions with whom there is a shared hospitality.”²⁴ The bread and wine, thus, focus on human existence in the world and their oneness with each other. They are gifts of creation and the heart of communion. The Church makes use of them to celebrate and transform life events. Along with those gifts, people bring their own stories and their sufferings. They are gifts, differently obtained, differently perceived, differently respected, but offered at the altar as an expression of the deep urges and needs of life.

In every Eucharist, we recall Christ’s life, death, resurrection, and parousia. Nevertheless, it must go beyond mere recalling to putting the participants truly in touch with their present realities of life. As we break the bread, bless the cup, and share them, the past is relived and the future is anticipated. For Monika Hellwig, one cannot possibly

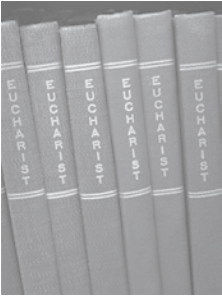
remember the death of Jesus while ignoring the suffering and the pain of the world. One cannot simply cross over to the Father through the remembrance of the sacrifice of Jesus while leaving behind in the world the poor and the oppressed.²⁵ Rather, one must be willing to embrace humanity with its pain and sorrow, joys and struggles. Paul Bernier cautions us “to guard against exercising total reverence and dedication to Christ present in the Eucharist while failing to honor his presence in our sisters and brothers in whom he dwells.”²⁶

In the face of the deepest suffering of the world, we often stand helpless, powerless, and silent. Nevertheless, the Eucharist prompts us to demonstrate God’s love and compassion even in a small way by extending pastoral care to our neighbor, brothers and sisters in need. Toward this end, the celebration of the Eucharist challenges all the evil forces that cause suffering and death. It reminds us that injustice and suffering do not have the final word. We are called to fight ceaselessly against all that is evil.

In all this, we are reminded that we are not alone, but God is present in a real way through the Eucharist. Pope Benedict XVI has rightly asserted in *Spe Salvi* that “God cannot suffer, but he can suffer with. Man is worth so much to God that he himself became human in order to suffer with man in an utterly real way — in flesh and blood — as is revealed to us in the account of Jesus’ passion. Hence, in all human suffering we are joined by one who experiences and carries that suffering with us.”²⁷ And so, our celebrations of the Eucharist must always remain critical of every form of suffering, injustice, oppression, individualism, and domination. Through a creative remembrance of the paschal mystery of Christ, we are able to stand in the garden of Gethsemane and place our sickness and pain, suffering and hurt along with the suffering of Christ.

The Eucharist: Sacrament of Healing

Healing is to be understood as a process of restoring functional wholeness. It means the healing of the entire person. The parable of the Good Samaritan can be used as an example. In it, the wounded man’s physical wounds are healed through the care and support of the Samaritan; afterward, he is taken to a safe place where the healing process continues to completion (cf. Lk 10:25-37). The Eucharist must be looked at as a channel of God’s love and grace in the midst of sickness, pain, or separation from God, family, or friends in order to



realize an integral healing of mind and body.

Inspired by the total gift of Christ, the Eucharist should become “the source and summit of Christian life”²⁸ in the process of healing of one’s self. The Eucharist is received for healing and salvation, not in the sense that it abolishes entirely the sickness, brokenness, suffering, or finitude, but rather in the sense that it offers a view of how Christian life addresses these negative experiences and how Christ himself shares with us the pains and suffering of life. Jesus himself went through the darkness of suffering and death himself. The sacrament of the Eucharist sets forth these facets of Jesus’ life and death.

At every Eucharist, the proclamation of the word of God makes present the love and healing presence of the Lord Jesus. People are touched as the word of God is read and shared, bringing meaning to their lives. As the author of Hebrews rightly states, “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword” (4:12). The Second Vatican Council endorsed that in the celebration of the Eucharist, Scripture is unfolded in a most solemn way in order to provide believers “with a richer diet of God’s word.”²⁹

When Scripture is read, the Holy Spirit enables the people to listen and attune their hearts to the voice of God. Prompted by the Holy Spirit, the word urges the people to enter into a dialogue with the Lord who continues to heal, sustain, and guide his people. In the words of Lathrop, “Hearing the Bible, we are gathered into a story, we have a place for our sorrow to sink.”³⁰ He further illustrates God’s grace that is being mediated through the biblical texts: “The texts are made to carry us, who have heard the texts and been included in its evocations, into this very transformation: God’s grace is present in our lives. Texts are read here as if they were the concrete medium for the encounter with God.”³¹ Thus, in the biblical texts, God’s actions are remembered to reshape the history of the community in the light of God’s continual presence nourishing and guiding his people.

Along with the word, we are also graced and nourished with the healing body and blood of Jesus in the Eucharist. The prayer of the centurion repeated at every Mass before receiving Holy Communion, namely, “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed” (Mt 8:8), is a constant reminder that the healing the Eucharist offers is essential, powerful, and eternal. Time and time again, people have testified to

powerful healings of body, mind, and spirit that have occurred through the Eucharist. The council also reiterated the Church's conviction of nourishment received both from the table of the word and the Eucharist. It said, "The Church has always held the divine Scriptures in reverence no less than it accords to the Lord's body itself, never ceasing — especially in the sacred liturgy — to receive the bread of life from the one table of God's word and Christ's body, and to offer it to the faithful."³²

Finally, the dismissal itself brings about the healing dimension of the Holy Eucharist. The Mass ends with words of mission: "*Ite, missa est*" or "Go, you are sent." We are sent or commissioned as Christ's disciples to share the fruits of the Mass. We are sent as Christ's body, his hands and his feet, to bring Christ's healing and comfort to those in need. Thus, the sacrament of the Eucharist not only transforms us more and more into the body of Christ, but also makes us instruments of the healing presence of God in the world.

At every Eucharist, along with the healing word of God, we are graced and nourished with the precious body and blood of Jesus, offered for us.

Going against the prevailing practice of his own time, in which people were prevented from approaching the eucharistic table under the pretext of dignity and respect for the sacrament, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist, already recognized the Eucharist as a means of restoring daily strength, healing, and nourishment. In a letter, he stated, "Whoever wants to persevere, let him receive our Lord. He is the bread that will nourish your failing strength, that will sustain you. . . . This nourishment, if taken at very long intervals, would have to be considered as an extraordinary food. Therefore, where is the ordinary nourishment that is meant to sustain us each and every day?"³³ In his last sermon, Eymard extended an invitation to the Holy Eucharist in an appealing way: "Come and receive Communion in order to have the strength of faith and not just the consolations and feelings of faith. The Eucharist exists! What more do you want?"³⁴

Conclusion

This article began with a historical sketch of sacramental theology. The exploration of the early Christian community revealed that the



sacramental reality was at work in the Church from the beginning, though there was no genre term like sacrament. Some reflections on the traditional and contemporary views on sacramentology provided a systematic overview of the development of the understanding of sacraments in the Church. We also noted how, in each sacrament, in particular in the sacrament of the Eucharist, there is an encounter with Christ.

The celebrations do not simply stop with rituals, prayers, and sharing. The Eucharist must embrace the people as they are, with their joys and sorrows, memories and hopes, poverty and richness, happiness and suffering. It must lead to soothing their pain and bestowing strength to overcome evil and suffering. Through the breaking of word and sacrament, the Holy Eucharist must feed the flock and care for their souls. As the Lord speaks to us through Sacred Scripture and as he makes the greatest gift of himself through his body and blood, we experience healing and nourishment.

Let us share its richness in our ministry to those who are entrusted to our care. This way, not only we will experience healing and nourishment in our lives, but we will also live out in our daily lives the mercy which the Father constantly extends to all through his Son.



Notes

- ¹ Johannes Roldanus, *The Church in the Age of Constantine* (London: Routledge, 2006), 6.
- ² Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," *Theological Investigations*, Vol. XIV, 169-178, 166.
- ³ L. Leijssen, "Rahner's Contribution to the Renewal of Sacramentology," *Philosophy & Theology, Marquette University Journal* 9 (1995), 201-222, 214-215.
- ⁴ Karl Rahner, "Considerations on the Active Role of the Person in the Sacramental Event," 167.
- ⁵ John P. Schanz, *Introduction to the Sacraments* (New York: Pueblo, 1983), 42.
- ⁶ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred: A Historical Introduction to Sacraments in the Christian Church* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 39.
- ⁷ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 43.
- ⁸ Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 39.
- ⁹ James Morgan, *The Importance of Tertullian in the Development of Christian Dogma* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1928), 127.
- ¹⁰ Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament: A Contemporary Sacramental Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 31.
- ¹¹ Maurice Wiles and Mark Santer (eds.) *Documents in Early Christian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 173-174.
- ¹² Joseph Martos, *Doors to the Sacred*, 58.
- ¹³ Saint Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John* 80, 3, PL 35, 1840; as cited by Martien E. Brinkman "Towards a Common Understanding of the Sacraments,"

Louvain Studies 23 (1998): 38-59.

14 *ST*, Part IIIa, au. 60, art. 3.

15 *ST*, Part III, I, I (Vol. 48).

16 Bernard Pialt, *What is a Sacrament?* (London: Burns and Oates, 1963), 59.

17 William J. Bausch, *A New Look at the Sacraments* (Indiana: Fides/Claretian, 1977), 8.

18 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 165.

19 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 54.

20 Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament*, 99.

21 Karl Rahner, "How to Receive a Sacrament and Mean it," *Theology Digest* 19 (1971), 227-234, 229.

22 David N. Power, *Sacrament: Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), 323.

23 Michael G. Lawler, *Symbol and Sacrament*, 60.

24 David N. Power, *Sacrament*, 318.

25 Monika Hellwig, *The Eucharist and the Hunger of the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 78.

26 Paul Bernier, *Bread Broken and Shared: Broadening Our Vision of Eucharist* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1981), 128.

27 Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, Encyclical Letter. *Origins* 37 (2007) 421-439, art. 39.

28 *SC*, 10.

29 *SC*, 51.

30 Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things: A Liturgical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 19.

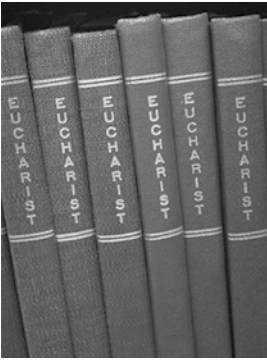
31 Gordon W. Lathrop, *Holy Things*, 19.

32 *DV*, 21.

33 Saint Peter Julian Eymard, *Letter III*, I. As cited in Flavio Fumagalli, "A Short Reflection on the Spirituality of Saint Peter Julian Eymard."

34 Saint Peter Julian Eymard, *Last Sermons* (July 16, 1868). As cited in A. Guitton, *P. J. Eymard: Apostle of the Eucharist*, 332.

Emmanuel Subscriber Service	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change your address • inquire about gift subscriptions • inquire about the status or payment of your subscription • inquire about missing issues 	
NEW SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM	
U.S. Rates 2 yr. - \$65.00 1 yr. - \$35.00 <hr/> Canadian and Foreign Rates (U.S. currency) 2 yr. - \$75.00 1 yr. - \$40.00	
Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ - _____	
TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS	
Send us an address label from a recent issue together with your new address, or fill in the information below. Please give us 6 to 8 weeks advance notice.	
Old Address	New Address
Name _____	Name _____
Address _____	Address _____
City _____	City _____
State _____ Zip _____	State _____ Zip _____



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

M. Eugene Boylan on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

The mystical reality of the Church lies at the heart of Eugene Boylan's spiritual vision and his eucharistic spirituality.

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.

DOM M. EUGENE BOYLAN, OCR (1904-1964), BORN RICHARD KEVIN BOYLAN, was an Irish Trappist monk, spiritual writer, confessor, and retreat master. Born in Dublin, he studied for some time at the local diocesan seminary and completed his studies at University College Dublin. He entered Saint Joseph's Cistercian Abbey in 1931, professed solemn vows in 1936, and was ordained a priest in 1937. In 1953, he was sent to Australia to establish Notre Dame Monastery (Tarrawara Abbey) and was later made acting superior of a Trappist monastery on Caldey Island, off the Welsh coast. In 1959, he returned to Roscrea and was elected abbot in 1962. He died in an automobile accident in 1964 as the Second Vatican Council was nearing its end.

His writings include *Difficulties in Mental Prayer* (1943), *This Tremendous Lover* (1946), *The Spiritual Life of the Priest* (1949), and *The Priest's Way to God* (published posthumously in 1963). His teaching on the Eucharist lies at the very heart of his spiritual vision.¹

Boylan's Spiritual Outlook

The Church's doctrine of the mystical body, what the apostle Paul called the "body of Christ" and what Saint Augustine referred to as the "whole Christ," lies at the heart of Boylan's spiritual vision. Christ, he believed, came to this earth not only to redeem us, but to create a New Man from the Old. Jesus was the New Adam and Mary, his mother, the New Eve. Together, they worked to bring about humanity's redemption and recreation, making it possible once again for each human being to enter into and enjoy an intimate friendship with God.²

Boylan makes it clear that being a member of Christ's mystical body needs to be understood in its proper sense: "The mystical body of Christ, while being one mystical person endowed with life coming from within, is not one physical person."³ Just as there are two natures united in the person of Christ and three persons united in the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, so also in Christ's mystical body "there are millions of persons, sharing in the divine nature, but each preserving his own human nature."⁴

The mystical body is thus a "four-dimensional entity" that extends beyond the boundaries of time and space.⁵ The doctrine in no way means that a person who is a member of the body loses his personal identity. On the contrary, a person's identity is elevated (transformed, if you will) to become the person he was meant to become in the plan of divine providence. At the same time, this person lives in Christ — and Christ lives in him. For this reason, Boylan calls Christ "our tremendous Lover," since through him an intimate union with God becomes possible that far exceeds any other intimacy known to man.⁶

He goes on to say that we can picture this union in three ways: "as the life of Christ in us; as our life in Christ; or as what we might call a 'shoulder to shoulder' partnership with Jesus, a constant companionship of two lovers sharing every thought and every deed."⁷ "Each of these pictures," he adds, "corresponds to a true aspect of the reality, the intimacy of which is so extraordinary that it defies description."⁸ Christ, in other words, not only walks with us, but also lives in us, as we live in him. In the words of Paul, "The life I live now is not my own; Christ is living in me."⁹

For Boylan, living in Christ allows us to pray in union with him and requires a fourfold purity upon which the health of our spiritual life depends: "Purity of conscience, purity of heart, purity of mind, purity of action."¹⁰ Each of these addresses a different aspect of our relationship with God:

"Purity of conscience results from our avoidance of sin and from our general conformity with God's will. Purity of heart is achieved by keeping our heart for God and avoiding or suppressing all *inordinate* attachments, that is, attachments that are not according to his will. Purity of mind arises from a continual control over one's thoughts and memories, and from a frequent but gentle effort at recollection. Purity of action requires that we watch carefully the motives and intentions in our work towards God so that we may act only for his love and according to his will."¹¹



These four dimensions of the spiritual life embody the goal of a healthy spiritual life. Boylan recognizes, however, that many of us are on a long spiritual journey and suffer from a variety of deadly spiritual ills. A deep disruption of soul, a product of humanity's primeval fall from grace, prevents us from achieving these goals and can even discourage us from reaching out for them. For this very reason, we must turn to Christ and rely on him for healing our wounds and bringing us back to health. What Jesus says in the Gospel of Mark is true: "With God, all things are possible."¹² Only God can restore us to health and make us whole.

Boylan identifies five ways of getting in touch with Jesus and the power of his transforming grace: prayer, the sacraments, spiritual reading, doing his will, and going to him through his mother, Mary.¹³ He points out, moreover, that these ways are not independent but are meant to work in concert with one another. Those who sincerely and honestly seek to incorporate them into their lives will be able to open every dimension of their lives to Jesus, and he will gradually draw them more and more deeply into his mind and heart.

Holiness is living in union with Christ by faith, by hope, by love, and by complete abandonment to his will. It also has to do with recognizing the truth about ourselves humbly before him.

The power of his Spirit will root out whatever keeps them from turning their lives over to him, and it will empower them to put on his mind and heart. They will come to see that holiness of life is not something beyond their grasp, but a gift from God offered to all who humbly turn to God in search of his compassion, mercy, and love.

Holiness, for Boylan, means "to live in union with him [Christ] by faith, by hope, by love, by humility, and by complete abandonment to his will."¹⁴ It involves trusting in God, looking forward to the fulfillment of his promises, and loving him with all our hearts and minds. It also has to do with recognizing the truth about ourselves before him and letting go of our self-centeredness and selfish desires so that his will can be accomplished in our lives. Sanctity means becoming so close to Jesus that, in the words of Augustine, "There shall be one Christ loving himself."¹⁵ Christ loving himself in us and in our neighbor is its ultimate manifestation and can be achieved in any state of Christian

life. The Eucharist, he claims, is “our food and our life”¹⁶ and is the primary means by which Christ brings about this intimate union with the members of his body.

Boylan’s Teaching on the Eucharist

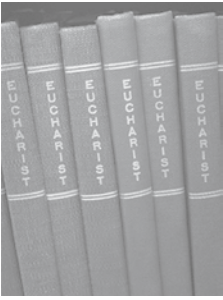
The Eucharist, for Boylan, is “the sacrament of union *par excellence* to which baptism is, as it were, only the gateway.”¹⁷ In creating the New Man, this mystical body of Christ, the whole Christ, “our Lord insisted that its food must be his own flesh and blood; and he warns the Christian that unless he eat of this flesh and drink of this blood, he shall not have life everlasting”¹⁸

What happens in Holy Communion is almost beyond description: “Our Lord, so to speak, ‘folds up’ his whole life and death and sacrifice into the sacrament of the Eucharist, reenacts his sacrifice sacramentally on the altar, and comes to us in Holy Communion with his whole self and all his riches as God and man.”¹⁹ “Jesus Christ . . . is really, truly, and substantially present in the sacramental species of bread, and also in the species of wine.”²⁰

However, there is one important difference between the priest’s presence at the altar and Christ’s: “The priest makes contact with the ground by the surface and size and weight of his *own* body; our Lord makes contact with the altar, by the surface and size and weight of the *bread*. The priest is localized by his own accidents; our Lord is localized by the accidents of the bread. These indicate and reveal his presence, but he himself is invisible.”²¹

Boylan also points out that, in the Eucharist, Christ becomes our very food and drink. Unlike normal bread and wine, however, which when digested becomes a part of our own body, whenever we eat and drink of the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, we are assumed (digested, if you will) and incorporated more deeply into Christ mystical body.²² This “sacrament of union,” in other words, makes us one with Christ and the members of his body, the Church.

The reception of Holy Communion, for Boylan, constitutes only one aspect of the Eucharist. Christ is contained and received in Holy Communion, which is a partaking of the fruits of the sacrificial offering of the Mass, “the central act of the Catholic Church. Everything else is centered on it.”²³ For Boylan, “it is the Mass that matters.”²⁴ Boylan



summarizes his teaching on the Eucharist in 24 points:

1. On Calvary, our Lord offered himself in sacrifice to God.
2. This sacrifice gave God full and perfect worship.
3. It was a complete satisfaction for our sins.
4. It merited every grace that we might need.
5. Our Lord instituted the sacramental and sensible rite of the Mass,
6. In which he offered himself to God the Father,
7. And ordered his apostles and priests to repeat the same offering;
8. That the salvific power of the sacrifice of the cross might be applied to our needs.
9. In the Mass, the victim is the same Christ.
10. And the offerer is also the same Christ, who once offered himself on Calvary;
11. Who now offers by the ministry of his priests.
12. The Mass, therefore, is truly propitiatory,
13. And, if we are rightly disposed, can be a source of grace and timely aid for us.
14. The Mass appeases God and obtains the forgiveness of even the most enormous sins.
15. The fruits of the cross are received most plentifully through Mass.
16. In the Mass, the minister represents not only Christ,
17. But also the whole mystical body and each one of us, its members.
18. Through the priest, we offer to God Christ the victim,
19. In praise and propitiation for the needs of the whole Church.
20. As on the cross, Christ offered himself as the head of the whole human race,
21. So in the Mass he offers himself not only as the head of the Church,
22. But in himself he encloses each of us, his members.
23. For he encloses us all — even the weakest of us —
24. Most lovingly in his heart.²⁵

Boylan then encapsulates his summary in these words: "In the Mass, then, each of us can say: Christ is offering himself as a perfect sacrifice to God; I, too, am offering him; he is offering me in himself; *am I also offering myself with him?*"²⁶ To clarify this point, he turns to the words of Thomas Aquinas: "The sacrament [the Blessed Eucharist] is both a sacrifice and a sacrament. It is a sacrifice inasmuch as it is offered to God; it is a sacrament in so far as it is received by men."²⁷

Boylan also points to the special relationship between the Holy Sacrifice of Christ in the Mass and the priesthood: “The priest ‘takes over’ this sacrifice in the Mass and makes it his own. He therefore has to endeavor to make his interior sacrifice correspond with the exterior sacrifice sacramentally renewed in the Mass, and then he has to make his whole life correspond to that interior sacrifice!”²⁸ The transformation that takes place is similar to what takes place in the sacred species: “Just as God changes the bread and wine offered up at Mass into the body and blood of Christ, so, too, he will by his paternal providence and the sequence of events effect our ‘consecration,’ our incorporation, our transformation into Christ.”²⁹

The Eucharist is the primary means by which Christ brings about intimate union with the members of his body.

He goes on to point out that priests are called to be “partners and partakers not only with Christ as priest, but also with Christ as victim.”³⁰ A priest offers himself with Christ every time he celebrates the Eucharist; for this reason, he must endeavor to *mean* the Mass.³¹ To be sure, “if he accepts the priesthood of Christ as it really is — a participation in the priesthood of Christ with the *de congruo* obligation of self-sacrifice with Christ — he can and should integrate all his experience into his spiritual life. His efforts for souls are to be made as part of his work — as fulfillment of the offering he makes of himself at Mass.”³²

This offering of self along with Christ the High Priest in accordance with the Father’s will lies at the very heart of the priestly identity: “It is by doing the will of God that we truly live up to the title of ‘Father.’”³³ Catholics, Boyle maintains, are called to follow suit: “The external sacrifice on Calvary was the perfect expression of that interior sacrifice that was our Lord’s whole life of submission to the will of God. That external sacrifice is given to us in the Mass, and we have to make of our life one similar interior sacrifice, if the Mass is to have that full and perfect meaning for us and from us to God, which it should have. There is the plan of the whole Christian life — to live up to what we say in the action of the Mass.”³⁴

Observations

The above presentation touches on many of the key points of Boylan’s teaching on the Eucharist, and, when seen against the backdrop of his



overall spiritual outlook, provides an opportunity to make a number of observations regarding the role the sacrament plays in the everyday lives of Catholics.

1. To begin with, Boylan maintains that in the Eucharist Christ has given his own body and blood as the necessary food for Christ's mystical body. Without it, the health of the members of Christ's body weakens and becomes spiritually enfeebled. His teaching reminds believers of the necessity of receiving Holy Communion for their own well-being and for that of the mystical body. Without the Eucharist, the Church will starve for lack of food and nourishment. With it, she will remain mystically united to Christ as her head and her members will continue to have access to his transforming grace.

2. Just as Christ's mystical body transcends the dimensions of time and space, so does its food. The Eucharist comes from the earth, but is made a part of the new creation through the power of Christ's Spirit. As such, it goes beyond the present boundaries of time and space. The sacrament, like Christ himself, is in the world, but not of it. As long as they are properly disposed, believers who receive this food are also mystically incorporated into the body of the risen Lord. In receiving Holy Communion, believers, when properly disposed, become more deeply united to Christ and are empowered to live in faith, hope, charity, humility, and, like Jesus himself, complete abandonment to God's will.

3. The Eucharist, according to Boylan, works as a kind of digestion in reverse. When normal food is digested, it is broken down and becomes part of our bodies. When the Eucharist is consumed, it breaks us down and assimilates us into Christ's mystical body, but without compromising our individual identities and personalities. This process of mystical assimilation is the means chosen by God to bring about the New Man and the New Creation. When seen in this light, the Christian life truly is "life in Christ." Christ lives in us, and we live in Christ. To be a disciple means more than merely following Christ and walking in his footsteps. It asks us to offer ourselves in faith through Christ as Eucharist for others, so that we might become food and nourishment for them and enable them to live in and through his Spirit.

4. Boylan calls the Eucharist the "sacrament of union *par excellence*." The union it effects, moreover, is multidimensional.

Receiving Holy Communion does much more than merely feed each person spiritually. It unites us not only personally to Christ, but also to the body. It incorporates the individual into the community of believers and helps him to find his special place. When seen in this light, the sanctity of the human person is intimately bound up with the sanctity of the whole. There is no doubt that God views us as individuals and actively seeks our own personal well-being. Our individual good, however, cannot be separated from the good of the whole. Holy Communion, therefore, celebrates the unity of Christ's mystical body and the union of each member of that body with Christ through the vivifying presence of the Holy Spirit.

In the Mass, Christ offers himself not only as the head of the Church, but in himself he encloses us all — even the weakest of us — most lovingly in his heart.

5. In the early church, the saints were known as the “friends of God.”³⁵ The union believers celebrate when receiving the Eucharist is their unique participation in an intimate community of friends. This friendship with Christ is both personal and communal. It celebrates the intimate love that the Triune God pours out freely onto all who accept it with open hearts. This friendship far exceeds the limits of earthly friendship and ultimately points to the transformation, union, and assimilation of all human loves through their participation in the divine. When seen in this light, everyone is called to be a “friend of God” — and so very much more.

6. Boylan maintains that priests share not only in Christ's priesthood, but also in his victimhood. This has enormous implications for priestly spirituality. When they celebrate Mass, priests stand in the place of Christ as an *alter Christus*. In doing so, they not only offer the sacrifice of Christ in a visible, sacramental manner, but by virtue of their close identity with Christ are also offering themselves as victims. Priests live out this victimhood in their service to the Church in daily ministry. It means closely identifying with the people they serve and consciously placing the needs of the community of believers before their own.

7. Finally, while Christ is the New Adam, Boylan also emphasizes Mary's subordinate yet nonetheless all-important role as



the New Eve in the mystery of redemption. Mary is the Mother of God, the mother of the Church, the mother of Christ's mystical body, the mother of all believers. She gave her own flesh and blood to bring her Son into the world. She suckled him as an infant and prepared his food for him throughout his hidden life in Nazareth. She followed him throughout his public ministry, stood beneath the cross as he died, and was present in the upper room when the Church was born on the day of Pentecost. She fed Christ because she loved him, but also so that he could feed us in the Eucharist. She offered herself to God so that her Son could offer himself to God for us. She has a special place in the heart of the Church, in the heart of every priest, and in the celebration of every Mass.

Priests are called to be "partners and partakers not only with Christ as priest, but also with Christ as victim."

These remarks represent just a few of the implications of Boylan's overall spiritual outlook and teaching on the Eucharist for today's believers. They remind us to lift our eyes beyond our present circumstances and to ponder the meaning of this sacrament through the eyes of Christ, the New Adam, and through those of the mystical body of believers incorporated into his Mystic Personality. Most of all, they remind us that the Eucharist is a precious gift, one not to be taken for granted, but celebrated with grateful hearts and lovingly poured out into our daily activities as a humble offering to God and to the world.

Conclusion

Dom M. Eugene Boylan roots his eucharistic spirituality in the doctrine of the mystical body of Christ. In doing so, he identifies the "sacrament of union" and the primary means by which Christ incorporates people into his Mystic Personality. Just as the human body needs food to nourish its various parts, the community of believers — the Church, purgative, militant, and triumphant — needs spiritual sustenance in order to maintain its identity as a supernatural organism.

The Eucharist, for Boylan, has a threefold function in the life of the mystical body. It is offered, contained, and received. Because Christ offers himself in the Mass for the sins of humanity, it is a sacrifice. Because he is substantially present in sacred species, it is a sacrament.

Because he is received and consumed in Holy Communion, it is a banquet. The Mass is the central action of the Church because it extends of Christ's salvific activity through time so that the community of believers can gain access to and be incorporated more deeply into his mystical body. In this respect, it is first and foremost an action of Christ himself.

Boylan's teaching on the Eucharist has great relevance for today's believers: it emphasizes the transcendental character of the sacrament and roots it firmly in the present dimensions of time and space. The sacrament, we might say, is *in* time and space, yet goes *far beyond* them. His teaching reminds us that, in the end, the present world will not simply devolve into chaos or nothingness, but be transformed (lifted up) into something far greater. The Eucharist represents the first fruits of this New Creation. Given to us by Christ, the New Adam, it is the food that nourishes and sustains his mystical body, the community of believers called the Church. It is the "sacrament of union" that incorporates all into Christ and thus enables us to offer ourselves with him to the Father.



Notes

- ¹ This biographical information comes from Lawrence S. Cunningham, "Foreword" in M. Eugene Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover* (Notre Dame, IN: Christian Classics, 2009), xiii-xvi.
- ² See M. Eugene Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 305-320.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 38.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, 41
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, 321-334.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, 321.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Gal 2:20. All quotations of Scripture come from *The New American Bible* (Washington, DC: Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 2010).
- ¹⁰ Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 259.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*
- ¹² Mk 10:27.
- ¹³ Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 87.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.
- ¹⁵ M. Eugene Boylan, *The Spiritual Life of the Priest* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 161.
- ¹⁶ Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 147.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 45.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 149.



- 22 Ibid., 154.
23 Ibid., 161.
24 Ibid.,
25 Ibid., 167-168.
26 Ibid., 168.
27 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, III, q. 83, a. 5, ad 2m.; Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 172.
28 Boylan, *The Spiritual Life of the Priest*, 55.
29 Ibid., 56-57.
30 Ibid., 59. See also Dom Eugene Boylan, *The Priest's Way to God* (Maryland, US: The Newman Press, 1962; republished, London: Catholic Way Publishing, 2014), 40.
31 Boylan, *The Priest's Way to God*, 40.
32 Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 60.
33 Ibid., 62.
34 Boylan, *This Tremendous Lover*, 169.
35 See Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 54-80.

In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Most Rev. William R. Houck
Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi

Msgr. William J. Stanton
Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Missouri

Most Rev. James M. Moynihan
Diocese of Syracuse, New York

Rev. Alfred E. Nortz
Diocese of Syracuse, New York

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 R, S, T, and U are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during September and October.



EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Finding the “Gold” in Others: The Often Missing but Necessary Thread in Religious Life

by Richard Gribble, CSC

It is natural, even in the Church and in religious life, to judge people by externals. Are we called to think and act differently?

SINCE THE TIME OF SAINT BENEDICT AND HIS ORGANIZATION OF THE FIRST FORMAL monastic community, religious life has always enshrined three basic common denominators: common prayer, common purse, and common table. Quite obviously, the evangelical counsels, poverty, celibacy, and obedience are an additional three important links, but these are professed personally and lived on a more individual level. Common prayer, purse, and table, on the other hand, are practiced in a communal life.

While each religious certainly must practice personal prayer, all communities have some type of common worship that draws them together. Similarly, while each religious should seek to live simply, following the exhortation “to live simply so others may simply live,” common purse suggests that each religious has his or her material needs met through the physical laborers and ministry of all. Poverty asks religious to live the common life through the common purse. Lastly, while not directly related to the evangelical counsels, common table suggests that our primary fellowship and friendships should be found, fostered, and maintained within the community. Coming together on a regular basis to share food and drink has always been part of the culture of religious life.

Clearly the vows and common prayer, purse, and table are central to the proper living and maintenance of religious life, but a central thread that must run through the lives of individual religious and their communities is brotherhood. Religious often hear the phrase: “Religious life: a blessing and a curse.”

The reality of this phrase becomes evident to anyone who has lived

Father Richard Gribble, a member of the Congregation of Holy Cross, has been at Stonehill College in Easton, Massachusetts, since 1995. In addition to teaching, he is actively involved with local parish ministry as well as campus activities.



the life for any length of time at all. The blessings that one receives as a member of a religious community are indeed many and manifested in many ways: friendship, common ministry, physical and financial stability, and a common and purposeful desire to follow Christ. Yet, the challenges, the “curses,” are also, unfortunately, readily apparent: rivalry, judgmental attitudes, favoritism, and inequality.

As human beings, the tendency for all of us, religious and non-religious alike, is to center our thoughts and opinions and make conclusions about people based on what we observe and hear only; we often refuse to look or listen more deeply. As the popular contemporary Catholic writer and speaker Matthew Kelly suggests in *Resisting Happiness*, we live “messy lives” and we too often refuse to take this into account when dealing with others. We have no idea what is going on with another individual; our surface view is just that — incomplete and insufficient for any judgment.

True brother or sisterhood, however, necessitates that we look more deeply, seek to find the good, the kernel of gold inside each one we encounter. Seeking that interior good and concentrating more on that than the surface knowledge which comes through our senses, is true sister- and brotherhood and must be the thread that ties religious communities together.

Jesus Finds the Gold in All

Jesus, the ever-compassionate Son of God, was a master at finding the best in all he encountered. Looking through the veneer and seeking the deep-seeded good within each person, Jesus always did as his Father demonstrated in choosing a youth, David, to be the king of Israel. When God told Samuel that he had chosen one of Jesse’s sons to be king, the great prophet, as is the case with most of us, looked to those who were “kingly in appearance.” But, as we read, the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not look as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sm 16:7).

The New Testament is replete with examples of how Jesus looked beyond the obvious in an individual, in seeking to find the good. We recall the story of Zacchaeus, a tax collector who was viewed by his Jewish compatriots as a collaborator with the dreaded Romans,

Finding the “Gold” in Others: The Often Missing Yet Necessary Thread of Religious Life

a dishonest man who had defrauded many. Yet, when entering Jericho, Jesus specifically picked out this apparent sinner and told him, “Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today” (Lk 19:5b).

The evangelists Mark and Luke describe Jesus’ encounter with Legion, a man who was feared and avoided by all, for “he lived among the tombs and no one could restrain him anymore, even with a chain” (Mk 5:3). Jesus, however, had no fear, for he could see beyond what was obvious, a man filled with many evil spirits, and concentrate on who the man could be if he were cured

John gives us the famous story (8:1-11) of a woman caught in the act of adultery. While Jesus disarms her accusers, one should note that the woman never claims, nor does Jesus suggest, that she is innocent, but that is not the point of the story. Once again, Jesus looks beyond the obvious, in this case the sin, and seeks the good present in the woman. Jesus’ outreach to lepers (Mk 1:40-45; Lk 17:11-19) who had been cast aside by society and even the good thief on the cross (Lk 23:43) who, it seems was guilty of capital crimes, are also examples of his ability to look to the heart.

Jesus was also able to look beyond prejudice, which often plagues society and does not allow individuals or groups to reach their full potential. It seems to have shocked his apostles, but Jesus had no problem having a significant conversation with a woman from Samaria. Not only was she one of a group of people who were despised by the Jews, but equally troubling she was a woman, and thus a person in the time of Jesus with whom someone of his stature would never have any public association or discourse (Jn 4:7-42).

Arguably one of the most popular and significant of the 39 parables told by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, the story of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), must have outraged those who first heard it. The religious elite, the priest and the Levite, are placed in a negative light and the Samaritan is professed to be the hero.

Jesus could even look into the heart of a pagan Roman centurion who asked a favor, not for himself, but for his servant. When Jesus agreed to come to the centurion’s home, the Roman beautifully responded, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word and my servant will be healed.” Jesus’ response was



indeed significant, and challenged others to reach the centurion's high bar of faith: "Truly, I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt 8:8, 10b).

Possibly the greatest example of Jesus' looking beyond the obvious in finding the good and potential in others is demonstrated through his choice of those who would be his inner circle of apostles. None of those he chose were of any significant status or stature within Jewish society; on the contrary, most of them were fishermen and, thus, common ordinary men who, most probably had a basic education at best.

Most leaders, when gathering an inner circle would, it seems historically clear, choose people who had demonstrable qualities of leadership or some specific skill that might be utilized in the organization. From external observation, the apostles had none of these qualities; yet, Jesus chose them. Moreover, there were, to say the least, some in the group who on first look might be directly opposed to what Jesus sought to do in his mission. The evangelists describe James and John as "Sons of Thunder." Today we might call them "hotheads," rebellious men who do not want to cooperate, who might seek to "do their own thing."

As with Zacchaeus mentioned above, Jesus chose Matthew, a tax collector, and thus one working for the dreaded Roman occupiers. Tax collectors were seen as corrupt officials of a despised Roman government, who, when collecting from their fellow Jews, were known to pocket significant sums for themselves. Jesus chose Simon, who is called the Zealot, one who might be labeled today as a terrorist. Somehow Jesus was able to see the potential and possibility in each of these men. In short, Jesus never gravitated to the obvious and the outside appearance of another, but always looked deep within all people. His example must be our challenge to do the same.

Finding the Gold in Each Person

An anecdote from the life of Andrew Carnegie, the famous steel magnate and philanthropist, can be highly illustrative to our discussion. At one time, Carnegie was the wealthiest man in the United States. He arrived here from his native Scotland when he was a small boy and, in a true "Horatio Alger" story, ended up as the owner of the largest steel manufacturing company, U.S. Steel, in the country.

At one time he had 43 millionaires on the payroll working for him.

One day, a reporter asked Carnegie how it was that he had hired 43 millionaires. Carnegie responded that the men had not been millionaires when they started working for him, but had become millionaires only as a result. The reporter’s next question was, “Well, how did you develop these men to become so valuable to you that you paid them that much money?” Carnegie replied that people are developed the same way gold is mined. When gold is mined, several tons of dirt and stone must be moved first to get an ounce of gold, but one doesn’t go into the mine looking for dirt; one goes in looking for gold.” Like Jesus, Andrew Carnegie had the ability to see the potential and good that exists in every person and “mined” that good until it came to the surface.

The numerous examples of Jesus in the Scripture, and a simple example from a well-known man in the history of American business can and I believe must, be instructive in how we who are privileged to be religious should relate to each other in brotherhood. While not true for all, the vast majority of religious live in close proximity, both physically and socially, with other members of their same community. This close association, when we encounter each other, sometimes more than once a day, can at times be a formula that concentrates on the negative; friction can easily arise. Quite obviously as humans we migrate toward words, actions, and personalities with which we agree or feel attracted.

Unfortunately, the reverse is also true; we avoid those who proclaim words, act, or possess personalities that are different than our own or too challenging. We center in on the inadequacies, the faults, failings, even at times sinfulness of others, especially those with whom we have difficulty or find troublesome. Rather than looking for and mining the gold and potential inside each person, we see only the dirt, the outside, the veneer. But, as Jesus has demonstrably shown, we can and must look deeper, for indeed we can all make some positive contribution. God has gifted each one in a very special and unique way. It might seem trite, but, as is often said, “God doesn’t make any junk.”

Mining the gold inside each person is a task all must undertake, but this does not mean that we can’t and even must hold others accountable when the situation necessitates such action. In fact, true brotherhood, while seeking the good and potential in others, does require that when fraternal correction is necessary, action is taken, whether that be a personal conversation or, as the situation may



dictate, more significant steps. We need to challenge others to be the man or woman, the religious we were called to be, to live the life we all agreed to when we professed our vows. Yet we do so in the spirit of charity, realizing that none of us is perfect, and again, as the popular expression says, "There but for the grace of God go I." In the end, we must always seek the kernel of gold.

Conclusion

Religious life requires more than common purse, prayer, and table, more than the evangelical counsels; it requires us to be brothers and sisters. Sinful men and women though we be, we are called to move beyond the common human tendency to see only the outside, the visible and obvious of people and situations, and always go deeper, to find the good and potential, the gold inside each person.

The numerous examples of Jesus' outreach to those who were perceived, either through physical appearance, action, or even cultural prejudice to be on the outside, to be rejected, must be the catalyst we need to foster a similar attitude in our relationships with our brothers and sisters with whom we walk the road of religious life. Seeking the good, the kernel of gold, in each person is not an easy path, but then Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount that we must enter through the less traveled narrow gate in order to find life (Mt 7:13-14). Let us, therefore, listen to the exhortation of Christ when he boldly told the lawyers about the need to reach out to those who have been rejected, "Go and do likewise" (Lk 10:37c).





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

You Are Where God Wants You to Be

The Apostle of the Eucharist was also a guide to the interior life and to eucharistic spirituality for many people.

Here, a niece of Camille Jordan, Emdée, has chosen to remain unmarried and will become the educator of the children of her sister Isabelle, who died at 42 years of age. In this letter, Father Eymard confirms her in her choice of state in life. He outlines a triple rule for her: the primacy of God's love, a spirit of piety nourished by the practice of meditation, and total trust in God. "Your future is God and God loves you."

"My thought is clear. It is that you should refuse any mission, any work, which takes away your freedom. Keep your independence as you keep your heart, keep it for God to whom it belongs and whose possession it will be.

"Yes, you are where God wants you, consequently where you find good to be done, with the grace that precedes, accompanies, and follows it. . . . May the law of God's love always be the rule and motive for your love of neighbor, in keeping with your duties and priorities."

"May the spirit of devotion make you rise above all external duties. Nourish your heart by frequent outpouring to God, your spirit by the daily practice of meditation, your will by virtuous self-denial.

"Always keep your heart free of anything that might trouble it. Your future is God and God loves you. You are all his; you are consecrated to him."



To Emdée Brenier de Montmorand
July 12, 1867

From *Counsels for Spiritual Life*, Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, Rome, Italy



PASTORAL LITURGY

Making Connections— “These or Similar Words”

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

What are the best practices for when to extemporize in the liturgy and not?

In his 25th year of priesthood, Father John Thomas J. 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 THIS YEAR’S COLUMNS, WE ARE EXPLORING VARIOUS PASTORAL PRACTICES IN THE eucharistic liturgy that vary from parish to parish. In this issue, we examine the parts of the Mass that have “in these or similar words,” that is, moments of extemporaneous explanation from a presider during a Mass.

Forty years ago, there were commentators! Remember that ministry that was eventually phased out due to not needing someone to explain what was going on or to give information before it happened during the Mass? The Order of Mass has flowed from its First Edition (1970) to the current Third Edition (2011), allowing presiders to use “these or similar words” in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Last year in *Emmanuel*, I reviewed a 2014 resource by Father Paul Turner entitled *In These or Similar Words: Praying and Crafting the Language of the Liturgy*. Turner documents the various parts of the Mass that allow for variations (e.g., the introduction to the Lord’s Prayer).

I raise this issue because I have heard presiders say inappropriate things. For theological and scriptural reasons, we should always say, “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world” and not “This is Jesus . . .,” for what we celebrate and proclaim at every Eucharist is the presence of the risen Lord. Other variations can dilute the theological meaning and power of the invitation to Holy Communion. This is why, for example, we do not say, “This is the baby Jesus who takes away the sins of the world” or other variations at different times and seasons in the liturgical year.

Here is a summary of which parts of the Mass are not allowed to have “in these or similar words”:

- The Penitential Act. The introduction is now scripted, except the third form;
- The Lord's Prayer. There is now just one introduction in English;
- The Sign of Peace. This was always scripted;
- The Concluding Rite blessings. The invitation is to "Bow down for the blessing";
- The Dismissal. There are new formularies which were added under Pope Benedict XVI. They are quite specific as to what should be said.

According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, 31, these are the parts of the Mass where the presider may say things "in similar words":

- Between the Greeting and the Penitential Act;
- Before the readings in the Liturgy of the Word (more of an explanation);
- The introduction and the concluding oration of the Universal Prayer;
- Before the Eucharistic Prayer (more of an explanation);
- The Lord's Prayer. One may look outside of the Order of Mass, such as in the Liturgy of Hours, for many other options.

Lastly, there are parts of the Mass that are to be "in these words," with no variation. Some may not agree, but as I hinted earlier, it is best that we "stick to the script" to communicate faithfully what the Church believes and professes in its official prayer.

Some may feel that we are to regularly explain the Mass inasmuch as there are people present who seem not to know what is going on during the liturgy. I suggest using bulletin columns and adult faith formation classes for this purpose. How often do we get annoyed by being reminded of the same things over and over? That's how presiders may sound when they regularly add commentary, especially when it isn't appropriate or part of the rubrics of the Order of Mass.

In our next column, we will review some of the actions and gestures that are part of the Order of Mass and how we can assist our parishioners in understanding these and in growing in their participation in the Eucharist.

Reminders for September and October

Monday, September 4 — Labor Day (United States)

Special readings are possible, See the fourth volume of the lectionary and special prayers in the *Roman Missal* (Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, 26: For the Sanctification of Human Labor).

Friday, September 8 — The Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Sunday, September 10 — Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

This is Grandparents Day. Adapt the Order for the Blessing of Elderly People (Chapter 1, XII).

Monday, September 11 — Patriot Day

Since the time of President George W. Bush, this has been observed as a National Day of Service and Remembrance. Create opportunities for your parish community to volunteer in projects for the betterment of others and the common good.

Wednesday, September 27 — Saint Vincent de Paul

Bless your parish ministries of service and outreach to the poor.

Monday, October 9 — Columbus Day (United States); Thanksgiving Day (Canada)

Monday, October 16 — Boss' Day

They always need our prayers.

Sunday, October 29 — Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Priesthood Sunday; Reformation Sunday

Special Readings in the New Lectionary Supplement (United States)

- Saturday, September 9: Saint Peter Claver
- Tuesday, September 12: The Most Holy Name of Mary
- Saturday, September 23: Saint Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio)
- Thursday, September 28: Saint Lawrence Ruiz and Companions
- Thursday, October 5: Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos
- Wednesday, October 11: Saint John XXIII





PASTORAL LITURGY

On Liturgy and Transformation

Eucharist as Transformation

WE READ IN THE FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS: "WE SHALL ALL BE CHANGED, in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound and we shall be changed" (1 Cor 15:52). Paul speaks here of the end of time, of the transformation that will take place in an instant! Unfortunately, we are not in the end times yet. We cannot experience this blink of an eye transformation at this time.

Our transformation is a slow, gradual process of growing into the person God has called each of us to become. Ours is a journey or maybe an adventure of discovering God's vision for each of us both as individuals and as the body of Christ in the world today. The journey begins at baptism and continues throughout our lives.

There is a story of a young girl who is frightened during the night and runs to her mother. Her mother comforts her and then takes her back to her own room. By looking under the bed, opening the closet, peering out the window, she shows her that there are no monsters in her room and that she need not fear. When the girl protests, her mother calmly says that God is right here with you. The little girl looks at her mother and says, "That may be true, but I need to see skin!"

We can look at the sacraments as "God's skin" in our lives. They are our ability to experience through our senses the touch of God as individuals and as a community. In each of the sacraments, we receive that touch of God in a unique way. The Eucharist is one of the sacraments that we experience over and over again. We are touched by God's word and nourished with the body and blood of his Son, and challenged to become who we are already in the words of Saint Augustine — the body of Christ.

Part of our individual transformation is being transformed into a member of a community. Indeed, this seems to be at the heart of the mystery of salvation. It is in and through community that we become who God is calling us to be. God invites us to move from our own thing to his. Here, we encounter the message, the meaning, and the means of entering into the lifelong process of transformation. Here, we encounter the Lord himself showing us through his great act of love and sacrifice how we can live into God's dream for us.

One of the practices of Quaker spirituality and prayer is for the members of the community to come together and sit in silence to listen to the inspiration of God in their lives. Thus, they allow God to do for them what they cannot do for themselves. What an apt description of what we do each time we come together to celebrate the Mass. We open ourselves to God transforming us into his people, his body, his community — literally, his hands, feet, and heart in our world.

As we stand together at the beginning of the Mass and admit that we are not all that God has called us to be, we realize that God's merciful love can do for us what we cannot do ourselves: bring peace and hope for a better future.

Sitting and listening together to the word of God enables us to become focused on God's dream for us. Through the scripture readings, we get a glimpse of who God wants us to be and how he asks us to make his kingdom a reality in our world. Week after week, we are challenged by the readings. We hear the story of those who went before us, listen to the words and actions of Christ, and are given in the second reading a "how-to" of living the Gospel. God's word can transform us if we learn to listen. Preparing to hear that word each week by reading the weekly readings ahead of time can help to open our hearts to what God is speaking to us.

As we stand to pray for the needs of our Church, our world, our families, and our community, we express in a powerful way our need to allow God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. We pray for the strength and the courage to cooperate in the transformation of our world.

The celebration of our liturgy now takes us to the heart of the Eucharist as transformation, as we remember Christ's saving act of redemption. We are called to place our lives on the altar to be transformed along with the bread and wine that we, too, may become Christ's body for a

world in need of his care and loving transformation.

Whatever is placed on the altar is made sacred. That is what *sacrifice* means: to make sacred. Here is the challenge — what in my life do I need to place on the altar to have it made sacred? What situation or relationship or attitude or action should I be bringing to the altar? Christ's sacrifice on the altar of the cross showed us that it is in dying that new life is brought forth. What is the new life I need as an individual? What is the new life we need as a community? Perhaps this is the place that we bring our social sins as well — racism, consumerism, sexism, violence as a means to resolving conflicts, the inability to listen to those who differ from us, etc. By dying to self, we allow God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves — bring about new life.

At the core of our beliefs as Catholics is the truth that what is placed on our altar becomes through the power of the Holy Spirit the very presence of Christ in our midst. We stand in the presence of our God, who has taken on all our weakness, all our pain, all our failings, all our sin, all our suffering. Christ tells us, "This is my body broken for you. Let me absorb all of this so you can be free to be who you are called to be. Let me transform your pain and sin into love for all people. At the end of this great Eucharistic Prayer, this great prayer of thanksgiving, our Amen expresses our belief, our acceptance, and our willingness to follow.

Praying The Lord's Prayer and extending the sign of peace to each other underscore that we are called into togetherness, into family, into community. As we ask for peace from one another, we become aware that this profound transformation is not a once-and-for-all but a gradual process of growing together.

"Lord, I am not worthy to receive you." Too often our transformation gets cut short because we become overwhelmed with our unworthiness; we know all too well how unworthy we are to be here, to accept this Communion with the Lord that we are about to receive. We concentrate too much on the first part of the prayer, "Lord, I am no worthy" and not enough on the second part, "Only say the word and I shall be healed." It is the Lord who is doing the transforming, the healing. It is the Lord who is saying: "This is my body given for you." We need to surrender to this loving gift with acceptance and gratitude. We will never earn it, deserve it, or cause God to give it to us. It is pure gift. We are so used to earning and deserving that we forget how to receive. Here again, in silence, we allow God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves!

If it is true that we become what we eat, when we respond Amen to the body of Christ, we are saying I believe, I accept, I want to become the body of Christ for others. Can you imagine what our homes, our communities, and our world would be like if when we looked at one another we saw the body of Christ?

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council spoke about one of the goals of the liturgical renewal being full, active, and conscious participation by all the faithful in the liturgy. For many in the Church, what we focused on was singing, responding to the prayers, involvement in liturgical ministries, and more inviting designs of our worship spaces. Perhaps there is more to full, conscious, and active participation. Perhaps it is about consciously being in the action of the celebration.

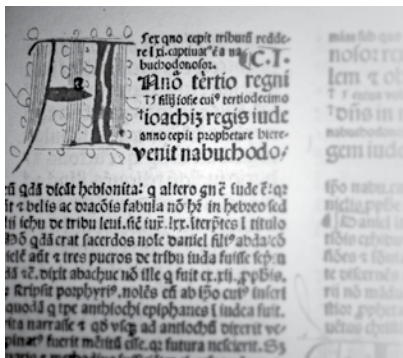
Livelier liturgies and better homilies alone will not resolve the common complaint that our Church services are not meaningful enough. Ronald Rolheiser offers the following explanation, indicating that maybe what is happening is that *most of the time the bread and the wine are the only things that change*. We leave the celebration the same as we entered. Our hearts remain just as suspicious, jealous, fearful, and hard as they were before. Our coming together each week is meant to transform us. It is about becoming who God calls us to be and who God calls us to be together.

One would think that one profound, life-changing encounter with the Lord would be enough to completely change us. However, sometimes we are not fully aware of what the potential is. I recently obtained a new fitness device. This device probably can do almost anything: be a watch, count steps, manage my diet, alert me to phone calls, allow me to see text messages, etc. The problem is all I know how to do at this point is to see the time and the number of steps. I've come to realize the problem is not with the device, but with me!

God offers us so much in the liturgy that we cannot take it all in at once. And so, we come back again and again. And we try again and again. And, gradually, we are transformed, not in the blink of an eye, but in a life of openness and fidelity, allowing God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves.



Mary Muehle



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections - Homiletics

by John R. Barker, OFM

September 3, 2017 Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Jeremiah 20:7-9; Psalm 63; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 16:21-27

Over the next few Sundays, the readings invite us to consider the theme of divine versus human ways of thinking and doing. Consistently, we see the human struggle to understand God's ways and to conform our own ways to them.

This week, we begin with Jeremiah, the prophet who endured so much for his fidelity to God. The lectionary has Jeremiah accusing God of "duping" him; the Hebrew suggests that "seduced" may be a better translation. Jeremiah was seduced into participating in God's plan for Israel's good. But this plan began with severe denunciations of injustice and infidelity, which brought upon the prophet significant opposition and even threats. Jeremiah desperately wants to walk away from his task, but whenever he tries to silence himself, something within him refuses to let him do it.

Rabbi Abraham Heschel once wrote that the experience of biblical prophets is of communion with the divine consciousness. Their messages aren't whispered into their ears by God, but rather derive from their own experience of the world from God's perspective. They see, feel, and respond to the world in sympathy with God. It is because Jeremiah is taken up into God's experience that he is unable to withdraw from his mission. Jeremiah must speak out because Israel's actions have an effect on God — and therefore on him. The prophet thinks as God does, not as human beings do.

And, of course, so does Jesus, who interprets his own reality, including his impending suffering, according to the mind and experience of God.

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

This allows him to understand and accept his mission. One cannot understand what anything really means unless one learns to see things from God's perspective. This is implied in Jesus' warning that those who would truly follow him must be willing to lose their lives in order to gain them. They must learn to see things from God's perspective. Or, as Paul says, they must allow themselves to be transformed by the renewal of their minds. Rather than conform themselves to this age — with its valorization of self-interest, self-realization, and worldly success — Christians must come to understand the world and their own experiences through the perspective of God's will. What is "good, pleasing, and perfect" according to "this age" is most definitely not the same as what is good, pleasing, and perfect in God's sight. Refusing to conform to this age will undoubtedly require sacrifice, as Jeremiah, Paul, and Jesus all know, but it is an imperative of discipleship.

September 10, 2017 Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 33:7-9; Psalm 95; Romans 13:8-10; Matthew 18:15-20

Last week's readings suggested that when we allow our minds to be transformed so that we think as God does, we will have to make sacrifices. This week's readings focus on a form of sacrifice required of all Christians all the time: loving one's neighbor as oneself. In his Letter to the Romans, Paul reflects a standard Jewish understanding of his time when he states that the commandments of the law can be summed up thus: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (In a few weeks we will hear Jesus say much the same thing, namely, that the law and the prophets depend entirely upon this commandment as well as the commandment to love God.)

Love, as Paul says, "is the fulfillment of the law" because it "does no evil to the neighbor." The commandments Paul cites — against adultery, killing, stealing, coveting — might lead one to suspect that loving one's neighbor, and thus fulfilling the law, consists entirely in avoiding harm. But Paul would surely agree that love also consists in actively willing and working for the good of our neighbor.

This can take many forms, but the readings from Ezekiel and Matthew

point to one that in the Catholic tradition has come to be known as “admonishing the sinner.” In the case of the prophet, God makes it clear that he must “speak out to dissuade the wicked from his way.” This is not an option; in fact, Ezekiel’s own fate depends on his faithful execution of this task. He may not be successful, but he must do his best to try to bring sinners to be reconciled with God — this is in fact the entire point of his calling and mission (and the same can be said for the rest of the biblical prophets). Because God wills the repentance and restoration of a sinner, the prophet — who thinks like God and not like human beings — must also wholeheartedly desire that the wicked turn from their ways and be reconciled to God.

Today’s Christians should not be fooled into thinking that such a task falls only to specially chosen individuals. We remember that last week Paul exhorted all of us to allow our minds to be transformed so that we, too, take on the mind of God. God is eager for all to turn from sin and be reconciled to him. So, then, should we ardently desire the same thing.

As the gospel acclamation has it, we have all been entrusted with the message of reconciliation. Thus, Jesus instructs his followers to try as hard as they can to bring the wayward back into the fold. Only if they remain obstinate in their sin should they be treated as “a Gentile or a tax collector,” that is, outside the community. But even here it is important to note that elsewhere in the Gospels Jesus always extends his invitation to the kingdom to those same Gentiles and tax collectors. At least while on this earth, no one is finally excluded from fellowship with Christ — the possibility always remains available for reconciliation.

The command to admonish the sinner is one of the seven spiritual works of mercy, and it is a profound expression of Christian charity. But, as the site of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops reminds us, it is a work that must be undertaken with utmost humility as we “strive to create a culture that does not accept sin, while realizing that we all fall at times.” To love our neighbor is to think and act as God does, and this means among other things to desire not only our own reconciliation with God, but others’ as well.

September 17, 2017
Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sirach 27:30-28:7; Psalm 103; Romans 14:7-9; Matthew 18:21-35

This week, we continue to explore the theme of thinking and acting as God does, not as human beings are inclined to do. Two weeks ago, Paul insisted that we must not conform ourselves to “this age,” but allow our minds to be transformed so that we reflect the values and perspective of God. This week’s readings focus on another sacrifice such a transformation will require of us on innumerable occasions: forgiveness.

Both Sirach and Jesus make the same point, which is that if we want forgiveness from God we must be willing to extend it to others. Furthermore, if we want forgiveness from God everytime we ask for it, we must be willing to extend it to others as many times as they ask for it. Sirach develops the basic principle at some length: we cannot expect from others, much less from God, what we are not willing ourselves to at least try to offer. Sirach notes that refusal to forgive, to “set enmity aside,” is a form of hatred: “cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbor, remember the Most High’s covenant, and overlook faults.”

As a form of hatred, refusal to forgive violates the covenant, the law, which — as we were reminded last week — is fulfilled through love. Not only must we forgive others if we want to be forgiven ourselves, but forgiving is a form of love, and therefore is expected of us. And it is expected of us because we are called to think and act not like human beings but like God, who readily forgives and actively seeks reconciliation.

Jesus’ parable highlights, however, how difficult we often find it to forgive even grudgingly (if such could be called forgiveness), much less truly and authentically “from our hearts.” Peter once again seems to be thinking as humans do, not as God does, and wants to know a “reasonable” limit to forgiveness. There is something in us that makes it difficult to accept that we must be willing to forgive the same person over and over . . . and over. Even forgiving once can seem impossible at times.

Letting go of anger and the sense of having been harmed by another requires that some part of our ego and even our sense of “fairness” die. This means that forgiving is part of the dying that constitutes Christian discipleship. As Paul reminds the Romans: “None of us lives for oneself, and no one dies for oneself. For if we live, we live for the Lord, and if we die, we die for the Lord.” Living for Lord and dying for the Lord mean among other things desiring what the Lord desires, even when it requires great sacrifice. It means allowing our minds and hearts to be transformed, because for God forgiveness and reconciliation are good, pleasing, and perfect.

September 24, 2017
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 55:6-9; Psalm 145; Philippians 1:20c-24, 27a; Matthew 20:1-16a

Again this week, the readings focus on the difference between the divine and human perspectives, and they extend to us once more an invitation to see the world through God’s eyes. In previous weeks, this required us to consider how we are called to love our neighbor by admonishing them when they sin against God and forgiving them when they sin against us.

Especially in the case of forgiveness, such an expectation can require great sacrifice from us. Human beings seem naturally to have limits to their willingness to forgive and in their interest in the spiritual well-being of others. But this is not the case with God, who actively calls the sinner to repentance and is generous in forgiving. Exceedingly so, it might seem at times. But this is the point: God’s thoughts are not our thoughts and God’s ways are not our ways — they are far, far above our thoughts and our ways.

Isaiah emphasizes that such is the generosity of God that any time the “wicked” and the “scoundrel” forsake their thoughts and their ways, God will extend mercy to them. This is good news for us, because if God did indeed think and act the way humans characteristically do, there would be limits to the divine generosity. But it also presents for us a great challenge when seen in light of the readings of previous

weeks, in which we are called on to make God's thoughts our thoughts and God's ways our ways.

This is one of the points of Jesus' parable of the workers, which is not only that God is generous but that we should rejoice in this instead of evaluating it according to human standards of "fairness." It is not for us to question God's generosity, from which we ourselves have benefited so much.

God's benevolence is not a zero-sum game; there is more than enough for everyone. There is no need to be envious of God's generosity toward others; in fact, we should be relieved by it and, if we take the message of previous weeks seriously, delighted that others also receive what we ourselves have. It is surely a sign of love of neighbor to hope that God will be generous to them. More than this is asked of us, though: for we are also called to be as generous with others as God is with us.

October 1, 2017 Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Ezekiel 18:25-28; Psalm 25; Philippians 2:1-11; Matthew 21:28-32

We continue this week to explore the theme of God's ways versus human ways and in particular the question of "fairness." In the reading from Ezekiel, God responds to the accusation that his ways are not fair. In the verses just previous to this selection, God has affirmed that he does not "find pleasure in the death of the wicked," but rather rejoices "when they turn from their evil way and live." No matter how long or consistently the wicked have been wicked, if they repent God will not hold the past against them.

In the same way, though, those who have abandoned the path of goodness to take up evil ways cannot expect that their past virtue to count for anything (Ez 18:21-24). God counters the accusation that his disregard for past behavior is unfair by affirming that, on the contrary, it is human ways that are unfair. It seems the people do not like the fact that the past is set aside in favor of the present; they would prefer that the past also "count."

One thinks here of the tendency we have to demand that people pay for their past sins; they “shouldn’t” be allowed to “just get away with them.” But God is not as interested in the sort of person we used to be as much as who we are right now. What is our orientation toward God today, at this moment?

Jesus takes up this same idea in his question to his audience: who actually does the will of the father in the end, the one who starts to do so but then doesn’t, or the one at first refuses but then does? Of course, what matters is what you actually end up doing. This is obvious in the human realm, and the same pertains when it comes to one’s relationship with God. Would that everyone of us always did the will of God — what is good, pleasing, and perfect — but often we don’t. What matters to God, Ezekiel and Jesus tell us, is where we are at the present moment, the moment of decision.

The Jewish and Christian traditions have always placed great confidence in God’s willingness to set aside our past sins in favor of a renewed present and future. But at the same time, as Paul reminds us in the verse immediately after today’s reading from Philippians, we must always be working out our salvation with fear and trembling.

This exhortation comes on the heels of Paul’s admonition to his audience to set aside human mindsets that foster selfishness and vainglory, and instead take on the mind of Christ, which fosters humility and regard for others. Just as Christ set aside his divine prerogatives for the good of God’s people, so must God’s people be willing to set aside their sense of “fairness” when it comes to their own pasts or those of others. This is simply another way of saying that we are to adopt God’s ways, to desire and seek the ultimate good of our neighbor, whether by admonishing them when they sin or forgiving them when they harm us.

Jesus has consistently been showing us the generosity of God, and the readings in these last weeks have insisted that this good news makes demands on us as well. As followers of Christ, we must reject anything that prevents us from loving our neighbor with the same “unfair” generosity with which God loves us. And, like God, to delight not only in our own salvation, but in the salvation of others.

October 8, 2017
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 5:1-7; Psalm 80; Philippians 4:6-9; Matthew 21:33-43

The reigning image this week is the vineyard, a metaphor which — along with that of a single vine — is used regularly of Israel in the Bible. Specifically, the metaphor of vine/vineyard is often employed to express the providential and generous care that God has taken to “plant” Israel in the Promised Land and to see to her growth and flourishing (see, for example, today’s psalm).

The Isaian passage this week speaks of the prophet’s “friend” (God), who with great care built a vineyard. He clears fertile land so the vine can flourish and erects a watchtower to protect it from marauders and animals who would destroy the vines. The point is not simply to allow the vines to grow, but to make it possible for them to produce good fruit.

In the Isaian context, this “crop of grapes” refers primarily to justice and integrity among the populace and leaders of Jerusalem and Judah. Because they produce instead the “wild grapes” of injustice, infidelity, and bloodshed, the owner will neglect and then allow the vineyard to be trampled. In the historical context, this means bringing drought and allowing the depredations of the Assyrian Empire to advance unopposed. Jesus takes up this same tragic story and applies it to his own situation.

The vineyard once again represents Israel, but now when the servants (prophets) come to gather the harvest, they are abused. In a grim vision of the results of his own rejection, Jesus proclaims that care of the vineyard will be taken from the current leaders and given to others who will see to it that God’s vine produces good fruit to be gathered at the proper time.

While there is a certain eschatological element to Jesus’ parable, in light of the other readings we can see a strong call for God’s people to attend to the kind of fruit they are producing, and to realize that they are not “vines” for their own sakes, but for God. In his Letter to the Philippians, Paul gives us a sense of what “good grapes” look like: whatever is true . . . honorable . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . gracious

. . . excellent . . . and worthy of praise. These are the fruits that God wishes to see produced in the vineyard he has so carefully tended and protected.

Jesus' parable also calls us to consider how well we are tending not only our own vines but God's vineyard, that is, all of God's "vines." In the parable, the task of tending the vineyard is taken away from those who abuse the privilege and who refuse to recognize that it is God's vineyard, not theirs.

The Bible consistently warns religious leaders of all stripes that they have serious, sacred duties toward God and God's people. They have been entrusted with a precious vineyard that they must tend with great care and humility. This brings us back to the theme of these past weeks, that of loving one's neighbor as oneself.

October 15, 2017 Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23; Philippians 4:12-14, 19-20; Matthew 22:1-14

The image this week is the eschatological banquet, an image of abundance and well-being that signifies the absolute sovereignty of God and the ultimate salvation of his people "on that day."

The passage from Isaiah is found in the middle of a section of the book sometimes called the "Apocalypse of Isaiah" (chapters 24-27). The section speaks of a cataclysmic judgment of the oppressive and abusive nations in which the earth itself is convulsed until God establishes his control over all creation and is enthroned on his holy mountain, Zion.

Once God's reign over the whole world is established, Isaiah tells us, he will provide "for all peoples a feast." Not only will God rule the whole world with benevolence and generosity, but he will even conquer the final enemy of his people, death. In God's kingdom there will be no want or hunger, no mourning, no oppression or injustice. This is a beautiful and inspiring vision of God's ultimate purpose for all of creation.

By the time of Jesus, this eschatological banquet had become a key symbol for the reign of God itself. Last week, Jesus had spoken of the care of God's vineyard being taken away from unfaithful leaders and given to those who would properly tend God's people. This week, he makes a similar point but focuses on who actually will enter the kingdom.

Through Jesus, God is summoning his people — those who have already been invited into the kingdom — to come, for the kingdom has arrived. But they have refused and even gone so far as to abuse those who are calling them to the banquet. And so they are deemed “unworthy” to enter the kingdom. Others are now invited in, who would perhaps not normally be considered “worthy.”

But Jesus does not intend us to understand that entrance into the kingdom is “free.” Indeed, it is a gracious gift, but one must accept it in the spirit in which it is given and come prepared. “Many are invited, but few are chosen”: all are welcome into the kingdom, but if we accept the invitation we must be prepared to change our lives and live according to the values and perspectives of the kingdom.

The readings of the past several weeks come to mind once again. Once we accept the invitation into God's kingdom, we must respond by allowing our minds to be transformed, to desire what is good, pleasing, and perfect, and to adopt God's thoughts and ways. Paul assures us this week that this is possible if we ask. What we need to be “properly dressed” for the banquet will be given to us by God, who “will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”

October 22, 2017
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 45:1, 4-6; Psalm 96; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5b; Matthew 22:15-21

In this week's Gospel, Jesus does more than simply avoid being trapped by the Pharisees. He also provides us with a reminder about the relative power and importance of earthly rulers.

The question of Roman taxes was, as we might expect, a contentious one at the time of Jesus. The Herodians mentioned in the reading were agents of Herod, a client king of the Romans, and so they supported the Roman tax. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were known for their opposition to the tax, although they did not go so far as to actively undermine its collection or advocate for the overthrow of the regime.

So it is telling that the Pharisees and the Herodians come together here to question Jesus about the tax, around which they make common cause to harm him. If Jesus supports the tax, he will place himself in bad odor with the populace; if he opposes it, the Herodians are ready to report him to the Romans.

The census tax could only be paid with a particular coin, which bore not only the image of Caesar but also an inscription: "Tiberius Caesar, august son of the divine Augustus, high priest." Both the image and the inscription were offensive to pious Jews, making the paying of the tax with this coin even more grievous. While Jesus deftly avoids giving a direct yes or no answer to the question of paying the tax, he essentially says, "Yes, go ahead and give Caesar his coin. It has his image on it, so it belongs to him."

This is more than just a clever response. When coupled with the exhortation to "repay . . . to God what belongs to God," Jesus relativizes and even trivializes the most "august" of human powers. One can almost see Jesus shrugging his shoulders and handing back the coin with a casual, "Well, it's his coin, give it back to him if he wants it. It's only a coin, after all." In other words, the only thing that truly belongs to Caesar, the only thing stamped with his image, is a piece of metal.

The implication when it comes to God is that whatever is stamped with the divine image belongs to him, and, of course, any Jew listening to Jesus would know that human beings bear the image of God (Gn 1:26-27). Caesar owns a coin; so repay it to him if he wants it. We, on the other hand, belong to God and owe ourselves to God, not to Caesar. We can pay a tax, we can turn over money to worldly powers, but we cannot turn over ourselves to them, nor can we give to them what rightly belongs to God. They and their values and expectations do not merit our ultimate loyalty. With his response, Jesus effectively dismisses Caesar as a human power to whom we may owe something, but certainly not everything, nor the most important thing: our hearts and our minds.

The first reading from Isaiah sheds even more light on this question. Cyrus, who liberated the Jews from the Babylonians, was acting at the behest and under the power of the God of Israel, besides whom “there is no other.” Even earthly powers are subject to God, which means even they belong to God.

The readings this week call us to consider how much stock we place in earthly powers and how much of what is most important about us — our hearts, our minds, our wills, our passions, our hopes for the future, our souls — we willingly or even unthinkingly surrender to them on a regular basis.

October 29, 2017
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 22:20-26; Psalm 18; 1 Thessalonians 1:5c-10; Matthew 22:34-40

Throughout the last several weeks, we have been exploring through the readings the theme of thinking and acting like God, allowing our minds to be transformed so that we conform ourselves not to this age but to the mind and heart of God. Broadly speaking, this means learning to love our neighbor, not just as much as we love ourselves, but as much as God loves our neighbor.

This week’s readings bring us explicitly back to this theme by having Jesus remind us that we are called to place at the center of our lives our relationship with God. To “love” God “with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” is to give absolutely every part of ourselves and our lives over to God and God’s will. Our dedication to our relationship with God must be total, not marked merely by external, half-hearted, or sporadic devotion.

This is the work of a lifetime, of course, and one that cannot be done without God’s grace, which the Bible consistently reminds us is readily available if we will only accept it. If we love God, if we strive to obey and put on the mind and will of God, we will naturally love our neighbor, because God does.

This week's reading from Exodus makes it clear how much God cherishes especially (though not exclusively) the vulnerable, who are most in need of our protection and care. The command to avoid harming or abusing "aliens, widows, and orphans" or taking advantage of the poor and needy comes right in the middle of the covenant laws, emphasizing its importance. Even more striking, and disturbing, is the notice that if God hears their cries of oppression, he will "kill you with the sword." This is the only place in the Bible where God threatens to wield the sword himself (as opposed to through a human agent).

The language cannot be taken literally, of course, but it nevertheless highlights the extremity of God's concern for the socially and economically vulnerable. Regardless of how we understand the notion of God's wrath flaring up, we are warned in starkest terms that God takes very seriously how we treat each other.

Our motivation, however, ought not to be just obedience to God, but most especially out of gratitude. The Israelites are reminded that they were once vulnerable and abused, but God had mercy on them. In the same way, Israel is called to do the same for each other. We, too, are called to recall the generosity, mercy, and abundant hope we have been given by God and to share that with those most in need of it. Thus, there is only one great commandment: to love God, which is also to love our neighbor.

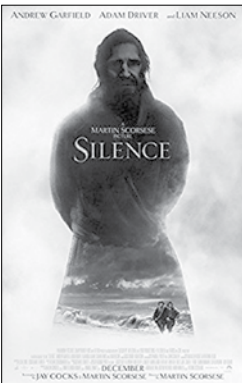




EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Film Review



SILENCE
Martin Scorsese
United States, 2017

John Christman,
SSS

Sadly, so many films that engage Christian themes and subjects tend to be superficial. On one side of the spectrum, we encounter purposefully religious films meant to instruct and to edify. Whether these films are Jesus films or films about the saints, their rose-tinted catechetical portrayals and tendencies towards hagiography leave little to thoughtfully challenge viewers. On the other end of the spectrum, we encounter non-religious films that raise religious questions but often with very little depth. Too often in these films, no positive attribute of religion is portrayed and Christianity itself receives a shallow treatment.

Rarely do great filmmakers engage Christianity acknowledging the deep meaning and value it can provide, while concurrently raising challenging questions about the nature of faith and the practice of religion. Martin Scorsese's film *Silence* is a rare exception in this regard.

Based upon the highly praised novel by Shusaku Endo, *Silence* envisions the story of two seventeenth-century Jesuit priests, Father Rodrigues and Father Garupe, who travel to Japan to search for their missionary mentor Father Ferreira. The practice of Christianity is banned by the Japanese authorities at this time and anyone found practicing the Christian faith is forced to publicly renounce their faith or be put to death. Small pockets of Christians nevertheless persist and warmly welcome the two Jesuit priests. They hide the two missionaries by day and are overjoyed to receive the sacraments under cover of darkness. The two priests minister to the people as they can, but ultimately split up in search of Father Ferreira. The film settles upon the journey of Father Rodrigues who is eventually captured and forced to decide between publically renouncing his faith or refusing and watching innocent Christians put to death as a result.

The film is tremendously engaging and multifaceted. It raises

questions about religion, faith, culture, European colonialism, martyrdom, apostasy, the Church, and much more. Additionally, it is meticulously constructed with Scorsese's encyclopedic knowledge of film history, eye for detail, and keen sense of drama. Simply put, *Silence* is the work of a master filmmaker at the height of his craft exploring his own faith tradition with uncompromising earnestness.

Given the great scope of the film, perhaps it's best to highlight two important aspects of the film of particular interest to *Emmanuel* readers: the sacraments and the priesthood. *Silence* is remarkable not only for its portrayal of the sacraments, but also its portrayal of a sacramental worldview. The film is woven together with portrayals of sacramental celebrations of baptism, Eucharist, and especially reconciliation. Indeed, the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation is a leitmotif that helps hold the film together, providing one of its most important narrative arcs. But perhaps more relevant than this is the sacramental worldview displayed in the film by the Japanese Catholics.

Throughout the film, the Japanese Christians are seen not only seeking the sacraments but also desiring tangible signs of their faith (crosses, rosary beads, etc.). These sacramentals are treated with awe and reverence. They give visual expression to a relationship with God.

The theologian Leonardo Boff has written eloquently about the ability of objects to embody meanings through relationship and "encounter" with both God and humanity.¹ Through the people's desire to experience the sacraments and the meaning they place upon sacramentals, the Japanese Christians in the film exhibit a profoundly Catholic sacramental worldview. This is important to note within the context of the film for two reasons.

First, the apostate priest Father Ferreira raises questions as to whether the Japanese Christians ever understood or embraced a so-called "true" Christianity. Besides the condescending Eurocentric tone to this statement and the manner in which it devalues the sacrifice of the Japanese martyrs, the stylistics of the film itself, with its emphasis upon the Japanese Christians embrace of not only the sacraments but of a sacramental worldview, argues that they have, on the contrary, embraced Christianity at a profound level. They have embraced a sacramental way of seeing the world. This leads to the second important point.

The emphasis upon sacraments, sacramentals, and a sacramental worldview makes the manner in which the Japanese authorities

choose to make the people apostatize all the more disturbing. It is precisely because they have a sacramental worldview that recognizes that objects can be imbued with greater meaning because of a relationship with God, that physically stepping on an image of Christ, a sacramental, is so repellant. It is not “merely a formality” as the Japanese authorities try to argue. It is an action that subverts the worldview these Christians have come to embrace. It is a testament to their faith that they refuse.

Equally compelling is the portrayal of the priesthood in *Silence*. Throughout the film, Father Rodrigues’ principle identity is that of a priest. He celebrates the sacraments with the people and quickly embraces his role as head of the community. A traditional understanding of the priesthood, drawing from Saint Paul, is that a priest is in relation to the Church as the head in relation to the body. Here, we encounter such theological terms as the priest being “in persona Christi” and “in persona ecclesiae.” As the Jesuit Father Richard Hauser explains, “Through ordination, the priest is established in a new, distinctive, and permanent relationship with Christ. The priest becomes the person-symbol of Christ in the Church: priests receive an anointing of the Spirit that enables them to act in the name of Christ the head.”²

This is a powerful symbol, one which finds unique poetic expression in *Silence*. In the film, Father Rodrigues not only takes upon himself the role of the head of the local church, but completely identifies himself as Christ, the head of the Church. This can be seen in a painting of Jesus’ head that Father Rodrigues sees throughout the film. He has a particular attachment to this image. He sees it when he prays. Importantly, he even sees it in a sequence where he looks into a pool of water. His own reflection becomes this image of Christ. Father Rodrigues so identifies himself with Christ the head of the Church that his own image becomes that of Christ.

Father Hauser reflects upon the role of the priest in relation to Christ and the Church in the following manner. He writes: “The biggest challenge of priestly spirituality is to become internally one with the Christ who is symbolized externally.”³ This, in many ways, is a summary of Father Rodrigues’ journey in the film. The image of Christ he so identifies with helps tell this story. Tellingly, however, while Father Rodrigues desires to symbolize Christ to all whom he encounters, he also falls into the temptation of over identifying himself with Christ.

In fact, such is his sense of his own important role within the Church that he at one point says, "If Garupe and I die, the Japanese Church dies with us."

Being Christ and *symbolizing Christ* are very different things. Christ would not abandon the Japanese Church even if no priests remained. The voice Father Rodrigues finally hears in the silence as he is forced with his horrendous decision to apostatize or watch innocent people killed draws his attention to the difference between himself and Christ. Of whom does salvation ultimately come? How wide is the scope of Christ's salvific action and when do our images of God become idols that we have to let go? Perhaps it is Father Rodrigues' image of the priesthood that needs to change? We see the image of Christ's head one last time before he makes his decision.

Great art like *Silence* isn't about providing superficial answers to life's challenging questions. Instead, it often helps us perceive with greater clarity the complexity of human experience and keeps us from arriving at superficial answers. *Silence* draws us deeper into our understanding of faith, the sacraments, the priesthood, and salvation. As such, it is a rare film indeed.

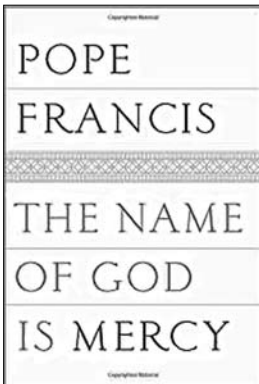
Notes

- ¹ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*. (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 1987), 6, 29, 31.
- ² Richard Hauser, SJ, "Priestly Spirituality" in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship*. Peter E. Fink, SJ (ed.) (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1990), 1020.
- ³ Ibid.

Book Reviews

When Pope Francis closed The Holy Door of Saint Peter's Basilica on November 20, 2016, he officially ended the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. But he made it clear that we were not to put mercy "back on the shelf." He left many of the special provisions he had allowed during the year of mercy to continue. He stated emphatically, "God has no memory of sin, but only of us, of each of us, we who are his beloved children. And he believes it is always possible to start anew, to raise ourselves up." The Holy Father issued a new apostolic letter, *Misericordia et Misera* (Mercy and Misery), addressed to the entire Church so it "may continue to live mercy with the same intensity experienced during the whole Extraordinary Jubilee."

There was much published on mercy during the jubilee and much of it was excellent in driving the whole Church into a deeper appreciation of mercy in the heart of God and God's wish that it would be the characteristic virtue of his children. I have reviewed several of these worthwhile works in the hope that they might continue to serve as a catalyst to an ongoing focus on living the virtue of mercy.



**THE NAME OF
GOD IS MERCY:
A CONVERSATION
WITH ANDREA
TORIELLI**
Pope Francis.
Oonagh Stransky
(tr.)
New York, New York:
Random House, 2016
176 pp., \$19.95

The subtitle describes this book well, a conversation. Andrea Torielli, a veteran Vatican reporter, was present on March 13, 2015, when Pope Francis proclaimed the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. He suggested to the pope the possibility of having a conversation with him on what mercy and forgiveness meant for him as a man and as a priest. He wanted to produce an interview which would reveal the heart of Francis and his vision. Pope Francis agreed.

Tornielli sent Pope Francis a few questions to begin the conversation, and he met with him at Casa Santa Marta in July 2015 with a number of recording devices. After their conversations, Tornielli edited what he heard into a text which he then forwarded to the pope for review.

The author shares an exchange with Francis which revealed the heart of his belief in God's mercy. He noted that in his first draft, he wrote, "The medicine is there, the healing is there — if only we take a small step toward God." Francis requested that he add "or even just the desire to take that step." It was his way of making it clear that God is waiting for any opening to heal.

There are nine short chapters in the book, but they are packed! One senses Francis' frustration and anger as he tells stories of situations in his years in Buenos Aires when Church officials responded to those who came to them in dire straits seeking help, only to be met with cold legalism and judgment. He contrasts these stories with the example of a Capuchin Friar whose confession line was always long, with priests, religious, and lay people waiting patiently. The priest met with then-Cardinal Bergoglio and told him that he feared that he was too easy and lax with his penitents. The cardinal asked him what he did when he felt that way. The Friar responded that he goes to the chapel and before the tabernacle admits that he is too lax, but then, speaking to Jesus, he prays, "Lord, forgive me if I have forgiven too much. But you are the one who gave me the bad example."

For Francis, mercy is not an abstract theological virtue; it is, as he writes, "God's identity card." It is Francis' fundamental orientation to

life and relationships. In the interviews, he cites many examples of Jesus' parables and actions which reveal a God who has no limits to the abundance of his mercy. Francis' conviction that God is a God of mercy was a great source of frustration for him at the Extraordinary Synod on the Family, in regards to divorce/remarriage/reception of the Eucharist. The "scholars of the law," a term he uses in this book and in his homilies, held firm against any "innovation" which contradicted the "long tradition" and the "deposit of faith." Francis wanted mercy to be the measure of pastoral care, not "the law."

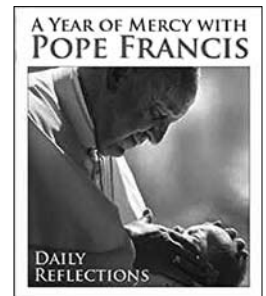
Francis describes situations in Buenos Aires of women forced into prostitution by poverty, whose children were refused baptism, a poor woman who was told that her annulment would cost \$5,000. He spoke of prisoners, the marginalized, the homeless, the refugees, and all who were in dire need of human kindness and mercy.

In responding to Tornielli's questions, Francis quotes parables, the ministry of Jesus, several fathers of the Church, his predecessors in the Petrine ministry, John Paul II and Benedict XVI and, refreshingly, Paul VI, John XXIII, and Albino Luciani, the pope of 33 days. This book introduces the reader to the heart of Pope Francis, the underlying convictions of his choices regarding the locations of his papal visits, his choice of those he names as bishops, and his outreach to the poor, the handicapped, the homeless, and the refugees. Included in the Appendix is the Bull of Indiction of the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, which gives further insights into the pope's singular focus on mercy, the name of God.

While this work was developed specifically for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, it really is too rich a resource to be put away after that special year. If you used it during the jubilee year, pick it up again and allow Pope Francis to guide your daily reflections. If you have not yet used it, get a copy and find a special time each day refocus your life on mercy, which Pope Francis describes as "the name of God."

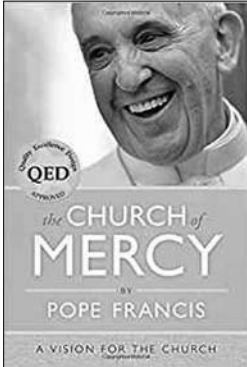
Kevin Cotter, who edited this work, began with Saint Francis de Sales' six steps to prayer. Cotter writes, "This book is set up so that you can not only read the words of Pope Francis, but also reflect on their meaning for your life" as you consider the questions that follow each chapter.

Each day offers a brief selection from Pope Francis' addresses, homilies,



**THE YEAR OF
MERCY WITH
POPE FRANCIS:
DAILY
REFLECTIONS**
Kevin Cotter (ed.)
Huntington, Indiana:
Our Sunday Visitor,
2014
384 pp., \$16.95

general audiences, or *Evangelium Gaudium*. The quote is followed by a few sentences and questions to stimulate the mind and heart and encourage a mindset of mercy.

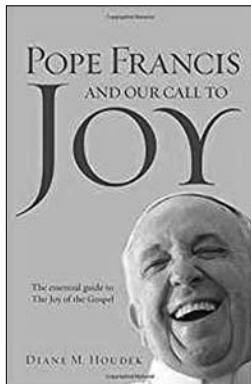


THE CHURCH OF MERCY: A VISION FOR THE CHURCH
Pope Francis.
Giuliano Vigni
(ed.)
Chicago, Illinois:
Loyola Press, 2014
150 pp., \$24.95

One caveat is that the feast days are from the calendar of the Year of Mercy and therefore don't necessarily the liturgical calendar of other years. But the richness of the meditations certainly outweighs that difficulty.

Published a year after the election of Pope Francis, Giuliano Vigni gathered a collection of 39 homilies, general audience allocutions, addresses to international groups, bishops, priests, and students in this collection. He organized them into ten sections according to themes. His goal was to try to explicate in Francis' own words his pastoral and ecclesial program.

The book was written several years before Francis' proclamation of the Jubilee of Mercy, but the title of the book makes it clear that even in the first year of his pontificate it was clear that the key to Francis' ministry was to be mercy. In each of the selections chosen by Vigni, the reader is introduced to the various angles and prisms that elucidate the centrality of mercy in Francis' vision of the nature of God and God's call to the Church to be a concrete manifestation of that divine presence healing, uplifting, and loving all of creation.



POPE FRANCIS AND OUR CALL TO JOY
Diane Houdek
Cincinnati, Ohio:
Franciscan Media,
2014
96 pp., \$9.99

Patrick J. Riley, DMin
Book Review Editor
Emmanuel

The author offers significant selections from the writings of Pope Francis for reflection on the world today and the needs it presents. In eight chapters, she describes, in an honest and refreshing way, the pastoral concerns and temptations experienced by all Church people — hierarchy, clergy, religious, and laity. The joyful hope of Pope Francis is threaded throughout this small book.

In each chapter, the author addresses a contemporary issue and proceeds to illuminate it with excerpts from the apostolic exhortation *Evangelium Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). She captures the spirit of Pope Francis and his commitment to evangelization. Her applications are as fresh as his writing.

Houdek includes wonderful selections to apply to present pastoral situations. Her writing style is forthright and challenging — a breath of fresh air. Though perhaps not intended by the author, this text would offer an excellent resource for parish adult education groups.

Donna Marie Bradesca, OSU, DMin
Cleveland, Ohio

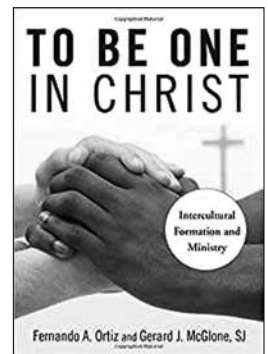
This book was a pleasure to read as I have worked in Hispanic communities since 1980 and have read as much as I could about their history and the culture. I think this book begins a new stage in multicultural ministry.

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 describe 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



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

capable of academic excellence and more inclined to manual labor; and 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 with 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

Poetry

Me and the Pain

Living the days
Looking for hope
Looking to cope
Looking for healing
Seeking the strength

Me and the pain
Together together
Looking for a hand
Looking for a friend
Looking for a hug
Seeking the comfort

Me and the pain
Together together
Looking for a rest
Looking for a fest
Looking for a smile
Seeking the fun

Me and the pain
Together together
Looking for peace
Looking for ease
Looking for help
Seeking the kindness

Me and the pain
Together together
Looking for one
Who can relieve
Who can moderate
Who can mitigate
The pain inside me

After the years
Looking with tears
In the world around me
Finally found out
Jesus, my God
The only one who can relieve
And ease the pain
That lives inside me



Charlotte Bechara



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

Father Anthony Schueller, SSS

Some years ago, while preparing to preach on the Sunday Scriptures, I was struck by this verse in the Book of Wisdom: “. . . And passing into holy souls from age to age, she produces friends of God and prophets” (7:27).

The passage, of course, is about Wisdom, the highest attribute of God and the supreme gift of God to souls that seek him. But, as I reflected on it then and through the ensuing years, I have come to see that this is also a beautiful description of the Eucharist as I experience it, celebrate it, and pray it.

As a religious of the Blessed Sacrament and a priest, the Eucharist is the center of my life and ministry, and the privileged place of entry into the mystery of God. Certainly as a priest, my ministry is public in nature. But the Eucharist is also my prayer as a member of the community of believers, all of us together offering our praise and worship to God.

“And passing into holy souls from age to age, she produces friends of God. . . .” Wisdom brings about intimacy with God. The Eucharist also does.

The intimacy of the Eucharist is not of our making, but of God’s desiring and effecting. As we sit at table with the Lord, as for his first followers on the night of the Last Supper and in subsequent meals and encounters with the Lord after his resurrection, Christ draws us close to himself, to his heart and to the Father’s. He teaches us, forgives us, strengthens us with the gift of his very life, and then sends us out in his name.

The first moment of eucharistic intimacy is the liturgy, but it is deepened and intensified in times of quiet prayer in his presence. How amazing it is to know the overwhelming love of God for us in Christ!

“. . . and prophets.” The Eucharist is meant to change us and empower us for our mission in the world. Weak and sinful and wholly dependent on God’s grace, we are nonetheless transformed over time to boldly proclaim God’s truth, justice, and compassion to others. Thus, the Eucharist brings us to the heart of God in loving intimacy and then outward in mission to those around us.





*“Be always disposed to say to God:
My heart is ready, O God, to do your holy will
in all things.”*

Eymard
Sp. J. J.

CO 283
October 1851

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

