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emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 125 Number 5

FROM THE EDITOR

In the past when I heard the word *accompaniment,* my thoughts inevitably ran to images of a pianist or an ensemble whose playing supports a soloist in performance, or a side dish that complements a dinner entrée. Somewhat quietly a new meaning of the word has entered the world of ministry and spirituality, as in the capacity or gift of being able to journey with another on the path to insight and wholeness. Recently, in fact, I have heard the bishops of two major American dioceses use the word accompaniment in this context.

In an October 27, 2014, article in the Jesuit periodical *America*, "Responses to Synod 2014: A Journey of Accompaniment," author Christopher J. Ruddy refers to "a pastoral approach that the pope has described as 'accompaniment,'" and quotes the Holy Father's challenge to the bishops of Brazil during World Youth Day 2013 when, against the backdrop of the Emmaus story, he said:

"We need a church capable of walking at people's side, of doing more than simply listening to them; a church that accompanies them on their journey; a church able to make sense of the 'night' contained in the flight of so many of our brothers and sisters from Jerusalem; a church that realizes that the reasons why people leave also contain reasons why they can eventually return. But we need to know how to interpret, with courage, the larger picture. Jesus warmed the hearts of the disciples of Emmaus."

Pope Francis then speaks of the "logic of Emmaus," that the Lord Jesus *walked alongside those in darkness,* he *listened, and* he *taught.*

As a priest, I can say that more often than not today I find myself accompanying others as they move by God's grace (and patience) toward deeper insight, conversion of life, and wholeness. Particularly in spiritual direction and in sacramental reconciliation, I see how the

Emmaus logic of walking with, listening, and teaching produces the greatest lasting effects. The journey may at times seem endless and the goal elusive, but it is worth it. I have no doubt about that.

James 5:7 counsels: "Be patient, therefore, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains."

In This Issue

Redemptorist Dennis J. Billy continues his series on authors and Church figures who wrote on the Eucharist, in this issuing focusing on the late Jean Vanier, one of the founders of L'Arche and a man of extraordinary grace and consistent witness to the dignity of every person. There are other articles and features for your reflection and prayer as we move into the rhythm of a new pastoral and academic year.

Thank you for being loyal subscribers to *Emmanuel*, and please, if you are so moved, consider giving subscriptions to the Magazine of Eucharistic Spirituality to others. Like so many Catholic periodicals today, we face the crunch of declining print subscriptions and rising production costs. We appreciate you very much.

Anthony Schueller, SSS
Editor

Discovering the Rich Treasures of Popular Piety, Part I

by James H. Kroeger, MM

Popular piety, nourished by the word of God and reflecting the encounter of faith and culture, can be for many a powerful complement to the Church's liturgical worship and prayer and an entry into a deeper lived faith.

Father James H. Kroeger, MM, is professor of systematic theology and mission studies in Manila at Loyola School of Theology, East Asian Pastoral Institute, and Mother of Life Catechetical Center. His most recent books are *Exploring the Priesthood with Pope Francis*, *Walking in the Light of Faith, Becoming Missionary Disciples*, and *Asia's Dynamic Local Churches: Serving Dialogue and Mission*

In the contemporary experience of parish priests, missionaries, catechists, preachers, and liturgists, the task of evangelization is immensely enriched by drawing on the insights and rituals of popular religiosity. In diverse cultural milieus, pastoral agents are discovering that their task of announcing the Gospel is facilitated and enhanced through the creative use of popular ritual and dramatics. In a word, folk religious practices, diversely termed "popular religiosity," "popular piety," and "popular spirituality," are a resource for evangelization awaiting full exploration; Pope Francis would wholeheartedly agree!

Often culturally unique local traditions and pageants can creatively portray core themes of Christianity and biblical faith. Such inculturated proclamation originates in the encounter of life and faith; it is then manifested through the pageantry and festivity of popular religiosity. This approach to liturgy and evangelization enables communities to artistically portray and celebrate their lived Christian identity.

Lively expressions of a community's faith-life need not raise undue anxieties about dogmatic orthodoxy or faithfulness to biblical texts. On the contrary, popular forms of piety should be welcomed as tools of evangelization, because dramatics, pageantry, socio-religious rituals and festivity can often constitute, in themselves, an actual proclamation of biblical faith.

In *Evangelii Nuntiandi*[1], Saint Paul VI's famous exhortation on evangelization in the modern world, a lengthy section is devoted to the role that popular piety should play in announcing the Good News. While noting its possible limitations, the pope asserted that "if

it is well oriented, above all by a pedagogy of evangelization, it is rich in values; . . . one must be sensitive to it, know how to perceive its interior dimensions and undeniable values. . . . When it is well oriented, this popular religiosity can be more and more for multitudes of our peoples a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ" (EN, 48).

Employing the traditional question-and-answer catechetical approach, this reflection will explore some basic questions about popular devotional practices. The authenticity of popular piety, its role in the spiritual life of Catholics, and its employment in the promotion of the faith will be explored through a brief, focused discussion on some important aspects of this worldwide phenomenon.

I. What is a common understanding of "popular piety," "popular religiosity," or "traditional devotional practices"?

Perhaps the most complete and authoritative resource for understanding the many dimensions of this subject is the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines* (DPPL)[2]. This truly helpful document was issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2001; it reaches to well over 200 pages. Here one reads that "popular piety" designates "those diverse cultic expressions of a private or community nature" which derive "from a particular nation or people or from their culture" (DPPL, 9). They are manifested in a wide variety of external practices, such as "prayers, hymns, observances attached to particular times or places, insignia, medals, habits, or customs"; they emerge from "an attitude of faith" and manifest a "particular relationship of the faithful with the Divine Persons, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. . . , or with the saints" (DPPL, 8).

The document goes on to explain additional aspects of popular piety: gestures, texts and formulae, song and music, sacred images, sacred places, and sacred times (DPPL, 15-20). Several common examples illustrate the importance and impact of popular pious devotions: stations of the cross (*via crucis*), rosary, novenas, litanies, even lyrical children's prayers. Indeed, the Church's popular devotions are extensive, diverse, and multifaceted; above all else, they are a rich treasure — to be preserved and propagated!

II. Did the Second Vatican Council discuss "popular piety"?

This subject was addressed by the council in several documents. The document on the liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*)[3] noted: "The

spiritual life, however, is not limited solely to participation in the liturgy. The Christian is indeed called to pray with his brothers and sisters, but he must also enter into his chamber to pray to the Father in secret; . . . he should pray without ceasing" (SC, 12). "Popular devotions of the Christian people are to be highly commended, provided they accord with the laws and norms of the Church. . . . Devotions proper to individual Churches also have a special dignity. . ." (SC, 13).

The Decree on Priestly Formation (*Optatam Totius*)[4] asserted: "Those practices of piety that are commended by the long usage of the Church should be zealously cultivated" among those preparing for ordained ministry in the Church (OT, 8). In the Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*)[5], one finds a clear encouragement that priests develop a strong Eucharistic spiritual life; this certainly includes the Eucharist itself, but also includes "the daily colloquy with Christ, a visit to and veneration of the Most Holy Eucharist" (PO, 18). In a word, Vatican II recommended practices of traditional piety, but also indicated some conditions that would guarantee their legitimacy and validity.

III. Have recent popes spoken on "popular religiosity"?

Saint Paul VI devoted an entire section (48) of *Evangelii Nuntiandi,* the *magna carta* of contemporary evangelization, to popular piety. He noted that one finds among Catholics "particular expressions of the search for God and for faith. . . . These expressions were for a long time regarded as less pure and were sometimes despised, but today they are almost everywhere being rediscovered." As noted earlier, Paul VI saw the value of popular piety and that it "can be more and more for multitudes of our people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ" (EN, 48).

Paul VI gifted the Church with the apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus,* a 1974 document that focused on "The Right Ordering and Development of Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary."[6] The intention of the pope was to shape and guide the Church's devotion (including popular piety) to the Blessed Virgin in light of the theological, liturgical, spiritual, and pastoral renewal promoted by the Second Vatican Council. The document also underscored the proper relation of popular devotions to the liturgy, ecumenical dimensions of Marian devotion, as well as the necessary connection of such devotions with the promotion of social justice, eloquently expressed in Mary's prayer, the Magnificat.

Saint John Paul II has spoken positively about popular religiosity: "Popular piety is an expression of faith which avails of certain cultural elements proper to a specific environment. . . . Genuine forms of popular piety, expressed in a multitude of different ways, derive from the faith, and therefore, must be valued and promoted. Such authentic expressions of popular piety are not at odds with the centrality of the sacred liturgy. Rather, in promoting the faith of the people, who regard popular piety as a natural religious expression, they predispose the people for the celebration of the sacred mysteries."[7]

Pope Benedict XVI, when he addressed the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean on May 13, 2007, at the shrine of Aparecida, spoke of "the rich and profound popular religiosity, in which we see the soul of the Latin American peoples." This faith emerges as "a synthesis between their cultures and the Christian faith"; it is marked by "love for the suffering Christ, the God of compassion, pardon, and reconciliation. . . , the God who is close to the poor and to those who suffer." Here one finds a "profound devotion to the most holy Virgin of Guadalupe, the *Aparecida*, the Virgin invoked under various national and local titles."[8]

Popular spirituality is a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church, and a manner of being missionaries.

Benedict continued: "This religiosity is also expressed in devotion to the saints with their patronal feasts, in love for the pope and the other pastors, and in love for the universal Church as the great family of God. . . . All this forms the great mosaic of popular piety which is the precious treasure of the Catholic Church in Latin America, and must be protected, promoted and, when necessary, purified."

Pope Francis has spoken and written extensively about popular piety, both as the archbishop of Buenos Aires and as pope. His profound thought will be highlighted in some later sections of this presentation.

IV. What are some values found in popular or folk religiosity?

Paul VI eloquently noted the values of popular religiosity: "It manifests a thirst for God which only the simple and poor can know. It makes

people capable of generosity and sacrifice even to the point of heroism, when it is a question of manifesting belief. It involves an acute awareness of profound attributes of God: fatherhood, providence, loving and constant presence. It engenders interior attitudes rarely observed to the same degree elsewhere: patience, the sense of the cross in daily life, detachment, openness to others, devotion. By reason of these aspects, we readily call it 'popular piety,' that is, religion of the people" (EN, 48).

Speaking to a group of pilgrims, Pope John Paul II asserted that popular piety is a form of evangelization; he noted: "I earnestly hope that these significant forms of popular piety, which sprung from faith-filled communities will continue today to be effective tools of evangelization. May they serve as an encouragement to prayer and contemplation, and instill, especially in young people, the same spiritual enthusiasm as in past generations."[9]

Similarly, in addressing a group of American bishops, John Paul II affirmed that authentic popular piety can build the faith; the pope said: "Another great gift that divine grace brought to life in America is popular piety, deeply rooted in the different nations. This particular characteristic of the American people, when correctly guided, purified and enriched by genuine elements of Catholic doctrine, can become a useful instrument to help the faithful deal appropriately with the challenges of secularization."[10]

V. Have episcopal bodies from various parts of the world spoken about popular piety?

Perhaps the most extensive positive presentation of popular religiosity in recent years is found in the concluding document of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean held in Aparecida in 2007.[11] Two paragraphs (263-264) of the lengthy document express well the profound thought of the assembled bishops.

"We cannot deprecate popular spirituality, or consider it a secondary mode of Christian life, for that would be to forget the primacy of the action of the Spirit and God's free initiative of love. Popular piety contains and expresses a powerful sense of transcendence, a spontaneous ability to find support in God, and a true experience of theological love. It is also an expression of supernatural wisdom,

because the wisdom of love does not depend directly on the enlightenment of the mind but on the internal action of grace. That is why we call it popular spirituality, that is, a Christian spirituality which, while it is a personal encounter with the Lord, includes It is a spirituality incarnated in the culture of the lowly, which is not thereby less spiritual, but is so in another manner."

Popes, from Saint Paul VI to Francis, have acknowledged that popular piety can be for many people a true encounter with God in Jesus Christ.

"Popular spirituality is a legitimate way of living the faith, a way of feeling part of the Church, and a manner of being missionaries, where the deepest vibrations of America's depths come together. It is part of a 'cultural historic originality' of the poor of this continent, and fruit of a 'synthesis between their cultures and the Christian faith.' In the environment of secularization experienced by our peoples, it is still a powerful confession of the living God who acts in history, and a channel for handing on the faith. Journeying together to shrines and taking part in other manifestations of popular piety, also taking one's children or inviting others, is in itself an evangelizing gesture by which the Christian people evangelizes itself and fulfills the Church's missionary calling."

VI. Have the Philippine bishops written about popular religiosity?

This author writes from the context of the Philippines where he has served as a missionary for nearly five decades. This enriching experience has brought him into direct, daily contact with a local Church where popular piety is strong and bears much fruit. However, he believes that such experience is certainly not unique to the Philippines; a "people's religiosity" is found in all local Christian communities around the world.

The Philippine bishops have strongly affirmed the positive values of a vibrant popular piety. The official *National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines* (NCDP), which bears the title *Maturing in Christian Faith,*[11] observes: "With the introduction of 'Hispanic Christianity' by the early Spanish missionaries into an already existing indigenous belief system, the beginning of what is called today 'folk' or 'popular

Catholicism' was initiated; . . . this popular religiosity still remains strong" among Filipino Catholics, both at home and around the world (NCDP, 36).

"Traces of veneration of dead ancestors, apparently a pre-Christian Filipino practice, can still be found today. Catholic devotion to the souls in purgatory, and the celebration of All Saints and All Souls Days, has tended to reinforce these beliefs at times. Perhaps the most characteristic aspect of Filipino popular religiosity . . . is devotion to saints. This fits in well with the Filipino's natural attraction for the concrete as well as for mediators. . . . The value of devotion to the saints remains high, but the catechetical effort must lead it to a more direct link with Christ, the source and goal of each saint's life" (NCDP, 40).

The same affirmation of folk religiosity "can be made of the traditional Filipino devotion to Mary, which is grounded in Filipino Catholicism's Hispanic roots, as well as in Filipino society's esteem and respect for women, especially mothers, itself a cultural trait fostered and deepened by the Christian faith." There are many "common titles under which Mary is venerated: Our Lady of the Rosary, Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, Our Lady of Perpetual Help, of Lourdes, of Mount Carmel, of Sorrows, etc. Mary plays an important role in both Christmas and Holy Week festivities" (NCDP, 43).

The Philippine bishops, while noting the positive elements of popular religion, also assert that there is a need for "evaluating popular religiosity" and "attempting various purifications." This renewal process is necessary because "practices that are good in themselves" are sometimes "no longer responsive to the new social, cultural, or even economic status of the people." In short, "popular religiosity is to be developed into authentic mature Filipino Christian living" (NCDP, 45). An excellent example of the renewal of popular religiosity can be found in *Ang Mahal na Birhen: Mary in Philippine Life Today,* the 1975 pastoral letter of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

Notes

[1] Paul VI. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (Evangelization in the Modern World). *The Pope Speaks* 21:1 (1976): 4-51. Hereafter cited as EN.

[2] Phan, Peter (ed.). *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines: A Commentary.* Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005. Hereafter cited as DPPL.

[3] *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy). In: Kroeger, James

(ed.). *Documents of Vatican Council II*: 169-226. Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines, 2011. Hereafter cited as SC.

[4] *Optatam Totius* (Decree on Priestly Training). In: Kroeger, James (ed.). *Documents of Vatican Council II*: 494-522. Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines, 2011. Hereafter cited as OT.

[5] *Presbyterorum Ordinis* (Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests). In: Kroeger, James (ed.). *Documents of Vatican Council II*: 596-654. Pasay City, Philippines: Paulines, 2011. Hereafter cited as PO.

[6] Paul VI. *Marialis Cultus* (Devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary). *The Pope Speaks* 19:1 (1974): 49-87. Hereafter cited as MC.

[7] John Paul II. "Message: Bishops' Conference of Nicaragua," *L'Osservatore Romano* 34:40 (October 3, 2001): 8.

[8] Benedict XVI. "Address: Fifth General Conference of the Latin American and Caribbean Bishops' Conferences," *L'Osservatore Romano* 40:20 (May 16, 2007): 16.

[9] John Paul II. "Popular Piety is a Form of Evangelization," *L'Osservatore Romano* 32:26 (June 30, 1999): 1.

[10] John Paul II. "Authentic Popular Piety can Build the Faith," *L'Osservatore Romano* 37:46 (November 17, 2004): 5.

[11] Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean. *Aparecida: Concluding Document*. Washington, DC: USCCB, 2007.

[12] Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP). *Maturing in Christian Faith: National Catechetical Directory for the Philippines.* Pasay City, Philippines: Saint Paul Publications, 1985. Hereafter cited as NCDP.

Ministry Leadership Lessons from Moses

by Victor M. Parachin

Moses was a great leader, a powerful man. His life and example convey profound lessons of service and compassion.

Victor M. Parachin is a minister and writes extensively on matters of spirituality. He has authored a dozen books and is a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*.

NOT MANY PEOPLE WOULD BE ABLE TO PLACE INTO A RESUME THESE positions: military commander, nation builder, liberator, religious leader, lawgiver, judge, mediator, advocate, leader of the opposition, visionary. Yet those are just some of the roles and responsibilities which Moses assumed. Although it has been thousands of years since he lived, Moses continues to be a source of inspiration, providing important ministry lessons for today. Here are four.

Look Out for Burning Bushes

The event which catapulted Moses into a completely new direction was his attention to a bush which burned but did not seem to burn out. Rather than ignore the odd event and walk by, Moses stopped to look and make an analysis. Clearly this was not a man who was sleepwalking though life, oblivious and unaware of opportunities and openings.

As we journey through life, all of us encounter burning bushes, events or circumstances which may seem random, peculiar, coincidental, even insignificant. Train yourself to be aware of the burning bushes that come your way. Stop to look in unlikely places.

The late television evangelist Robert H. Schuller tells of speaking before a group of several hundred clergy in Vancouver, Canada. At the conference opening, he met the group treasurer who was collecting money from those who had registered. In a few hours, everyone had been processed and the funds collected. The treasurer had several thousand dollars in cash which he put into a small metal box.

Uncomfortable with carrying around that much money, the man decided to put the cash in the safest place he could think of: the trunk of his car. When the conference ended, he went to the garage to get his car and found that it had been stolen. Terribly upset, he reported the theft to the police.

A week later, the police called to tell him that they found the car, but it had been completely stripped. He claimed what was left of his car but amazingly, when he opened the trunk, there was the little metal box still containing the entire amount of money. The thief never bothered to look for anything of value in the trunk.

Citing that story, Reverend Schuller said, "The truth is that we oftentimes overlook the greatest potential and value, because we simply can't envision such a productive concept coming from such an unlikely source. Some of the greatest concepts come out of the most unlikely ideas." Be on the lookout for burning bushes. By doing so, your life, like that of Moses, may take off in a dramatic new direction.

Remain Humble

Moses was one of the most powerful and successful leaders in history. He triumphed over mighty Pharaoh's resistances, led his people through the Red Sea, through the desert, and into their promised land.

Such successes could easily have inflated his ego. His attitude could have been: "None of this would have happened without me!" Yet Moses knew how to blush. The Bible describes him this way: "Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth" (Nm 12:3).

Humility is not an inferiority complex nor is it a negative self-image. True humility is simply maintaining a right view of ourselves. People with a proper sense of humility never feel they are too good, too important, too educated, too powerful to reach out and help another person. They never feel they are better than others. This is the lesson Jesus sought to impart to his disciples when he washed their feet at the Last Supper (John 13).

Today there is no scarcity of feet to wash. Opportunities to serve others abound every day. Author and physician Rachel Naomi Remen, MD, tells of being on an airplane. She was seated beside an "elegant older man." During the flight, the man upset a small container of yogurt from

his tray. It spilled on his shoes, the carpet, and his overnight bag.

Dr. Remen waited for the passenger to take some action, but nothing happened. Looking down again, she observed him slowly drawing back his right foot, the one covered with yogurt, until it was safely hidden under the seat. On his left foot, she saw a swollen ankle and a metal brace. She knew immediately that the leg was paralyzed.

Dr. Remen called for a flight attendant, pointed out the yogurt spill and asked for a wet towel. The flight attendant snapped at her saying: "There are four hundred and fifty-two people on this plane. I'm doing the best I can; you'll just have to wait." Upset by the flight attendant's rudeness, Dr. Remen tried to soften the issue saying gently, "If you will bring me a wet towel, I will be able to get that up."

A few moments later, she was given a wet towel. Turning to her traveling companion, Dr. Remen motioned with the towel and asked: "May I?" He gladly consented. "Kneeling, I began to wipe his shoes." As she cleaned, the man explained he had suffered a stroke eight months earlier, but had flown across the country to spend some time in the home of his son. When she returned the towel to the galley, three flight attendants thanked her profusely.

Train yourself to be aware of the burning bushes that come your way. Stop to look in unlikely places.

Later, as she left the plane, the pilot greeted her and said, "Thanks." Then he pressed something into her hand. As she walked up the jetway, Dr. Remen looked and saw he had given her the little gift that airlines often hand to children after a flight: a pin in the shape of a pair of wings. The truly humble know how to serve and help others.

Be a Source of Blessing

Moses encouraged the Israelites by blessing them. To "bless" means to celebrate, favor, glorify, magnify, and praise. People thrive when they are blessed and encouraged, but shrivel and shrink when they are criticized and marginalized.

Deuteronomy 33 contains Moses' blessings on the various tribes of Israel. He uses eloquent, uplifting language referring to them as "the beloved of the Lord" (verse 12) and "abounding with the favor of the Lord" (verse 23).

All of us can apply this important lesson from Moses and strive to be a source of blessing for others. This means acting in ways which lift up rather than weigh down or burden. It means speaking in ways which inspire and heal rather than injure and hurt. Like Moses, we must allow the Spirit to flow through us via small acts of kindness, brief words of encouragement, and bountiful expressions of courtesy and kindness.

Put Faith into Action

Moses not only articulated his faith, he put it into action. This is clearly seen in the book of Numbers. There, Miriam was stuck with leprosy for her criticism of Moses. Even though Moses was the target of her gossip and criticism, he immediately responded with forgiveness and compassion, offering this simple but effective prayer: "O God, please heal her!" (Nm 12:13).

Likewise, we must find ways to put our faith into action, our creeds into deeds, our beliefs into our behaviors. This was something promoted by the apostle Paul, who urged his fellow Christians: "Bless those who persecute you. . . rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody" (Rom 12:14-17).

Allow the Spirit to flow through small acts of kindness, brief words of encouragement, and bountiful expressions of courtesy and kindness.

An example of putting faith into action can be seen in this experience of a 15-year-old girl who once wrote advice columnist Dear Abby explaining she was from a financially-secure family. However, her best friend, "Audrey," was in the opposite situation. Audrey and her siblings were supported solely by the modest income of their mother, a single parent. "I used to get annoyed at Audrey when she'd hesitate after I'd suggest we do something fun together," the teen wrote. "She finally

admitted she didn't have the money. I feel awful because money has never been a problem for me, and I thought it was not a problem for any of my friends."

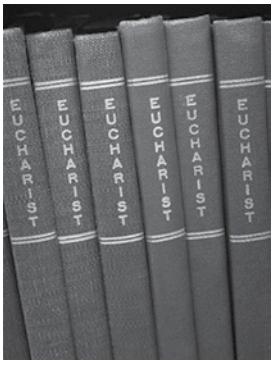
To her credit, the teen said she enjoyed Audrey's company and is more than willing to pay for admissions to amusement parks, movies. and other events. She even offered to buy clothing when the two would shop together. "The problem is, she is very sensitive about money. She never takes me up on my offers," the girl further explained. She concluded her letter by outlining both her dilemma and her desire: "How do I get to do fun things with Audrey without making her feel she is accepting charity?"

Abigail Van Buren, the advice columnist, offered her this simple but sound suggestion: "Offer to do things with her that don't cost a lot of money — listen to music, rent videos, exercise, or do homework together."

Like Moses, all of us need to see our lives as a mission. We are not merely religious professionals. We are ambassadors of faith, hope, and love. Whenever we encounter darkness, we must light a candle. Where there is hurt, we must try to bring healing, and where there is discord, we must be peacemakers. Our daily call is to put our faith into action.

In Christ's Peace
Deceased Members

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with R S, T, and U are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during September and October.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Jean Vanier on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

Everything Jean Vanier did was inspired by his faith in Jesus and his firm belief that Christ has a special place in his heart for the poor and marginalized. Becoming bread for others and receiving their offering was at the heart of his spiritual vision.

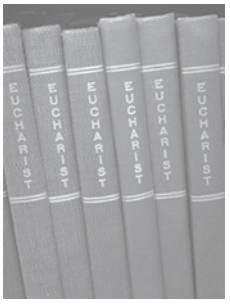
Jean Vanier, born on September 10, 1928, in Geneva, Switzerland, died earlier this year at age 90 on May 7 in Paris, France. Vanier was a Catholic philosopher of Canadian heritage and the founder of L'Arche, an international federation of communities dedicated to serving people with disabilities and those who help them. After his early studies in Canada, England, and France, he served in the Royal and the Royal Canadian Navies in the late 1940s and resigned his commission in 1950 in order to continue his education. In time, he earned a PhD in philosophy from the Institut Catholique in Paris and taught philosophy at Saint Michael's College of the University of Toronto.

Redemptorist Father Dennis J. Billy is a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*. He has authored or edited more than 30 books and 300 articles in a number of scholarly and popular journals.

He founded the first L'Arche community in 1964 at Trosly-Breuil, France, and, since that time, has established a total of 151 L'Arche communities throughout the world. In 1971, he co-founded with Marie-Hélène Mathieu, the international movement Faith and Light, which provides people with disabilities, their families and friends, forums for sharing and mutual support. Central to Vanier's teaching is the dignity of all human persons and the way in which life in community enables all people, abled and disabled alike, to become more human. The Eucharist lies at the very heart of his communitarian vision.[1]

Vanier's Spiritual Outlook

Vanier believes that contemporary society has witnessed a gradual disintegration of the natural or familial ties. As a result of this slow dissolution of communal bonds, people have become increasingly isolated from each other, strangers to those around them and even to themselves. One way of dealing with this deep sense of estrangement



is to intentionally seek people who share similar values and perhaps even live together to implement a common vision.

Community, for Vanier, refers to "groupings of people who have left their own milieu to live with others under the same roof, and work from a new vision of humanity and peoples' relationships with each other and with God."[2] While he recognizes that community can exist outside of Christianity, he believes that Jesus' message invites his disciples "to love one another and to live community in a special way."[3] It was with this purpose in mind that he established the first L'Arche community.

Vanier identifies two essential elements of life in community: "interpersonal relationship and a sense of purpose, and orientation of life to a common goal and common witness."[4] These elements enable members to plumb the depths of their identities and encounter elements of both light and darkness. Community is at one and the same time both a summit of humanity's noblest dreams and a source of its most terrible nightmares. It stretches our souls and forces us to confront our limitations and weaknesses.

Rather than trying to escape the inner turmoil of our souls, community encourages us to face it head-on and gradually make peace with the monsters within us. In his mind, ". . . if we accept that the monsters are there, we let them out and learn to tame them. That is growth towards liberation."[5]

Vanier began L'Arche by taking two mentally disabled men, Raphaël Simi and Philippe Seux, out of their institutional surroundings, bringing them to a small house he had purchased, and welcoming them into his life. In doing so, he made a commitment to live with them, take care of them, and love them. All of this was inspired by his faith in Jesus and his conviction regarding the gifted nature of the poor and marginalized.

In living with and caring for these men, Vanier was able to befriend them on a profound and deeply human level: "Essentially, they wanted a friend. They were not very interested in my knowledge or my ability to do things, but rather they needed my heart and my being."[6]

Living in community with the disabled helped him get in touch with his own limitations and human vulnerabilities: "Life shared in community by people with and without intellectual disabilities creates a whole

new sense of solidarity."[7] They nourished each other in a mutual, reciprocal way. They communicated with each other on a deep level, one that went beneath superficial appearances and touched the deeply human in both the disabled and those who cared for them. Together, they shared life's joyous moments and tragic defeats. They encountered Jesus in breaking open the bread of their lives and celebrating his presence in their midst.

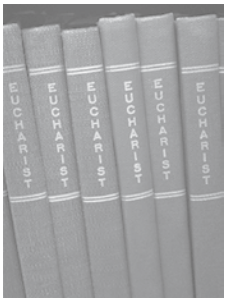
The disabled put us in touch with the Jesus who is in our hearts and in our midst. Their gift to us is the gift of Christ himself.

Vanier's spiritual outlook was shaped by his deep faith in Jesus and the conviction that those who follow him must seek him in those marginalized by society by welcoming them into their lives and befriending them. The members of L'Arche communities meet people where they are, serve them, and rejoice in their common humanity. They both minster to the disabled and are ministered by them. At the heart of their community is the commitment to love as Christ loves, to both give to and receive from the poor and the voiceless. The Eucharist is central to their life together.

Vanier's Teaching on the Eucharist

The Eucharist lies at the heart of Vanier's communitarian vision. "The Eucharist," he says, "is the celebration, the epitome of the communal feast, because in it we relive the mystery of Jesus' gift of his own life for us. It is the time of thanksgiving for the whole community. That is why the priest says after the consecration: 'Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood may be filled with his Holy Spirit and become one body, one spirit in Christ.' There we touch the heart of the mystery of community."[8]

In addition to this communal nourishment, the sacrament also is a source of personal nourishment. It is also "an intimate moment when each of us is transformed through a personal meeting with Jesus: 'Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him' (Jn 6:56). At the moment of consecration, the priest repeats Jesus' words: 'Take this, all of you, and eat it, this is my body which will be given up for you.' It is the 'given up for you,' which is striking. It is only when we have eaten his body that we can give ourselves to others. Only God could invent something like that."[9]



The Eucharist, for Vanier, "links communal and personal nourishment, because it is itself both at the same time."[10] It empowers the Christian community — both individually and as a whole — to give itself up for others by becoming bread for them. It immerses us in sacred time *(Kairos)* and enables us to embrace the ordinary moments of daily life *(Chronos)* with the transforming love of Jesus. The Eucharist fosters personal and communal growth, provides spiritual nourishment for the members of the body, and unites us together in deep bonds of fellowship rooted in our mutual love for Christ and Christ's love for us.

The Eucharist also challenges us to delve beneath appearances and to experience ourselves on a deeper level. It calls us to be faithful to God, to one another, and to ourselves. It touches us at the deepest part of our humanity and enables us to get in touch with our own weakness and vulnerability. This inward journey eventually turns outward. It involves an encounter with Christ, who touches us in our broken places and heals us with the power of his wounded love. In the Eucharist, Jesus pours himself into simple bread and wine, becomes our food, communes with us, dwells within us, and sends us forth to become food for others.

Vanier sees the Eucharist as the heart and soul of L'Arche. Through it, Jesus nourishes us, befriends us, forgives us, renews us, communes with us, celebrates with us, and rests with us. This sacrament has the power to shape the community's collective conscience: "Many people are tense because they have not yet entered into the collective conscience of their community; they have not yet surrendered to its gift and call. They have not really made the passage from 'the community for myself' to 'myself for the community.' Perhaps because their fragility makes them want to prove something to themselves and others, or because, fundamentally, they have come to the community as a refuge. They will only relax when they have discovered their own gift and put it decisively at the community's service."[11]

The Eucharist immerses us in Christ's paschal mystery and shapes the community's collective self-image. It helps us to put on the mind of Christ and see the world around us through his eyes: "If we remain at the level of 'doing' something for people we can stay behind our barriers of superiority. We have to welcome the gift of the poor with open hands. Jesus says: 'What you do for the least significant of my brothers (the ones you don't notice and reject), you do for me.' It's true. We ask God each night in the L'Arche prayer to help us see in the

sufferings of our wounded brothers and sisters the humble presence of the living Jesus."[12]

Through the Eucharist, Jesus nourishes us, befriends us, forgives us, renews us, communes with us, celebrates with us, and rests with us.

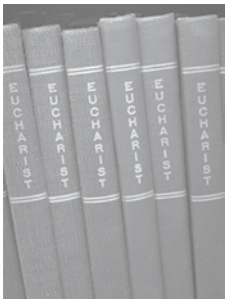
The Eucharist is the prayer of the Church. When the Church is at prayer, the Church is most itself. The same can be said of L'Arche: prayer, both personal and communal, "is no more than the child resting in his Father's arm and saying, 'Yes.' The heart finds its nourishment in fidelity to the poor, listening to them and allowing itself to be disturbed by their prophetic presence. It finds nourishment in fidelity to the collective conscience and structures of the community, in its continual, loving, and patient 'yes' to these."[13] When L'Arche is at prayer, its members are resting in the arms of the Father and Jesus, their Eucharistic Lord, lives in their midst and in their hearts.

Some Further Insights

Many other things can be said of Vanier's approach to the Eucharist. The above description, while not comprehensive, underscores the central role it plays in his spiritual outlook and in the life of L'Arche. The follow remarks seek to probe a little more deeply into his understanding of the sacrament and how it shapes his approach to his life and work with the mentally disabled.

1. To begin with, Vanier's insight that the Eucharist links both communal and personal nourishment emphasizes the close relationship between the two. If not managed appropriately, the individual's relationship to the larger whole can be a major source of tension within the community. The extremes of total isolation from the community and complete absorption by the community must be avoided at all costs. The former can rob the individual of the deep sense of belonging that authentic communities generate. The latter can do psychological damage to the individual and stunt the growth of a mature personality. The Eucharist offers a place where a person's fundamental dignity and place in the believing community are both affirmed and mutually reinforced.

2. Vanier's insight that "being with" takes priority over "doing for" reflects one of the fundamental values of the Christian message.



Action flows from being and returns to shape the soul's character. His insight that it was possible to connect with the mentally disabled on a deep level of their common humanity went against the currents of his day and served to highlight the great gift that the handicapped and mentally disabled can bring to community. His ability, moreover, to recognize the deep need of the disabled for human friendship enabled him to be with them, connect with them, and eventually befriend them. The relationships that grew from these encounters were far more important than any useful service rendered.

3. Vanier believed that you should always meet people where they are and then offer them the bread of human friendship. This insight reflects what Jesus did at the Last Supper. He gave himself up for us by becoming our very food and drink, thus meeting us at the most basic level of human need. This human need also reveals the divine yearning to befriend us and dwell within our hearts. By "caring for" and by simply "being with" the mentally disabled, we are given the unique opportunity to get in touch with our own deep-seated vulnerabilities. In the eyes of God, we are all disabled. Those of the disabled are more visible and readily apparent than ours, which tend to be buried and hidden from plain sight.

4. For Vanier, the disabled help us to experience the presence of the risen Lord in our midst. Jesus himself said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Mt 25:40). For Vanier, Jesus' words are more than mere metaphor. Jesus promised to be with us always. He is present to us in the Church and sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He is present to us in Holy Writ. He is present to us in the person of the priest and whenever the believing community gathers for worship. In a very special way, he is also present in the poor and marginalized, in those who have been neglected by society and counted as worthless. The disabled put us in touch with the Jesus who is in our hearts and in our midst. Their gift to us is the gift of Christ himself.

5. Christ's quiet presence in the tabernacle reminds us of an essential element of the call to discipleship: presence. Vanier came to see that being present to the disabled, becoming their friends, and forming a family with them touched upon some of their deepest needs. If isolation and a deep sense of detachment from others has become an increasingly dominant trait in today's world, the disabled are especially vulnerable to experiencing it, since they have been

marginalized and cannot easily communicate their needs. Being present to them in a Christ-like way helps them to get in touch with their deeper humanity and to form bonds of friendship that go beyond world and gestures. To communicate with those who cannot communicate, to be present to those who have been defined primarily in terms of absence — by what they are lacking rather than what they already possess — lies at the very heart of Vanier's vision.

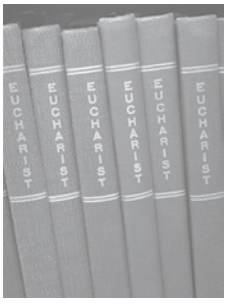
Vanier's insight that "being with" takes priority over "doing for" reflects one of the fundamental values of the Christian message.

6. In the Eucharist, Jesus also gives himself up for us. He empties himself into bread and wine to become our food for eternal life: "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you" (Jn 6:53). Christ's sacrificial self-offering continues in the members of his body, the Church. L'Arche is a concrete response made on his part and those inspired by his message to follow Jesus' example of kenotic self-emptying. By pouring themselves into the lives of the disabled, they seek to bring Christ to the disabled on every level of their human makeup — the physical, the emotional, the mental, the spiritual, and the social. In doing so, they also hope to find a glimpse of him in the lives of those they love and serve.

7. Finally, in the Eucharist, Jesus nourishes us. Those who receive him in the sacrament are called to be a source of nourishment for others. They do this by entering their worlds and giving of themselves completely to them to the point of becoming nourishment for them and a source of hope. This means embracing all of life, with all of its joys and sorrows, summits and valleys, celebrations and trials. Everything Vanier did at L'Arche was inspired by his faith in Jesus and his firm belief that Christ has a very special place in his heart for the poor and marginalized. Becoming bread for others lies at the heart of his spiritual vision, as does receiving it from those who have nothing to give but their own vulnerabilities.

Conclusion

Jean Vanier gave a voice to those who have none. His work with the disabled started with humble beginnings and has burgeoned into a worldwide federation of 151 communities and more than 5,000 members. What is more, his international movement, Faith and Light,



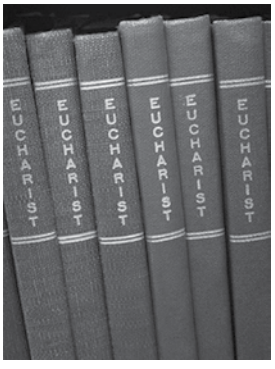
now has over 1,500 communities in 81 countries on five continents. The winner of the 2015 Templeton Prize, he is recognized throughout the world for his compassionate advocacy for the disabled.[14]

Vanier's work at L'Arche was groundbreaking. By making himself present to the disabled, he brought them from the periphery of society, nourished them, and enabled others to see the great gift they are to the world. L'Arche communities are known for their respect for the dignity of the human person and everyone's right to enjoy a sense of purpose and belonging. Each community is a small "Ark" of humanity afloat in the turbulent sea of man's inhumanity to man. As such, each community is a sign of hope to a world that has lost its bearings and has become out of touch with its own humanity.

The Eucharist is the food that nourishes each L'Arche community, both personally and as a group. It does so by putting members of the community in touch with the living presence of Jesus Christ, who gives himself up for them in the breaking of the bread to nourish them ad make them more deeply human. Jesus acts in this sacrament in a very real and palpable way. Those who partake of it are called to follow in his footsteps and reflect his love to others in similar ways. Vanier took these words of Jesus to his disciples to heart: "As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). In each generation, God raises up men and women like him to go and do likewise.

Notes

1 For Vanier's biography, message, work, and publications, see "Jean Vanier: Official Site," https://www.jean-vanier.org/en.
2 Jean Vanier, *Community and Growth: Our Pilgrimage Together*, trans. Ann Shearer (Ramsey, NJ: Paulist Press, 1979), x.
3 Ibid., xi.
4 Ibid., x.
5 Ibid., 1.
6 "Jean Vanier: Official Site," https://www.jean-vanier.org/en/meet-jean/biography.
7 Ibid.
8 Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 125.
9 Ibid. All quotations from Scripture come from *The Catholic Study Bible,* Second Edition. *The New American Bible, Revised Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
10 Vanier, *Community and Growth*, 125.
11 Ibid., 110.
12 Ibid., 116.
13 Ibid., 122.
14 "Jean Vanier: Official Site," https://www.jean-vanier.org/en/meet-jean/biography.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Musings on the Church and Theology

by Owen F. Cummings

The Church is changing and changing fast. What will the future Catholic Church be like?

"THE TEMPTATION IS FOUND, IN PRESENT CONTROVERSY AND IN OUR INTERPRETATION of the past, to clarify complexity by dividing the wheat from the cockle, the light from the dark, 'us' from 'them.'" (Nicholas Lash[1])

"The Roman Catholic Church is not the monolithic entity that her enemies and her most zealous members believe. Beliefs are not held univocally, or with clarity, or across the board." (Fergus Kerr, OP[2])

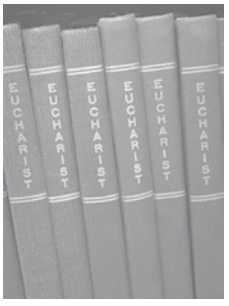
"No one's crystal ball is cloudless, and it would be a foolish person who was too sure of the shape that the Church of the future will take." (Paul Lakeland[3])

Between the First Vatican Council and the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic Church could be likened to a village with a high wall all around it, keeping at bay the jungle outside. The jungle consisted of post-Enlightenment ideas, while the high-walled village with its system of regulations and taboos kept the villagers safe from the dangers of the jungle. "The Second Vatican Council breached the (village) wall at several points and thus ended the seclusion so carefully fostered by several generations of village rulers."[4]

Looking at the enormously complex period between both Vatican Councils, and attempting to gain some perspective in today's Catholic Church and on contemporary theology, is an impossible task for any one person, but it is tempting to try!

What will the future Catholic Church be like? What will future popes, policies, and people be like? No one can answer such questions, of course, with exactitude. But the religious journalist David Gibson, in the

Deacon Owen F. Cummings, a frequent contributor to *Emmanuel*, is the academic dean and Regents' Professor of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Oregon.



introduction to his fine book *The Coming Catholic Church*, has this to say: "The question at hand is not whether American Catholicism will exist in ten years, or twenty or thirty years, but what it will look like."[5]

One might re-phrase Gibson's point *a propos* of the entire Western Catholic Church — one recognizes that the Church is more than the West, of course — the question is what will it look like in the future, in ten, or twenty or thirty years, given the changes and developments in the Church today. Obviously, there can be no clear answer, "no cloudless crystal ball." Nevertheless, one might speculate a little.

A Beginning

The English Catholic novelist David Lodge provides us with a useful beginning for such speculation. Commenting on his 1980 novel *How Far Can You Go?* 28 years later in 2008, and asking the question of his Catholic fictional characters, "How far have we come?" Lodge writes: "The utopian spirit of radical Catholicism in the 1960s and 1970s faded in the 1980s and 1990s, as it did in secular society. Some of my characters would have 'lapsed,' disillusioned by the return of old-fashioned quietist forms of devotion and the absence of real structural change in the Church. Others might have returned to the fold, feeling the need for some reassurance with which to face aging and mortality. But the Church is no longer the tightly governed, watchfully policed citadel it once was; membership is no longer defined by visible signs and sanctions — scrupulously regular attendance at Mass on Sundays and holy days, confession before Communion at least once a year, fasting, abstinence, and all the rest — or by an unquestioning acceptance of the whole package of Catholic Christian doctrine."[6]

Lodge's description does not, because it cannot, apply to all Catholics everywhere in equal measure and degree. There are different groupings within Catholicism, self-described as conservative or neo-conservative, progressive or liberal, post-liberal, or even evangelical Catholic. But it seems undeniable that Lodge is also describing a very large number of Roman Catholics today when he judges that "the Church is no longer the tightly governed, watchfully policed citadel it once was" nor is it marked "by an unquestioning acceptance of the whole package of Catholic Christian doctrine."

This seems to me to be simple statement of fact, however desirable or undesirable, depending on one's point of view, it may be. It certainly

reflects the perspective of many at the popular level, who still wish to belong. All manner of statistical surveys conducted in recent years reinforce this perception. The Church is changing and changing fast.

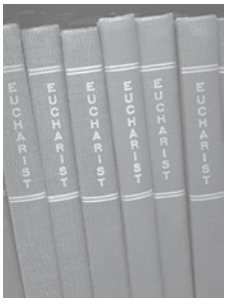
The distinguished American church historian John W. O'Malley speaks of a "papalcentric ecclesiology." Looking back over the second millennium of Christianity and attempting to locate significant changes in Catholic life, O'Malley maintains that the biggest change of the millennium has been "the papalization of Catholicism." He provides a host of examples of the fact that for most Catholics the papacy did not loom large in the daily living out of their Christian faith. Aquinas, for example, hardly mentions the papacy in his comprehensive *Summa Theologiae*.

The Church is no longer the citadel it once was, defined by visible signs and sanctions and an unquestioning acceptance of the full range of Catholic doctrine.

This stands in strong contrast with our contemporary experience of the papacy, and in contemporary ecclesiological reflection. "To be a Catholic today, however, as most Catholics and surely everybody else would say, is 'to believe in the pope.' . . . In their publications, theologians know that, quite unlike the situation in Saint Thomas' day, it is as important to quote writings of the current pontiff as it is to quote Scripture."[7] One suspects a little hyperbole on O'Malley's part here, but his point is well-taken. There is a centeredness on papal documents and texts and on the person of the pope in our contemporary experience that is largely foreign to the period before Pope Pius IX.

Papalcentric ecclesiology, and to some extent theology, largely began with Pope Pius IX, an ecclesiology that, at least at the popular level, seems to presuppose that the Holy Spirit communicates exclusively with the pope.[8] To move on from this papalcentric ecclesiology, but at the same time maintaining a necessary, firm, and clear role for the papacy, will demand an informed historical perspective, and that has too often been lacking.

Church history has too often been the Cinderella of both theology and catechetical instruction. As theologian Paul Lakeland has it: "The



laity and the clergy need to become better educated in the history of the Catholic tradition. . . . The history of the Church is the rightful possession of every member of the community, and responsible members of the community will take the trouble to learn about their history. There are many reasons why this is good practice, but the principal one is that it discourages us from paying too much attention to the way things are right now. 'It's always been this way!' is a terrible fallacy."[9]

Recall some words spoken in 1962: "In the daily exercise of our pastoral office we sometimes have to listen, much to our regret, to voices of persons who, though burning with zeal, are not endowed with too much sense of discretion or measure. In these modern times they can see nothing but prevarication and ruin. They say that our era, in comparison with past eras, is getting worse and they behave as though they had learned nothing from history, which is, nonetheless, the teacher of life." These words come from Pope John XXIII at the opening of the first session of Vatican II.[10] They are as relevant now as they were then.

Or recall some words uttered in the nineteenth century: "This is a world of conflict, and of vicissitude amid the conflict. The Church is ever militant; sometimes she gains, sometimes she loses; and more often she is at once gaining and losing in parts of her territory. What is ecclesiastical history but a record of the ever-doubtful fortune of the battle, though its issue is not doubtful? Scarcely are we singing *Te Deum*, when we have to turn to our *Misereres*: scarcely are we in peace, when we are in persecution; scarcely have we gained a triumph, when we are visited by a scandal. Nay, we make progress by means of reverses; our griefs are our consolations; we lose Stephen, to gain Paul, and Matthias replaces the traitor Judas. It is so in every age; it is so in the nineteenth century; it was so in the fourth. . . ."[11] These words come from John Henry Cardinal Newman introducing his sketches of Church history. Pastoral challenges are with us always.

The point is to recognize that there is no golden age in the history of the Church, an age free of problems and challenges, an age in which the entire assembly of Christians was active in every possible way in their local communities and held fast to the integrity of Christian doctrine in every respect. Arguably, this sense of a golden age which seems to perdure stems and flows from the papalization of Catholicism, especially during the nineteenth century.

If that papalcentric perspective is less tight now than it has been, that may be no bad thing. As English Catholic theologian Paul D. Murray, reviewing and summing up theology in the decades after Vatican II, writes: "The instincts of the reactionary conservative, the progressive reformer, the creative retriever, the cautious consolidator, and the counter-cultural critic exist as differing yet overlapping parameters of concern. They constitute the diverse keys within which the music of Catholicism has been and is being variously performed with the possibility of both harmony and dissonance."[12] It is a fine description of contemporary Catholic theology.

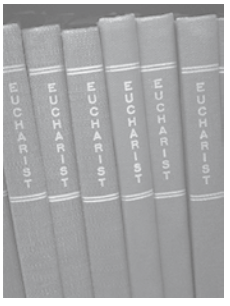
Theological Diversity

It would be fair to say that Thomism in the wake of Vatican II and as a result of the mid-century *nouvelle théologie* became much less central to Catholic theology as other ways of doing theology opened up. As Catholic students of theology pursued graduate studies not only at Catholic but also at non-Catholic institutions, it was inevitable that a greater theological pluralism would emerge.

There exists a diversity in theology and theological methodologies and an inclusiveness of experience; this will be a challenge for the future.

At the same time, Thomism did not simply disappear but rather developed in various ways in dialogue with other styles of philosophy and theology. Paul Murray comments sagely: "While a range of appropriations of the Thomist tradition, from analytic and personalist to more self-consciously historical readings, still features as an important part of the contemporary Catholic theological scene, they now feature precisely as a part — and an internally differentiated part — rather than as a whole."[13]

Perhaps it might be helpful to describe the decades after the council as "the democratization of theology." This is certainly true of the United States. Prior to Vatican II, probably the majority of graduate students in theology were priests studying more often than not at the Roman universities, for example, the Jesuit Gregorian, the Dominican Angelicum, and the Benedictine Sant' Anselmo.



While some laity have studied and continue to study at these schools, many more pursue their studies at other universities such as Harvard, Yale, Duke, Chicago, the Graduate Theological Union, Emory, and so forth, as well as in Catholic schools like Catholic University of America, Fordham, Marquette, Boston College, Duquesne, etc. This has led to the "democratization" of theology, as theological expertise and competence has moved away from being a preserve of the clergy to committed and credentialed lay people.

The result is both diversity in theologians and in theological methodologies, and, therefore, ineluctably certain tensions. This leads Paul Murray to conclude as follows: "While this proliferation of methodologies and analytical tools has greatly enriched Catholic theology, it has become increasingly difficult to hold it in gathered, cross-boundary, mutually constructive conversation. It is, consequently, as vital to Catholicism's health to develop and to sustain spaces for richly textured conversation between theologians of varying persuasions and differing expertise as it is to nurture the opportunities for similar conversations between theologians and the hierarchy."[14]

This is a major challenge for Catholic theology in our twenty-first century. Theologians and Catholics concerned with a critically reflective and adult understanding of their faith can either let themselves be stretched to understand styles and methods different from their own leading to mutual enrichment all around, including at times some very serious disagreements, or they can retreat to their ideological fortresses, ignoring, excluding, or anathematizing one another.

The meeting of the American bishops at Dallas in 2002 (and other such meetings throughout the universal Church) to deal with the sex abuse scandals in the Church signaled to some the end of the monarchical shape of the Church, the deconstruction of which arguably began with Vatican II and is being accelerated under Pope Francis.[15] There is a populist demand for transparency and accountability at the highest levels of leadership in the Church, as never witnessed before.

Accompanying this populist demand, and growing over a much longer period of time, and at least since the late 1960s, is the fact that Catholics are making up their own minds about a broad range of issues in ways that do not always coincide with formal Church teaching. This is especially true of younger Catholics.

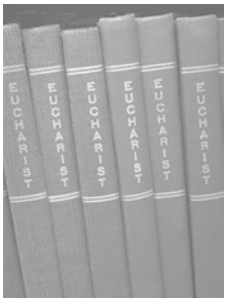
The Catholic theologian Tom Beaudoin, cited by David Gibson, describes the situation among younger Catholics as follows: "Let's be honest and admit that most young Catholics, even into our thirties, are only semi-practicing or non-practicing. . . . That does not mean that they have abandoned God or been abandoned by God. How many of us know young adults who are waiting for a credible, believable Church, a Church that addresses real life issues, a Church that treats us like adults, that takes our cultures seriously, a Church that feeds us spiritually, that asks for our gifts."[16] The Church of tomorrow, then, will be both like and unlike the Church of today, just as the Church of today in the years following Vatican II is both like and unlike the Church of yesterday.

An Inclusive Church

One of the great characteristics of Catholicism is its ability to make room for everyone, for saints and sinners. This is how David Gibson, the religious journalist puts it: "Catholicism's genius is that for all its doctrinal certitude, one of its main tenets is that all should come under its catholic embrace. Thus one finds an astounding variety of types who proudly wear their Catholicism like a badge — peaceniks such as the Berrigans, charismatics who pray like Pentecostals, traditionalists who chant in Latin, feminists who celebrate underground women's liturgies, and even those annoying 'holy idiots' who sometimes turn out to be saints. It also encompasses miscreants who have abused children — even if they are defrocked, ex-priests remain Catholics — as well as an astonishing number of their victims."[17]

This all-embracing Catholic Church, today and of tomorrow, if it is to be faithful to the vision of Vatican II will be a Church in which dialogue between different points of view is the order of the day. It will be a Church in which the members will need to recognize that they will find themselves in disagreement with one another from time to time. It will be a Church in which they will be able to live with these tensions and disagreements amicably if not always comfortably. It will be a Church marked by the synodality encouraged and practiced by Pope Francis.

Theologian Paul Lakeland puts it so well when he believes that a basic, deep, and pervasive love for the Church is what is called for, and a love for the Church that is enormously challenging: "You have to love the whole sorry mess, all those who are praying with you in praying the



prayer of the publican, and even those who are not."[18]

Notes

[1] Nicholas Lash, "Modernism, Aggiornnamento and the Night Battle," in Adrian Hastings,, ed., *Bishops and Writers* (Wheathampstead, UK: Anthony Clarke, 1977), 51.

[2] Fergus Kerr, OP, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 203.

[3] Paul Lakeland, *Catholicism at the Crossroads* (New York-London: Continuum, 2007), 97.

[4] Gabriel Daly, OSA, "Catholicism and Modernity," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 53 (1985), 777.

[5] David Gibson, *The Coming Catholic Church* (New York: HarperCollins, 2004), 12.

[6] David Lodge, "How Far Have We Come?" *The Tablet,* July 26, 2008, 17.

[7] John W. O'Malley, SJ, "The Millennium and the Papalization of Catholicism," *America* (April 8, 2000), 10.

[8] John W. O'Malley, SJ, "Truth Be Told, Review: Gary Wills, *Papal Sin*," *America* (July 1-8, 2000), 24.

[9] Paul Lakeland, op. cit., 110.

[10] Cited from Meriol Trevor, *Pope John* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 80.

[11] John Henry Newman, *Historical Sketches,* vol. 2 (London: Dent, 1906), 1.

[12] Paul D. Murray, "Roman Catholic Theology after Vatican II," in David F. Ford and Rachel Muers, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), 270. Murray's essay runs from pages 265-286.

[13] Ibid., 272.

[14] Ibid.

[15] Thus, the former priest and psychology professor, Eugene C. Kennedy, as reported in David Gibson, op. cit., 33.

[16] David Gibson, op. cit., 50, 60, 79.

[17] Ibid., 105.

[18] Paul Lakeland, op. cit., 25.

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

The Rule of Law, Not the Law of Rules: A Gospel Perspective

by Gerald J. Bednar

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

I. The Rule of Law versus the Law of Rules

Oliver Wendell Holmes observed that, "The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience." That pithy sentence in his 1881 classic, *The Common Law*, clarified the reasoning process employed by the better judges in the legal world.[1] They do not simply apply rules, rather they see beyond the rules to discern the American character at its best. This has its ecclesiastical equivalent, as we will see. But first it will be helpful to consider the insight of Holmes. He highlighted the difference between what I will call the "Rule of Law" as opposed to the "Law of Rules."

The Rule of Law envisions the relationships between people in a given society. Not just a set of rules, "The law embodies the story of a nation's development through many centuries . . ."[2] In the United States, it describes the American character. Not merely a logically consistent code, the Law gives authoritative expression to the experience and expectations of the people. Its nuances must be discerned through the wisdom bestowed by historical research, the distinctions observed in judicial precedent, and knowledge of the culture. When people follow the Law, their brand of natural justice will rise among them.[3] Dante likened this natural sense of justice to the natural instincts that guide a bird to build its nest in one way and not another.[4] Just as each species builds its own nest in its own way, each nation produces its own version of the Law in which its own notion of justice resides.

The Law of Rules, on the other hand, assumes that the constitution and its collection of statutes, ordinances, and regulations give full expression to the Law. Sometimes Rules capture an element of the Law very well. At other times, a statute may be so badly drafted that it obfuscates the Law it tries to express. Other statutes clearly state their objectives but may contain loopholes that can defeat the purpose of the Law. People

may also become so skillful at avoiding statutory requirements that they can profit handsomely in their dealings with the unwary. In those cases, upright citizens detect a lack of fairness, even though the Rules have been followed to a tee. Therefore, Justice Holmes and others have concluded that there must be more to the Law than Rules. Justice must look beyond Rules to achieve a fair result.

Despite Holmes' treatise, judges well into the twentieth century still struggled to incorporate properly his insight into their opinions. In 1927, a company sought to foreclose a mortgage that had become past due because of a simple clerical error. A check for $4,219.69 had been sent and cashed, but, due to a miscalculation, it was $401.87 short. When the secretary discovered her error, she immediately notified the mortgagee that the difference would be paid as soon as her boss, the president and the only one authorized to write checks, returned from his business trip in Europe. When he returned, she forgot to tell him about the shortage. After 20 days elapsed, the plaintiff filed for foreclosure. Her boss tendered the balance the same day. It was refused, and the matter went to court. In *Graf v. Hope Building Corp*., Judge O'Brien, writing for the majority, had only to refer to the agreement and the logic of contract law to reach his conclusion.[5] Nothing stood in the way of foreclosure. The secretary's mathematical error, her forgetfulness and the president's immediate tender of the balance due could not override the Rule, no matter how innocent or inconsequential the infraction.

Chief Judge Cardozo dissented. He understood the Rules very well, but thought that the Law required a different result. The all-too-human error of the secretary and the immediate offer to pay the full balance owing should not trigger foreclosure. In Cardozo's opinion, the majority ruling simply did not describe how society operates in America. The Law favors mercy to those who make an honest mistake in a situation like that. He wrote in his dissent, "In this case, the hardship is so flagrant, the misadventure so undoubted, the oppression so apparent, . . . " that the court should require the mortgagee to accept late payment in such circumstances.[6] Cardozo did not want to change the Rules; he simply wanted to follow the Law. Making such judgments requires the skill to distinguish substantive harm from mere technicalities. Saint Thomas More cautioned that, "Laws must be applied not mechanically but prudently . . . Laws, like medicines, can be applied well only by individuals who show prudence, courage and temperance."[7] Good judgment includes the recognition of many

subtle factors.[8]

According to the Rules, O'Brien was right. According to the Law, Cardozo was right.[9] Everyone has an interest in justice and fairness. Unfortunately, at times people equate that interest with an uncritical adherence to the Rules.

II. Law as Alive in the Scriptures

The situation described in the civil courts above has its ecclesiastical equivalent. Both clergy and laity apply Rules to religious controversies. But they can also confuse the Law with the Rules, and at times mistakenly expect that their uncritical adherence to the Rules will produce the graceful result promised by Christ himself.

John Meier notes the complexity of the Law: "Coming as it did from Yahweh . . . and comprising as it did both narratives and commandments (but also with elements of prophecy and wisdom), this religious *tôrâ* can roughly be translated as 'divine revelation.'"[10] The Torah needed to be discerned, not simply read, as if it were only a set of Rules. Indeed, he notes how fluid the Pentateuch was in Jesus' day. Rewriting certain stories was possible.[11] Not only different interpretations existed, but also different precepts could be inserted into the text even though knowledgeable Jews understood they were not in the original.[12] These possibilities cohere nicely if one supposes that the Torah referred not only to the written Rules contained in the Pentateuch, but also to an unwritten source, the Torah as God intends it and as Jesus understood it. Indeed, Rabbinic Judaism eventually recognized that the full Torah existed only in heaven.

Paul respected the Law, calling it ". . . holy, just and good" (Rom 7:12), but he also knew the difference between the Torah and its writing. He asserts that, "[God] has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6). As James Dunn observes, "The point is that *gramma* [letter] is not simply a synonym for *nomos* [law]."[13] Jesus could see the distinction easily, and, after his conversion, so too could Paul.

According to Paul, at one point the Law served the function of identifying sin to the people so as to enable them to regulate their lives. However, this led the people to become fascinated with sin, and they sunk even lower. Furthermore, sometimes self-interest

distorted their perspective. Many of the Jews in Jesus' day approached the Law properly, carefully discerning its requirements. Others unfortunately used the Law to maintain their privileged status as the chosen people. The Rule of Law became for them the Law of Rules. These rules, extracted from their context, were manipulated to prop up their exclusive, exalted status. Biblical theologian Olivier-Thomas Venard, OP, notes that a Christian who reads the Scriptures faithfully knows that the letter is "necessary but not sufficient."[14] The Law was given to regulate life, not to increase sin (Gal 3:21). Christ fulfills the Law by infusing it with life, something the Law could not do by itself. Indeed, the Law of Christ is now written on the heart, as Jeremiah once promised (Jer 31:33).[15]

Jesus brings the idea of the Law to the forefront. He offers the commandments of the love of God and neighbor as a summary statement of the Law (Mt 22:37-40). Paul follows suit: "He who loves the other fulfills the Law" (Rom 13:8).[16] As in the civil law, the way of the Torah is not always perfectly expressed in each particular rule. Christians need the guidance of Jesus to help them determine what to do on the practical level. Jesus understood the intended sense behind the Law, and did not hesitate to correct deficient notions as the need arose. "You have heard it said . . . but I say to you" (see Mt 5:21 ff.). How could he do this?

Jesus offers the commandments of the love of God and neighbor as a summary statement of the Law.

John presents Jesus as the Incarnate Light of the World (Jn 8:12; 1:9). Light functioned as a symbol of Torah in Jesus' day.[17] He embodied the Torah. Francis J. Moloney, SDB, writes that "Jesus claims to be the perfection of the Law. . . . He personifies . . . the light of the Law. . . . What once the Law was to Israel, now Jesus is to the world."[18] In effect, Jesus *is* the Torah. He perfects it as it applies to everyone, Jew and Gentile alike.[19] Jesus, therefore, sees beyond the written Torah, right to the Father's will. He fulfills the Law, and even modifies it as needed.[20]

Theologian Servais Pinckaers claims that Thomas Aquinas considered the Law as "a work of wisdom, first engaging the intelligence, and only then the will."[21] While various types of laws are interrelated, the evangelical Law represents, "the most perfect possible participation

in the eternal law that can be found on earth and the closest approximation to our final goal."[22] In other words, the Law does not consist in mere precepts, ordinances and obligations. It needs to be discerned, not simply read. It flows from revelation, and penetrates the interior of the human person. Therefore, Pinckaers argues that the Law becomes "the very source of the virtues."[23] The Law "enlightens the reason as to the nature and character of things."[24] This gives rise to a morality of freedom, a virtue ethics, which integrates the challenge of the Sermon on the Mount into each person's striving for excellence. It indeed represents the Rule of Law and not the Law of Rules, which gave rise to the old manualist tradition in moral theology.

Believers follow the Law by following Christ. On a practical level that implies that leaders exhibit a healthy spirituality, intelligent scriptural exegesis, and a mature theological analysis that takes into account the historical dimension of the Church. All this needs to inform one's discernment of the Law of the Lord.

Although people often wish Jesus would give more clear-cut rules, he frequently puts his disciples in positions that require difficult judgments. For example, one might expect to find ringing endorsements of justice and fairness from Jesus. Yet, practically at every turn, Jesus does not side with the rules of justice in its modern American sense; rather he sides with mercy. Nor does he side with fairness; rather he sides with generosity. It's worth taking a closer look at this surprising result.

III. The Advice of the Gospels

First, it should be noted that "justice" in the Gospels means something very different from the way Americans typically use the term. Justice or justification refers to a work of God who reconciles sinners to himself. It refers to the ability of a believer to walk uprightly with others before God. The gracious will of God produces justification that saves those lost in sin. Paul sees this work as achieved by Christ who reconciles all to the Father (see Eph 2:4-10).[25]

Although this time-honored use of the term "justice" has a long history, I will search for a sampling of texts in which Jesus considers justice in its American sense, justice as ensuring that people receive their due.

A. Not "Justice" but Mercy

One group of sayings that confronts the American sensibilities on justice can be found at Mt 7:1 ff. and Lk 6:37 ff. "Judge not lest you be judged." The act of judging itself comes under scrutiny. "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, and ignore the log that is in your own eye?" The only legitimate act of judgment is self-judgment. Rather than attempting to correct another, the Christian must see to the cleansing of his or her own soul first, a never-ending task.

Although Americans can hunger for justice to be done to and for others, the Gospels continue to question whether any human being is in a position to judge at all. Jesus compares the kingdom to a man who sowed seed in a field. During the night, an enemy came and planted weeds among the wheat. As the crops came up, the farmer and his hands could not distinguish the weeds from the wheat. The master tells them to let both grow to term. Only at the end will they be judged — and then by the reapers at the end of time, not by the slaves who now stand ready to pull the weeds (Mt 13:24-30). Americans seem to have an unbridled confidence in their ability to judge. Not so in the Scriptures, where humility and mercy comingle as natural allies.

The scribes and Pharisees put the issue of justice front and center as they drag the woman caught in adultery before Jesus (7:53-8:11). They cited the command of Moses to stone such a woman. Will Jesus authorize a "just" stoning? Famously he scribbled on the sand, straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Although the facts and the rules line up perfectly for a conviction, Jesus works cleverly with the Law and implements it in a way that results in mercy. In that scene, the Law achieves its intended effect.

What if a disciple sins? What should the other disciples do? Jesus answers that they must "rebuke the offender, and, if there is repentance, then you must forgive" (Lk 17:3-4). Although Jesus implicitly allows judgment here, he calls for mercy, not punishment. Given his prior cautions, judgment can come only as a result of careful discernment under the Law. Even if the offender repeats his offense "seven times a day" and asks forgiveness, the disciple must forgive. Mercy never ends, regardless of what justice might otherwise require.

In Matthew 18:23-35, Jesus gives Peter incentive to forgive seventy-

seven times. He does so simply by contrasting a life that has received mercy with a life that has not. In the parable, a king, out of the mercy of his heart, forgave his slave an enormous debt of 10,000 talents. Set free, that forgiven slave then encountered a fellow slave that owed him a mere 100 denarii. The debtor slave begged for mercy to no avail, and was imprisoned until he could pay back the debt. The king became so enraged at the merciless conduct of the slave he had just forgiven that he gave him a taste of his own medicine. In telling the parable, Jesus does not indicate that mercy comes to an end, but he rather shows Peter a world made impossible by its unswerving dedication to rules. Once again, the Lord presents mercy as necessary. It produces a more livable world than justice would allow.

Another pericope that touches on the superiority of mercy over justice comes at Matthew 5:38-42. Justice would seem to require punishment that equals the crime: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Jesus instructs his disciples to do the opposite: "Do not resist the evildoer." This counsel baffles those dedicated to justice. Jesus further instructs the disciples to be generous by going the extra mile and giving not only one's cloak, but one's coat as well. He sets aside the rules of justice and fairness, and commands mercy and generosity instead.

Mature believers understand the necessity of rules, but they also appreciate the priority of mercy and generosity.

In the Sermon on the Mount, far from counseling that one may claim what is justly due, Jesus forbids even anger (Mt. 5:21-22). Justice works in reverse to the American way. An American crying, "Give me justice," wants restitution. The scales of justice must be balanced, as if vengeance could erase a felony.[26] But for Jesus, reconciliation constitutes the primary task, *even for the victim* (5:22). There can be no thought of obtaining justice by sending the criminal to jail. Furthermore, if any disciples wrong another, they cannot offer their gifts at the temple. They must first be reconciled and only then offer their gifts. American courtroom "justice" takes a back seat to mercy.

The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46 also shows that mercy constitutes an obligation for all the nations, not simply justice. The Son of Man confronts both groups with the same

scenarios: ". . . for I was hungry, . . . a stranger . . . naked . . . sick . . . in prison . . ." Neither group recognized the Lord. Neither group was contractually obligated in justice to those they encountered. Yet the Son of Man pronounces his blessing on the merciful, whom he calls "justified" and sends the merciless to eternal punishment. Even though they obeyed the Rules, they violated the Law.

Finally, Jesus has choice words for lawyers. He pronounces woes to those who attend to the finer points of tithing spices while neglecting "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith." The justice Jesus has in mind is the justice by which God justifies the sinner. This brand of justice removes the log from one's own eye. His listeners have failed to do so since Jesus calls them "blind guides" who manage to "strain out the gnats but swallow the camel" (Mt 23:23-24). Once again, justice refuses to adjudicate the guilt of others. It rather tends to one's own shortcomings. Otherwise, woeful lawyers merely "load people with burdens hard to bear" while not lifting "a finger to ease them" (Lk 11:46). Indeed, Americans daily witness in updated terms the tale of *Jarndyce v. Jarndyce*, the perpetual litigation in Dickens' *Bleak House* that gives lawyers endless billing opportunities while ensuring that the litigants receive little, if anything.[27]

B. Not "Fairness" but Generosity

Just as the Gospels tell a tale of mercy while giving second-class status to American justice, so too they tell a tale of generosity while relegating fairness to baser minds.

Perhaps the clearest story in this regard occurs at Matthew 20:1-16. One set of laborers, hired early in the morning, agreed to the usual daily wage. The master finds others at about 9 AM and others at noon. He hires more at 3 PM, and still more at 5 PM. Yet at the end of the day, the manager paid everyone a full day's pay. Those who worked all day grumbled that the others received exactly the same wage as they, even though they endured the burdens of the entire day. It's not fair! But the landowner insisted on his right to be generous. Generosity trumps fairness.

The parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-23) constitutes a story that is stunning in its lack of fairness. The younger son takes his inheritance ahead of time and squanders it on a life of gross self-absorption. The older son stays home with the father. The younger son finally returns

home out of concern for his own self-preservation. The father adorns the younger son with fine clothes and a ring. To the delight of the father, the household rejoices with a lavish meal complete with music and dancing. The older son understandably cries the age-old complaint of one sibling against another: "No fair!" The father sympathizes with him, and assures him of his love and possessions. Nevertheless, the father insists on generosity even if it is not fair.

The parable of the rich fool is occasioned by a man who merely wanted the inheritance that should come to him. "Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me'" (Lk 12:13). Instead of interpreting the situation in terms of justice or fairness, Jesus observes that, "Life does not consist in the abundance of possessions" (Lk 12:15b). It is better to be able to walk away from what is rightfully one's own than to become fascinated with property. After all, what good is it to fill one's barns if one's life will be required of him that very night (Lk 12:20). In the end, merely receiving one's due pales in comparison to the generosity of God. Fairness as a reliable standard fails again.

A final example concerns Jesus' encounter with the tax collector Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10). The merciful Jesus befriends Zacchaeus instead of accusing him of collecting excessive fees. The crowd does not hesitate to identify Zacchaeus as a sinner. Zacchaeus recognizes his lack of fairness. He vows to give half his possessions to the poor, and he will repay anyone he has defrauded four times the amount. Jesus applauds the response. The tax collector's recognition of his lack of fairness motivates generosity, not merely a balancing of the scales.

Both mercy and generosity require discernment, not simply the application of rules. One thinks of Paul's admonition that those who would not work should not eat (1 Thes 3:10), and the Lord's instructions on how to deal with a disciple who gives offense (Lk 17:3-4). Mercy and generosity do not necessarily produce free passes and plentiful food at every turn. Understanding that rules cannot give adequate expression to justice and fairness, the faithful should also refrain from turning mercy and generosity into unbending Rules. One must discern what mercy and generosity require in each circumstance. The faithful must carefully consider the matter in light of the entire gospel. In other words, mercy and generosity do not constitute Rules, but come as part of the discernment of the Law.

IV. If You Want Peace, Work for Mercy and Generosity

Saint Paul VI famously proclaimed that, "If you want peace, work for justice."[28] Certainly that claim rings true in at least one sense. Just working conditions, just wages and just relations among employees and owners can support peaceful relations among them. Unjust conditions eventually undermine peace.

Nevertheless, at times those who labor for justice in America tend to produce not peace, but discord. Saint John Paul II saw that without mercy, work for justice deteriorates and produces injustice.[29] Many litigants and their lawyers "work for justice," but with very little peace to show for it. Perhaps the adversarial system of justice contributes to this result. In America, a litigant must accuse one's opponent first, and prove the case with well-founded evidence. It sets people at odds from the start. Unfortunately, this adversarial posture can also affect those who work for social justice. News stories typically feature opposing groups, with one group trying to shame the other into silence. Universities disinvite speakers after protesters intimidate administrators and humiliate their potential guests. Communication, understanding, and peace suffer along with mercy and generosity.

The Catholic tradition has something to contribute to the quest for justice in America today. Whenever Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote about justice, his discussion aimed at *self*-reflection, not accusation.[30] A right referred to someone else's claim on me, not my claim on anyone else. It focused on the subject's own potentially unjust acts, and sought to nurture good relationships, even friendship, with others.[31] Focus on another person needs to lead with mercy and generosity foremost in mind. Not only the needs of the victim but also the needs of the victimizer need attention. What would mercy and generosity look like to the perpetrators of racism, greed, or sexism?

A veteran of the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s, Robert L. Woodson, Sr., has shared startling true stories of graceful reconciliation worthy of imitation. In one story from 1962, Woodson recalls that four Klansmen dragged Reverend Charles Billups from his car, along with two co-workers. Chained to a tree and severely beaten, Billups was branded by the Klansmen with a hot iron, leaving the initials "KKK" permanently on his abdomen. Eventually one of the perpetrators came to Billups to apologize and face the legal consequences. "Instead of demanding retribution, Billups declined to press charges and prayed

with his attacker."[32]

Such a witness overwhelms other possible responses. If Billups had insisted on his legal rights, if he presented himself as a witness for the prosecution, if he insisted on American justice, he would have settled for the circumstance in which winners and losers stay on opposite sides of the fence. Punishment would not even the score. It would not remove the brand from his abdomen. It would not bring opponents together. Mercy creates a debt of love that the Klan members could repay only through a profound continuing conversion.

Men and women like Charles Billups show that a non-violent, gracious response is not only possible but powerful. Both the Rule of Law and the Law of Rules would condemn the attack on Billups. But only the Law of Christ, the Law of mercy and generosity could transform it.

V. The Flexibility of Mercy and Generosity

Similar to the American civil law and the Torah, the Gospel must be discerned, not simply read. Turning gospel precepts into Rules can flatten the Law of Love and deprive it of its texture.

Mature believers understand the necessity of rules, but they also appreciate the priority of mercy and generosity. The faithful must avoid making up unbending Rules for the application of mercy and generosity. Even there, discernment must guide one's search for the requirements of the Law of Love. Perhaps Jesus stressed mercy and generosity so frequently because he knew the human inclination to find comfort in one's possessions and security in the rules that keep them safe.

In situations of justice and fairness, believers come to understand that, to paraphrase Holmes, the life of the faith has not been logic, but Christian experience. This means accepting the occasionally difficult responsibility to achieve a subtle and flexible understanding of the requirements of the Law in the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Notes

1 Oliver Wendell Holmes, *The Common Law* (New York: Holmes Press, 2012), 1.

2 Holmes, *Common Law*, 1.

3 Alistair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of

Notre Dame Press, 1988), 2, 7, Ch. 2. See also Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1987), 27, 46, 159, where he notes that societies have operative myths that provide the "self-evident" truths against which their constitutions make sense. Holmes' use of the term "law" functions in a fashion similar to Voegelin's term "myth."

[4] *Paradiso,* 18:111.

[5] 254 N.Y. 1 (1930).

[6] 254 N. Y. 14.

[7] Thomas More, *The Yale Edition of the Complete Works of Saint Thomas More*, vol. 12 (New Haven: Yale, 1976), 225. While a proper implementation of the Law allows for more humane decisions, it requires prodigious judicial talents. Some judges can rationalize, innocently or not, in such a way that their rendition of the Law can produce decisions that fly in the face of the society's notion of common sense and decency. See the decisions allowing for abortion in *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973); for homosexual marriage in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, 576 U.S. ____ (2015), 135 S. Ct. 2584; and for the compelled sterilization of women, an opinion in which Justice Holmes himself wrote, "Three generations of imbeciles is enough," *Buck v. Bell*, 274 U.S. 200 (1927). See Judge Jeffrey F. Sutton, *Fifty-One Imperfect Solutions* (New York: Oxford University, 2017) for an enlightening account of the valuable contributions made by state courts to the development of jurisprudence at the federal level.

[8] Among other things, those factors include historical awareness, research into legal precedents, a knack for identifying relevant facts, appreciation of the richness of human relations as it is expressed in the society's foundational writings and in other laws, an understanding of the wisdom of its recognized sages, and the benefit of mature experience in the American culture.

[9] Although Judge O'Brien would claim that the rules did in fact embody American Law, Cardozo's dissent has been cited approvingly in no fewer than 179 cases. See, for example, *Gottlieb v. Gottlieb,* 25 N.Y.S.3d 90 (2016).

[10] John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4: *Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale, 2009), 28-29, 30-32.

[11] Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol 4, 31.

[12] Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, vol. 4, 32. "What is startling to us moderns is that, at times, knowledgeable first-century Jews would claim that the written Law of Moses contained important commandments that . . . simply are not there in the text." Meier offers the example of fighting a war on the Sabbath.

[13] Paul regards the Law as a positive force that Christ came to activate in us by purging it of sin so the law might be fulfilled in us. "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free" (Rom 8:2, 3-4). See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 149.

[14] Olivier-Thomas Venard, OP, *A Poetic Christ: Thomist Reflections on Scripture, Language and Reality*, ed. F. Aran Murphy, B. M. Mezei and K. Oakes (New York: T & T Clark, 2019), 101.

[15] James D. G. Dunn, *Theology of Paul*, Section 6, esp. 130, 133, 135, 145, 149.

[16] The complexity of the New Testament situation eventually results in Matthew's complaint that some Christians teach others that Torah observance makes no difference. Matthew's Gospel insists that every letter of the Law retains its importance (Mt 5:17-19).

[17] See, for example, Wis 18:4; Ps 119:105; 84:11; 16:11 and Prv 6:23.

[18] Francis J. Moloney, SDB, *Signs and Shadows: Reading John 5-12* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 94-95.

[19] See Stanley Marrow, *The Gospel of John: A Reading* (New York: Paulist, 1995), 251; and Gerald Borchert, *John 12-21, The New American Commentary*, 25 B (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 109.

[20] See Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, rev. ed. (Canada: McGill-Queens University Press, 2000), especially Chapters 3 through 6.

[21] Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble, OP (Washington, DC: Catholic University, 1995), 181.

[22] Pinckaers, *Sources*, 181. See *Summa Theologiae*, Ia IIae, q. 106, a. 4

[23] Pinckaers, *Sources*, 183.

[24] Pinckaers, *Sources*, 420.

[25] See James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul*, 337 and 342-344.

[26] Modern Americans do not have a monopoly on this way of thinking. Shakespeare has the wife of Capulet, at the death of her nephew, exclaim to the Prince, "I beg for justice, which thou, Prince, must give. Romeo slew Tybalt; Romeo must not live." William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act III, Scene 1, lines 183-184.

[27] See Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, Chapter 1: "This scarecrow of a suit has, in course of time, become so complicated that no man alive knows what it means. . . . Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it. . . . whole families have inherited legendary hatreds with the suit. . . . There are not three Jarndyces left upon the earth perhaps since old Tom Jarndyce in despair blew his brains out at a coffee-house in Chancery Lane; but Jarndyce and Jarndyce still drags its dreary length before the court, perennially hopeless."

[28] Message of His Holiness Pope Paul VI for the Celebration of the Day of Peace (1 January 1972).

[29] Saint John Paul II, *Dives in Misericordia* (Nov. 30, 1980), VI:12, Para. 3.

[30] Pinckaers, *Sources*, 38.

[31] Pinckaers, *Sources*, 434.

[32] Robert L. Woodson, Sr., "Even the Fiercest Social-Justice Warrior Should Learn Mercy," *Wall Street Journal*, Vol. CCLXXIII, no. 48 (February 28, 2019): A17.

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Two Sons

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

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

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

THIS PARABLE (MT 21:28-32), PECULIAR TO MATTHEW, IS RATHER SIMPLE IN character and has none of the elements of surprise and paradox that we associate with the other parables of Jesus. A father asks one of his sons to go and work in the vineyard. The son refuses at first, but then has a change of heart and goes to work in the vineyard. The father, who knows only of his first son's refusal, goes to his second son and makes a like request of him. The man immediately agrees to the request but does not go to work.

Jesus then asks the chief priests and elders of the people: "Which of the two did his father's will?" After they give the obvious answer, Jesus lays before them the parable's application: "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you." Jesus proceeds to recall the ministry of John the Baptist whom "when (he) came to you in the way of righteousness, you did not believe. . . , but tax collectors and prostitutes did."

Interpreting the Parable

A key to interpreting this parable is to be found in the question that Jesus puts to the chief priests and elders: "Which of the two sons did his father's will?" The son who says, "Yes" to his father but then does not go to work as requested is contrasted to the son who rejects the father's request but subsequently goes to work.

The parable, in its original form, could have been meant simply to highlight the difference between saying and doing in living the faith

that one professes. However, the addition of verses 31-32, where Jesus describes the reaction of the chief priests and elders to the Baptist's preaching, gives the parable a more specific application.

The two sons represent, respectively, the *religious leaders* who prided themselves on their external religious observance but lacked genuine interiority, and the *outcasts* of Jewish society who responded positively to John's call to repentance and change of heart. By their answer to Jesus' question, the religious leaders pronounce a condemnation on themselves.

The parable's obvious application is: "Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you."

However, Matthew, as he recounts this parable, may have in mind the Jewish religious leaders of his own day. He does not despair of them; on the contrary, though they may resemble the second son who said, "Yes" but did not obey, they are now summoned to that life and truth offered by the Gospel. They can still say, "Yes."

Application for Today

Perhaps in the two sons of the parable we can see two contrasting groups of people in the Christian community. There are those who, like the second son in the parable, seem to speak a ready "Yes" to God, but their profession is better than their practice. They give a great exterior display of religious piety and fidelity, but interiorly they lack a genuine appreciation and assimilation of the spirit and ideals of Christ's Gospel and of the teachings of his Church.

On the other hand, there are those who at one time, and perhaps even for a lengthy period, strayed widely from Christ and his Church, but at some point, they were deeply touched by grace and underwent a heart-felt conversion. Their reconciliation with Christ and the Church was perhaps without exterior drama and fanfare, and they endured the continuing suspicions and calumnies of their "pious" coreligionists. These people may be regarded with disdain and go about the living of their faith in quiet humility, but they are the ones who truly do the will of their Father.

Finally, our parable reminds us that mere promises cannot replace

true performance; fine words cannot substitute for genuine deeds. The son who said he would go to work in the vineyard and then did not, showed the outward marks of courtesy toward his father, calling him "Sir," a term of respect, but it was a courtesy vitiated by disobedience. On the other hand, the son who at first refused to go to work but subsequently went demonstrates how basic obedience can, to a degree, make up for lack of courtesy and respect.

The parable reminds us that mere promises cannot replace performance; fine words cannot substitute for genuine deeds.

Both sons have something to teach us. The Christian way is in the actual performance of God's will and not simply in promise; and the ideal in giving obedience to God's will is in assenting to it with reverence and readiness.

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Counsels for Spiritual Life from Saint Peter Julian Eymard

The Hidden Holiness of Jesus Christ

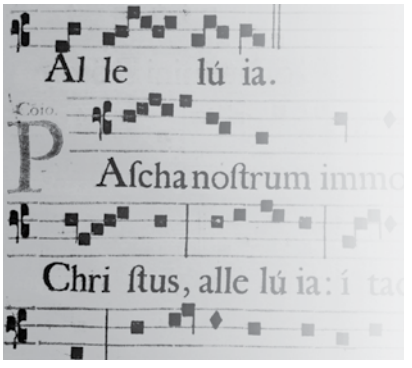
The Apostle of the Eucharist was also a guide to the interior life and to Eucharistic spirituality for many. In a conference to the Servants of the Blessed Sacrament on October 26, 1860, he said:

"Be satisfied with the holiness of Jesus Christ, who is hidden. Jesus Christ has two kinds of holiness. There is one that is external, in great things, in his glory, in his heroic virtues. Don't seek the holiness of the grandeur of Jesus Christ. That one is less perfect, less esteemed by Jesus. Consider his hidden life, where there is more love. . . .

"Note the holiness of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. He hides his greatness. Everything is small, veiled, annihilating and annihilated; nevertheless, he takes up in the Eucharist all the marvels of his love. He places them in their final perfection: the hidden life of his humanity and divinity. This kind of life very beautiful! Jesus Christ loved it so much that he sacrificed everything for it. All of humanity sacrificed to the glory of God. . . . Choose a hidden holiness, where there is more love and perfection.

"In all my prayers, I have been asking for the success of our mission, hoping that all my brothers and you, might grow stronger by your sanctification, and that you, my sisters, might become solid and strong in virtue.

"All my prayers were for external success. It was like a seed that becomes a tree, like a child that becomes an adult. When I ask our Lord for his external glory in the world and in us, and consequently his external reign over sinners and over the world — his final triumph — this is not wrong, but it is far from being perfect! It is not this reign that our Lord desires — what he wants is the reign of his hidden life, of his silence, of his annihilated life in us."



PASTORAL LITURGY

Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass, Part V

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

The Catholic Church cherishes the relationship between the Eucharistic celebration and worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass.

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane is the pastor of his home parish, Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio. He has degrees in education, music, theology, and liturgy, and speaks and writes on liturgical theology and ministry. He is the author of *Daily Prayer 2019* and *Guide to Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, both published by LTP. Contact him at jtlanesss@gmail.com.

In our review of *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharistic Outside Mass* (HCWEOM) we are finishing Chapter Three with a look at Eucharistic processions and Eucharistic congresses. (Please note that when I quote from the document, the words are exactly as written in the text; the lack of capitalization reflects the grammatical style of the document). Before getting to the end of the chapter, let's remind ourselves of the rituals during Mass, between the end of Communion, exposition, and processions.

Our last column ended with paragraph 94. Moving on, paragraphs 95 through 100 offer a brief outline of the rite of exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. This is different than people coming at any hour of the day to "make a visit" and pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. Churches have long encouraged periodic prayer in the chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved, or in the church proper if the tabernacle is in the sanctuary. HCWEOM guides the liturgical rite. Many equate exposition and personal prayer in the presence of the risen Lord in the tabernacle as the same and they are not. One is a communal, ritual act; the other is not a "liturgical act" but personal prayer.

HCWEOM examines "Eucharistic processions" in part two of Chapter Three. Exposition may lead to a procession. HCWEOM 103 states how "fitting" it is to begin a procession begin immediately after the Mass. During the distribution of Holy Communion, ministers prepare the altar with the monstrance, incense, and other items for the procession. Once distribution of Holy Communion ends, the priest recites the Prayer after Communion and then goes to the altar to begin the procession.

Eucharistic processions "give public witness of faith and devotion toward the sacrament" (101). This is a public statement of what we believe in and how we want our Eucharists to be lived in the world. We normally say at Mass, "Go and serve the Lord." A procession reminds us that we are always walking with the risen Lord into the world and the daily mission called by our baptismal discipleship. We are visual people; during a Eucharistic procession, we demonstrate our gospel living with the Jesus Christ.

Paragraph 102 reminds us of the special significance of the procession on what is now called the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Again, theologically, the Church merged the feast days of Corpus Christi and the Precious Blood into one liturgical solemnity. Our language should reflect this mystery and encourage further devotion to the precious blood of Christ.

This solemnity began in the late Middle Ages (see *Emmanuel* archives for this author's detailed history of this solemnity). In the year 1246, Saint Juliana of Liège envisioned with her spiritual director Jacques Pantaeléon, who would later become Pope Urban IV, this feast of the universal Church on the Thursday after Pentecost. The day was to be devoted to reflection on the Lord's Supper and our witness to and living of the Eucharist in the world.

Her focus on regular reception of Holy Communion would not be adopted until the late twentieth century, but the public liturgical ritual of a procession become an important reality. In areas of the world where churches are close to one another, people processed from church to church (see 107) with prayers, songs, canopies (see 106). After a short visit and/or stops along the way, the procession ended with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and reposition at the "home" church or at another (108).

Paragraphs 109-112 are devoted to Eucharistic Congresses. Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, envisioned regional, national, and global congresses on the Eucharist annually. These would highlight the faith of the Church and the participants on the Eucharist and offer opportunities for study, prayer, and public ceremonies expressing that faith. This did not materialize in his lifetime due to his early death.

However, two of Eymard's spiritual directees, Emilie-Marie and Marie-Marthe-Baptistine Tamisier, fulfilled the dream, lobbying priests and bishops in France. The first International Eucharistic Congress was

held in Lille, France, on June 21, 1881. Today these are not just a day, but usually a week. At one time, they were celebrated around the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ. Now other factors are also considered, for example, the weather in the host country.

Congresses should get more attention than the Olympics, for more people gather at these events than do at the quadrennial sporting events. Themes emphasize a particular aspect of Eucharistic faith and living. "Specialists in [theology], biblical, liturgical, pastoral, and humane studies (110)" develop the congress with the help of a pontifical commission and a representative of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament who serves on the commission.

Paragraph 111 specifies the importance of the congress in offering catechesis on the Eucharist, active participation of the faithful in the liturgy, developing community, and the promotion of social mission for the full human development of the Eucharist. Recent congresses have had themes devoted to social justice and the Eucharist. Congresses are to have multiple processions, too (see 112), so that the local community is aware of the congress. There are many values of the Eucharist; congresses help us contemplate the mysteries over many days in a "retreat" experience. The next International Eucharistic Congress will be in Budapest, Hungary, September 13-20, 2020. Join with me in a pilgrimage!

In our next column, we will review contemporary issues not addressed in HCWEOM, but that have developed since the promulgation of this ritual.

Reminders for September and October

During this fiftieth anniversary of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar* (GNLY), it might be helpful to review your parish's patronal feast day with your Parish Pastoral Council, Liturgical Commission, and pastoral staff. How do you celebrate it? Do you have a potluck? A special liturgy? If during Ordinary Time, do you transfer it to the nearest Lord's Day (Sunday) so that all may celebrate with music and festivity? These are options that the GNLY developed. Give thanks to God for the gift of your saint, your church community, and the living out of the particular values that are unique to your faith community.

Some other important dates now in our calendar with the updated *Lectionary Supplement for the United States:*

- **Monday, September 9 — Saint Peter Claver.**
- **Thursday, September 12 — The Most Holy Name of Mary.**
- **Monday, September 23 — Saint Pius of Pietrelcina (Padre Pio).**
- **Saturday, September 28 — Saint Lawrence Ruiz and Companions.**
- **Saturday, October 5 — Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos.**
- **Friday, October 11 — Saint John XXIII.**
- **Tuesday, October 22 — Saint John Paul II.**

Also appropriate at this time of the year, the following from the *Book of Blessings*:

- **Sunday, September 15 — Catechetical Sunday**

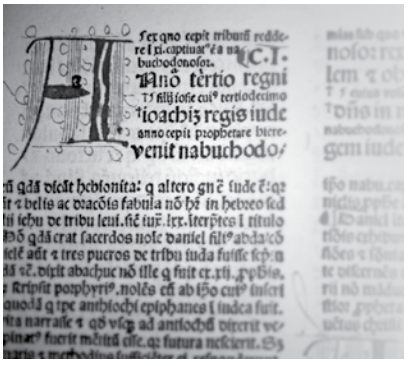
Chapter 4, Order for the Blessing of Those Appointed as Catechists.

- **Friday, October 4 — Saint Francis of Assisi**

Chapter 25, Order for the Blessing of Animals.

- **Other Special Parochial Occasions**

Chapter 28: Order for a Blessing on the Occasion of Thanksgiving for the Harvest;
Chapter 29: Order for the Blessing of an Athletic Event (especially as you begin a new season of sports);
Chapter 64: Order for the Blessing of a [Pastoral] Council (especially as you begin a new pastoral/academic/ministry year together) or Chapter 65: Order for the Blessing of Officers of Parish Societies.



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Barbara Shanahan

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

September 1, 2019
Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29; Psalm 68:4-5, 6-7, 10-11; Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a; Luke 14:1, 7-14

We are moving toward the season of autumn, a slower paced, more reflective time. The earth gives up her rich harvest and provident householders wisely store up the summer produce to capture that sun-drenched flavor for winter days. It is a time of gratitude for all that life and the earth offer. Looking ahead at the readings for the coming weeks, we are given rich fare from the Wisdom writings, pondering the insights we can acquire from life. We become richer as life instructs us, if we let it instruct us! We gain wisdom with years. We are "wise" in the biblical sense if we store up this wisdom.

In biblical thought, one is deemed "wise" who is docile, teachable, and open to instruction. The antithesis of the wise person is one who is close-minded, stubborn, and unwilling to learn, change, and grow. Humility is at the root of such wisdom when one acknowledges they do not possess all knowledge or understanding; that we are a work in progress.

There are two aspects of wisdom: one pertaining to our relationship with God and the other that considers our relationship with others. Take note of this in the reading from Sirach for today. Humility is an essential attitude of the wise person who demonstrates his/her wisdom first by recognizing the importance of being in right relationship with God. Such a relationship recognizes that God is God and we are not; that God is an unfathomable mystery before which we must simply bow in awe! To render glory to God and show respect for all others regardless of our differences must well up from an honest recognition that we are all "of the earth."

The word *humility* is associated with *humus* (earth). We are, each one of us, earth/clay that has received the life breath of God. This is our beginning. The wise person knows we are totally dependent on God who keeps us in existence. Living life from this perspective recalculates our direction and opens us to be instructed in God's ways. This will lead us along various paths beyond our imagining and bring us peace as the reading from Sirach assures us.

In the Gospel today, Jesus takes the principles we heard from the Wisdom of Ben Sira, only he weaves this wisdom into the vivid parable he crafts. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus often uses a meal as a teaching venue. Note the host of this dinner party is a "leading Pharisee" (verse 1)! This is the third reference to Pharisees being at or hosting Jesus for a meal (see also Lk 5:29 ff, 7:36 ff). If you read these passages carefully, you may detect a lack of sincerity and genuine hospitality in their invitation. They seem to want to "watch" or find reason to criticize Jesus.

In Jesus' parable, the invited guests seem to presume that they have a privileged access to the host and so select the places of honor for themselves. To their surprise, this privileged "A Lister" would have had difficulty accepting that they were seated alongside the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. Was Jesus trying to teach his host (the Pharisee) that there is another standard by which guests are held in esteem? Do the religious leaders ever seem to learn this? Are they "wise"?

There is nothing intellectually challenging in the wisdom we hear today. From the start it seems rather self-evident. But to take oneself out of the center of life's orbit is never easy. It may become easier for us once we realize that we are all "of the earth." This attitude grows with practice, with prayer and grace and by attentively studying the gentle manner and words spoken by the Son of Man.

"*In your goodness, O God, you provided a home for the poor"* (Ps 68:11).

September 8, 2019
Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Wisdom 9:13-18b; Psalm 90:3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 14, 17; Philemon 9-10, 12-17; Luke 14:25-33

The theme of wisdom and humility surface again this week in our readings. Some of what we said last week will be helpful to keep in

mind. As we said, much in the Wisdom writings address every day, earthly life. At times the instruction may be about our dealings with other people or our own humanity. Then again, it can be about our relationship with God. The passage from Wisdom considers both: "Scarcely can we guess the things on earth . . . but things of heaven who can search them out?"

Invited into a relationship with God, we are cloaked with humanity that leaves us to struggle with our limitations. Does this demand humility? We are not on an equal footing with God and we are faced with accepting our dependence on God to unfold this mystery in God's own time. We have no alternative than to trust that God will respond to our restless searching, sending his Spirit to guide us and fill us with light one day at a time. The humble person is not troubled by this, knowing that God is God, accepting that we cannot learn the ways of God unless God instruct us. How important to be open and docile to this! How does this advice fit our definition of "wisdom" or "humility"?

Paul is writing a personal letter to Philemon, whom he calls "brother," appealing on behalf of Philemon's former slave, Onesimus, who likely ran away from his master Philemon, found Paul, and now is being returned by Paul to Philemon. Slavery was part of the world of the first century. There are several places in the New Testament where the relationship of slave to master is described (see Col 3:22 ff; 1 Tm 6:1ff). Paul skillfully crafts his words and does not simply urge Philemon to reinstate Onesimus without consequences nor does Paul suggest Philemon grant manumission, a legal term meaning giving a slave his/her freedom. Paul urges Philemon to receive Onesimus back as he would Paul himself whom he called his "brother." This is about a different relationship altogether.

Philemon was the head of a house church and Paul encouraged him to set an example of what that meant. Do you see humility here? Being part of a community or a church requires this of all. In a way, Paul sets Philemon up when he says, "With trust in your compliance, I write to you knowing that you will do even more than I say"! (verse 21). He further adds, "Prepare a guest room for me. . . ." What is Philemon to do?

Perhaps the Gospel gives a context for what Paul is asking of Philemon and what discipleship requires of each of us. Jesus speaks of a would-be follower's relationship to family, his own life and possessions. Jesus

here is sounding like a wisdom teacher, pointing out the necessity of planning and knowing what is involved before entering into some major effort such as building or entering into a battle. Strategic planning is necessary for success. Know the costs! Have a "Plan B"!

So, one who deliberately takes on the responsibilities of discipleship knows full well what is required. A radical shift is demanded. Relationships will be redefined, following behind Jesus and lifting our own cross demands identification with the things that brought Jesus to his cross, and dispossessing ourselves of our stuff is not easy. We wish not to be encumbered, but things tend to connect us to this life, to our past, and they secure our future. Jesus redefines all this. It is about taking ourselves out of the center and putting something or someone else there. This sounds so easy until we begin the process and realize it is not!

"Teach us to number our days that we may gain wisdom of heart" (Ps 90:12).

September 15, 2019
Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14; Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 17, 19; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-32

Through the narratives found in the Bible, God reveals to us the incomprehensible nature and depth of divine love for all creation. This point is brought home poignantly in the readings for this week. Each one assures us of the confidence we place in God who will always be forgiving and accepting of our limitations. God knows of what we are made. It is as though God saves us from ourselves. Each reading, as crafted by the biblical author, depicts a divine humanness as tender as one might hope for God to show toward us. The writer takes the liberty to speak of God as if he embodied the very best of human nature even though God is not like us. But how else are we to comprehend God or even speak of him?

The intimate relationship between God and Moses in the Exodus passage invites a closer look. Rather than thinking of this as an actual conversation that took place, consider what the exchange reveals

about God and about Moses. God tells Moses: "Go down to *your* people. . . ." Earlier in the narrative, in a covenant-making ceremony, God claimed the people as his own: "I will be your God and you will be my people." Now it seems God is washing his hands of them. But Moses says a few verses later: "Why should your anger flare up against *your* own people?" Moses posts his disclaimer. How to fix this standoff!

Moses has grown into his role as the Exodus story unfolds, and here he reaches his finest moment. He tells God all the reasons why it is not in God's best interest to exterminate the people: "What will the Egyptians say?" . . . "Remember you have made promises to these people. Will you now renege on them?" . . . "Maybe you were unable to see your plan through to the end." What is God's response to Moses' plea? God "changes his mind"! Think about this! Do these words suggest that God's original plan was flawed and, thanks to Moses, God now sees things in a better light?

This is that "divine humanness" we spoke of earlier; rendering God with human qualities that are admirable. We have no other way to imagine God. The depiction says more about the faith of Israel in the nature of their God than that it describes an actual event. The heart of the story is God's willingness to love his people and his servant Moses enough to change his mind! Is God learning that the humans he made will always need salvation? Are we learning that God will always find a way to grant mercy and restore a broken relationship? God is aware of the tendencies of his creatures, and because of this God must always extend mercy.

The writer of the Letter to Timothy, whether Paul or someone else, speaks out of a similar experience as that of Moses who, in the beginning of Exodus when God called him, offered a string of reasons why God should look elsewhere. Time and frequent encounters with God change Moses into an intimate friend, as we see in Moses' conversation with God. The writer of this letter, as Paul himself, has had a similar experience. Anyone who searches for God seems to walk a similar path.

We have been talking a lot about humility. Is that what we see demonstrated here? The acknowledgement that all that we are and all that we do is sheer grace and not a result of our abilities? Those called to serve God's people are channels of God's mercy and forgiveness. They are effective because they have experienced for themselves this

need for God's forgiveness in their own life.

God must always be forgiving because humans will always fall short of the mark. We are prone to wander, get lost, or run away. How comforting to know that heaven rejoices when we are found by God, who is willing to change his mind!

"I will rise and go to my Father" (Lk 15:18).

September 22, 2019
Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Amos 8:4-7; Psalm 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Luke 16:1-13

As a member of a faith community, there are times when I wish something would disturb people, make them question, snap them out of complacency, sit up and take notice! Perhaps the appearance of an Amos would accomplish this! He disturbs the externally observant keepers of Sabbath and calls them to task for the most egregious offenses against the covenant: failure to defend the poor, failure to extend the mercy and compassion of God. Something in their heart is missing!

Today's gospel reading might get the attention of the congregation if they listen to the words of Jesus. What can we do to hear them in the challenging and nuanced way Jesus intended them to be heard? What is commendable about the crooked manager's actions in the parable we hear? Is Jesus praising this cheat? What is the connection between the dishonest manager and those who would hope to inherit the kingdom? First caught stealing from his master, he creatively feathers his own nest so when he is fired from his job, he will have made friends who are indebted to him because he reduced their debt.

The lesson is not that crime will be rewarded in the kingdom. Rather, the parable draws attention to the ambition and determination of the manager. He risked everything to hatch a plan that would save him from doing the work of a common laborer. Jesus makes no moral judgment against the man. This is not the point of the story. If we read this literally, we might mistakenly arrive at such an erroneous conclusion. This is a perfect example of having to read more deeply

into what the text means, and not just what it says.

Saving his skin prompted the manager to construct a scheme and make it work. He put all his effort into this! Is this the question the parable is asking us to ponder? Do we engage all our efforts, our entire self, sparing nothing to ensure the kingdom of heaven is within our reach? Is it that important to us that we stop at nothing to bring it about? Such an attitude is in sharp contrast to boredom, complacency, and indifference. The old, worn interpretation about the choice between "God and Mammon" can put us to sleep. Please wake us up with the edgy teachings of Jesus! Give us something to think about!

Amos surely did this in his day. The frame of reference for the prophets was God's covenant with his people, and at the heart of that covenant was a merciful and compassionate God who demanded that his covenant partner (Israel) be like himself in showing compassion especially to the poor, in the same way as God did in the days of Israel's beginning when they were enslaved in Egypt. So, when the poor are being cheated, sold, and disregarded, someone would be accountable.

The irony in Amos' critique is that it is addressed to pious keepers of the law of Sabbath, but who, at the same time, think nothing of breaking several other laws. It is the age-old dispute over what constitutes true religion: external observance or an internal spirit that requires a listening, responsive heart.

Almost the opposite tone of the Gospel and Amos is found in the advice from Timothy. The letter gives us insight into the growing pains of the Church at the end of the first century. Christians who knew a certain freedom in the Lord, might be looked upon with suspicion by Rome. So, this more conciliatory chord is sounded. There is a time to make waves and a time to calm the waters and live quietly out of the deep convictions of the heart. Timing is everything and wisdom is needed to know what time it is.

"That we may lead a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity" (1 Tim 2:2).

September 29, 2019
Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Amos 6:1a, 4-7; Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10; 1 Timothy 6:11-16; Luke 16:19-31

Amos makes an appearance in our assembly again this week. He addresses the rich and famous of his day in what was the "Northern Kingdom" of Israel. This fertile land was settled largely by the patriarch Joseph's two grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh; thus, it is sometimes referred to as the "Land of Joseph." At the time of Amos, this Northern Kingdom is at the peak of prosperity. And in ancient times, this was a sign of God's blessing. It is always hard to get through to people who are living the good life, convincing them that somehow their perspective is skewed.

The starting point of Amos' preaching is the story of Exodus. This is the story of deliverance from Egypt, of wandering for 40 years in the wilderness, and finally crossing into the Promised Land. As freed slaves, God cared for them in their sojourning in the wilderness. A relationship was formed. God commanded Israel to always keep alive the beating heart of a sojourner who knows how fragile life is and acknowledges that all they have comes from the hand of God. And when they become settled in their land, they must never forget and always be mindful of the vulnerable among them, as God was mindful of them in their need. This is the Passover story, the story of identity known by every Jewish person from that time to today.

This is what is in Amos' mind as he describes for us a princely class who are enjoying every luxury and amenity available to the rich. As they enjoy the good life, we read the heart-piercing words, "But they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph." Think on how many levels this is wrong! It evokes the age-old story of God's preferential love for the poor whose voices come before God.

The indictment against the rich is a rejection of the story of who Israel is called to be. If we "are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph" (by the voiceless, the vulnerable, the poor, the forgotten), we have lost our soul!

Israel seemed to struggle to remain faithful in good times. When

they have nothing, they readily turn to God. When they become prosperous, they become forgetful. Are we like this? We seem to be more aware of our need for God in hard times than when all is well. The voice of the prophet is always 180 degrees different from the people. The people are experiencing blessings, and the prophet tells them they have no future! Then when hard times come, the prophet brings words of hope announcing a future.

This text became real to me when visiting the Israel Museum in Jerusalem on one of many visits, I saw the ivory inlay from furniture found in the remains in the city of Samaria. The Northern Kingdom, the land of Joseph, experienced a short-lived prosperity before destruction came at the hands of the Assyrians in the eighth century. The passing pleasures of the good things of life take their rightful place. If we possess them without an awareness of the needy among us, they will lose their power to bring happiness or to give life. They will possess us and we will be left empty and tormented . . . as the rich man (Dives in some old manuscripts) demonstrates.

The checklist of virtues in 1 Timothy keeps our focus in the right place. Righteousness (right relationship with God), devotion, faith, love, patience, gentleness. . . ." Daily listening and daily prayer keep any one of us from excesses that so easily make us forget our own story of identity: our living as Christ taught.

"Praise the LORD, my soul, who loves the righteous, who protects the stranger, and upholds the widow and the orphan" (Ps 146:8-9).

October 6, 2019
Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4; Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9; 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14; Luke 17:5-10

Have you ever enjoyed putting together a jigsaw puzzle? Usually you start with the border, then work in sections — the sky, water, mountain, buildings, etc. Then there are those moments when one section joins together with another and the subject begins to be a whole piece. We start to "get the picture"!

Sometimes our exposure to the Bible can be like this. In the lectionary we get snippets of readings, but seldom enough to immerse us in the uniqueness of each individual book and message. Even though we listen to the continuous gospel reading from week to week, we can easily miss how one section highlights and continues a theme proclaimed earlier. Being able to make this connection and admire the skill of the writer gives us a more complete picture.

This week we encounter another of the minor prophets of Israel (minor only because their works are shorter than the major prophets'). Habakkuk follows two weeks of reading from the prophet Amos. Unlike Amos, this prophet does not, in the sections we will hear, address the people for their failure to uphold their covenant with God. Rather, Habakkuk seems to be challenging God for his apparent failure in this regard. He laments out loud to God.

Lament is a form of prayer found in the Bible, especially in many psalms. It is deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition. It is a gut-wrenching cry to God about things that are out of control. Lament is more than a literary style or form; it is a profound stance of faith that recognizes God as the only one who can give answer to the question "Why?"

Habakkuk cries out: "How long, O LORD, must I cry for help and you do not listen?" God will give answer to the prophet, but before the answer comes, we observe an attitude the prophet brings to the dialogue. In the verse omitted in the reading (2:1), we find something important. He says: "I will stand at my guard post and station myself upon the rampart and keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what answer he will give to my complaint" (2:1).

"God questions" are always bigger than we are, and ready responses or insights elude us. Humble silence before God and the willingness to acknowledge that God is God and we are not is appropriate. Habakkuk does not explain why there is suffering in the world (as other prophets try to do), but he gives us an example of how to face the problems of life. The unique insight and contribution Habakkuk makes to the prophetic tradition is *the importance of quiet, trusting faith that waits on God.*

There are many times we do not have all the answers. To come before God humbly acknowledging that God's ways are mysterious and must be accepted, even if not understood, is what leads the righteous

person to the fullness of life. There is much in the world around us that can make us question what in the world God is doing. Faith would say to us that we cannot always answer this, but do we trust God even when there is no evidence of why we should do just that?

To be termed "righteous" is to imply innocence and integrity and that one is in right relationship with God. We see this demonstrated in the prophet Habakkuk himself and in the instruction Jesus offers to his disciples to not expect to be praised for having done what was expected of a servant. Whatever we are able to accomplish to build the kingdom of God is God's grace at work in us, stirred to flame by the gift of his Spirit. We are simply humble servants who rely on faith in things we do not see.

"O come; let us bow and bend low. Let us kneel before the LORD who made us" (Ps 95:6).

October 13, 2019
Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time

2 Kings 5:14-17; Psalm 98:1, 2-3, 3-4; 2 Timothy 2:8-13; Luke 17:11-19

The readings we ponder this week draw us to consider the place of non-Israelites in God's plan of salvation. First, we meet Naaman the Syrian, afflicted with leprosy, who comes to Israel in search of a cure. In the Gospel we meet a nameless leper, a Samaritan, a "foreigner," who makes his request for healing "from a distance."

For Naaman, his healing brings him to acknowledge the power of the God who dwells in the land he came to visit. He obediently, even if reluctantly, does as the prophet instructs: he washes seven times in the Jordan. Maybe it seemed too simple to Naaman, who asks, "Why could I not have stayed home and washed in cleaner waters than this muddy Jordan?" In the end, perhaps humbled a bit, Naaman acknowledges the greatness of the God who speaks through his prophet.

The gospel account of the ten lepers shines a light on one of them who returned to say, "Thank you." This one happened to be a Samaritan,

a "foreigner." Lepers were segregated from society, made to live apart, but as a Samaritans he was an "outsider" even among lepers. Samaritans had a shared history with the Jews, but long ago parted ways. Samaritans were not welcome in the temple in Jerusalem, and developed their own traditions separate from the Jews. We can detect this tension in the gospel accounts when Jesus and the Twelve pass through Samaritan territory. The usual choice was to make a wide sweep around, skirting their land altogether, steering clear of any encounters. Those meetings recorded in the Gospels are somewhat contentious.

If we look beneath the surface of these two stories (Naaman and the leper), there is an underlying response of gratitude. Gratitude is a state of mind that brings us happiness, contentment, humility, and a host of other attitudes that make for peaceful living. Observe Naaman who comes from his home in Syria to Israel in search of healing. He brings along a stash of treasures to "pay" for his cure. Elisha the prophet refuses to accept his gifts. How easy it can be to feel we have adequately "paid back" kindnesses done to us. Do we, like Naaman, want to feel we have repaid our indebtedness? Or is there some benefit to knowing we can never even the score? Does this require some humility? And is this not the basis of building a relationship?

Curiously, Naaman asks to take back to his home two mule loads of earth so he can continue honoring the God who accomplished his healing. Naaman wants to always remember and never forget this event in his life! Naaman received more than healing that day! He will live in perpetual gratitude for his blessings. Are there blessings in life for which we could not make adequate payment except to God, who gives us all good things?

It is gardening season as I write. I have a large pile of mulch to move into my gardens. As I go about my tasks, I will imagine the earth, the humus of gratitude for the ways God has blessed my life. The two mule loads of earth from Israel reminded Naaman of healing and the power of God. Memory keeps us mindful of the places where God has walked in our life. To remember is to live in gratitude and joy!

Imagining the Samaritan leper who remembered to return and say, "Thank you" . . . He, too, could never forget his encounter with Jesus. His memories and his gratitude will likely set a way of living his life to the fullest. What happened to the other nine? Did they forget? Did

they not look into the eyes of their healer?

"All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God" (Ps 98:3).

October 20, 2019
Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Exodus 17:8-13; Psalm 121:1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8; 2 Timothy 3:14-4:2; Luke 18:1-8

A fitting summary to each of the readings could be: "Know what your strengths are." When life comes at us, with what do we hit back? The psalmist joins the conversation and reminds us that "our help, our strength, and our courage is from the LORD, who made heaven and earth" (Ps 121).

For Moses, his staff symbolizes the power of God. It is a symbol of his authority over God's people. With his staff raised, the scourge of the plagues came down upon the Egyptians. Later, when Pharaoh relented, the staff would remove the plague. As Israel escaped the pursuing Egyptians, Moses again raises his staff to divide the sea. With this staff, he taps the rock, and water flows for the people to drink. When the authority of leadership is challenged, the staff (now in Aaron's possession) buds forth blossoms as a sign of God's favor and choice (Nm 17).

In today's reading, the power of God protects the people from a desert enemy, the Amalekites. In every case, the writer makes a statement of faith not in Moses' power but in God's power to save. Moses is sustained by God, but this story also suggests that he needs to lean on human supports. He cannot do everything by himself. Without the support of Aaron and Hur, he would yield to exhaustion. Others must be included in the work of God.

In the Letter to Timothy, a pastoral work, we are reminded of the importance of Scripture. How do we live without the word of God! It inspires growth, grounds our faith, and brings us wisdom and understanding. It is a living word that constantly challenges us. What a defense the word of God can be against discouragement, disillusionment, and complacency! We are encouraged to "proclaim

the word" . . . but, first, we need to know what that word is. It is *God's word*, communicating God to us! We diminish it if we isolate verses from their context, failing to see how culture and history and theology play a role in forming the words of Scripture. The Bible is "the word of God in human words" (*Dei Verbum*). Our deepening understanding of how Scripture reveals God to us can be a source of grace and peace in our turbulent times.

Who does not admire the persistent widow in the Gospel? It is likely that she has had to develop such attitudes for survival, learning patience and persistence because of her social role in that world. As off-putting as these traits might be to some, her determination and persistence make her a formidable opponent, and admirable to us. Jesus emphasizes her faith and her unrelenting determination to get what she wants.

The point of the parable is given us in verse 1: ". . . a parable about the necessity to pray always without becoming weary. …" It invites us to think about our prayer. Not so much about the number of times we ask God for something, but the persistence of faith that sustains the constant hope we place in God who hears and will give what we need.

Someone once said that prayer is like leaning toward God as a plant leans toward the sun. This is about faith. The end of the Gospel brings us to consider this. Will Jesus find faith? He may find a lot of people speaking words, but will he find faith?

In our face-off with any opponent, in our prayer during trials, in our struggle to hold on to faith, there are three weapons we should not discount: the power of God, the word of God, and the persistence that springs from faith. How comfortable are we with these in our arsenal? Each of these is grounded in faith, belief in things we cannot see. Do we trust the power of God to protect? Do we trust the word of God to guide? Do we trust the promise of God to supply all our needs?

October 27, 2019
Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18; Psalm 34:2-3, 17-18, 19, 23; 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18; Luke 18:9-14

Today's reading from Sirach is not about increasing one's tithe. It is actually a warning against thinking we can manipulate God by doing just that. God does not ask for what we have. God asks us to give who and what we are. Bottom line, God who knows us, knows our heart and the purity of whatever gift we bring to set before him.

The heart of Sirach's message to us is always to be in right relationship with God, who is not overly impressed by the rich or powerful or famous. The ones who get his attention when they cry out to him are the "widow and orphan." How frequently are these, along with the "alien," mentioned as those favored by God? They are incapable of swaying a decision, making a deal, or thinking they can buy a favorable answer to prayer.

Integrity, purity of heart, humility, and trust in God; such are the gifts God expects from us, along with the many often difficult turnings of the heart as we engage in a process, handing over to God all that is required so that these qualities can be formed in us. It is a process of growth that is not always easy.

Similarly, the parable in today's Gospel puts before us the prayer of two individuals. The first is recognized (or recognizes himself!) as one who keeps the rules and commandments to the letter. "Thank God I am not like the rest of the people!" Then we have the prayer of the other who knows that, however hard he may try, he will always stand in need of God's mercy. "Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner."

Parables invite us to identify with various characters or elements in the story. Which of these two do you think mirrors yourself? Do we think that we do things better than most, and so the words become our own "Thank God, I am not like the rest of the people"? . . . "I do more than most, so I am better than most." What about this tax collector who knows he is small and flawed, who must rely on God's goodness and mercy?

Without knowing of God's mercy, we would not stand a chance. But do we *trust* in this? Do we allow it to lift from us the burden of guilt and a false sense of inferiority and insignificance? Do we truly know we are loved by God, that we are children of God?

Is there a temptation for us to imagine that we have got it all right? Is there ever a place for us to judge others in their relationship with God based on our criteria of perfection? Perhaps it is just this attitude that can crush a gentle soul and cause him or her to lose sight of their inestimable value before God.

Notice the intended audience to whom the parable is addressed, namely, "those who trust in their own righteousness and regard others with contempt." We can be surprised at how God's ways reverse human expectations. The Gospel has its way of pulling us away from complacency and forming us as God's own people, who should never find themselves saying the words, "Thank God I am not like the rest of people."

The conclusion of the Letter to Timothy also speaks of honestly evaluating our accomplishments. The writer of this letter speaks of a job well done and of trusting that God who called him to share the work will give him a reward for his labors. Unlike the Pharisee in the Gospel, he does not boast about his accomplishments. If anything, he speaks about the trials faced and how God sustained him, of his contribution being part of something greater than himself. We are all a small part in a great work!

"When the righteous cries out, the LORD hears and rescues them in all their distress" (Ps 34:19).

Art • Music • Film • Poetry • Books

Art Review

UNTITLED (AFRICAN LAST SUPPER)
Unsigned
Painting on Cloth
Africa (likely Uganda), circa 2011
Collection Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament
Province of Saint Ann
Gift of Dennis Ruane, SSS

John Christman, SSS

The Last Supper has been depicted in so many ways through the centuries that it may be difficult to appreciate the nuances that each new depiction offers. From early Byzantine mosaic depictions, such as that found in Saint Apollinaire Nuovo showing Jesus and the apostles gathered around loaves and fish, to Jacopo Tintoretto's dramatically composed and almost frantic dinner scene from 1563, artists have explored numerous ways to illumine this biblical meal.

Among all of them Leonardo da Vinci's Italian Renaissance masterpiece has become paradigmatic. And while one may shudder at the multitude of kitsch appropriations of Da Vinci's fresco, there are other artworks that honor his masterpiece. Salvador Dalí's *The Sacrament of the Last Supper* is one such example of a famous work of art that pays tribute to Da Vinci. We see in it the balanced composition with long table placed immediately before the viewer. Christ is likewise centrally located, surrounded by disciples as in the Da Vinci precursor. Beyond these similarities, it is in the details that Da Vinci and Dalí offer us their own unique theological insights and perspectives. It is often in small things that we appreciate meaningful differences.

On the front and back cover of this issue of *Emmanuel* is a Last Supper scene from Africa, most likely Uganda. The painting, like much religious artwork through the centuries, is not signed. So we do not know the name of the artist. However, its theological and artistic contribution is rich. Like Da Vinci and Dalí's Last Supper scenes, the table is placed directly before the viewer with Christ at its center. The perspective is also similar with the lines on the floor and the roof guiding our eyes to the central action. In composing the painting in this manner, the artist has created continuity with the past. The painting acknowledges a shared history, but wishes to imbue and enrich that history with a distinct African identity. Theologians call this "inculturation," but as ancient masterpieces like the *Book of Kells* demonstrate, artists have been doing this important work long before the term was coined.

The creative genius and spirit of each culture illuminates the incarnation in ways perhaps otherwise unimaginable. Each is a treasure offered to the Church. If Da Vinci's *The Last Supper* offers something of the pathos of Jesus' betrayal and impending crucifixion, and Dalí's image offers a more Trinitarian and sacramental perspective, what does this painting offer that those European images miss?

The answer is in the details. An abundance of local fruit, food, and drink spread across the table. The drums, harps, and flutes as those gathered clap to the music. The inviting warm yellow and orange hues surround Jesus as he lifts bread in thanksgiving. All of these create something we do not see in Da Vinci or Dalí, a sense of celebration. As the theologian Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator explains,

> In Africa, worship is never complete without singing and dancing; otherwise that worship would be considered cold and dead. Every aspect of the liturgical celebration is accompanied by joyful vocal and bodily expressions. . . . A shared belief of many Africans is that anything that is good must necessarily overflow. As one African proverb says, a good pot of okra sauce cannot be confined to the cooking pot with a lid. It must bubble up and overflow. This means that what is seen on the outside manifests what lies in the depth of African spirituality.[1]

We may tend to consider the Last Supper, and the Eucharist by extension, through the lens of sacrifice. Certainly, sacrifice (also memorial) is a very important lens through which we understand these. However, it is certainly not the only lens. As Raymond Moloney has pointed out, the gospel accounts of the Last Supper were likely composed through the early Church experience of celebrating Eucharist.[2] He writes: "Consequently these passages are not primarily intended as historical report but as liturgical recital."[3]

And so, celebrating the resurrection of Christ in a liturgical setting has become an important lens through which we understand both the Last Supper and the Eucharist.[4] It is thought provoking and delightful to see this same spirit represented in this African depiction of the Last Supper.

The painting not only reminds us that our Eucharistic liturgy is meant to be a celebration, but equally relevant, it reminds us that our Eucharistic celebrations unite us to the past and to Christian communities gathered around the world. It is interesting to note

in Mark's Gospel, the Last Supper ends with Jesus and the disciples singing a hymn (Mk 14:25). It is easy to believe that the Jesus depicted in this African painting would do just that, lead his disciples in song.

Notes

[1] Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator, *Theology Brewed in an African Pot* (New York: Orbis Books, 2008), 148-149.

[2] Raymond Moloney SJ, "Eucharist" in *The New Dictionary of Theology*, Ed. Mary Collins, Joseph Komonchak, Dermot Lane. (Wilmington, Delaware: Michael Glazier, Inc. 1987), 343.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

Poetry

eucharistia

hunger so fierce: bread
thirst so tender: wine
your body: sacrifice and feast
the amen of gratitude
like no other

Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

Speaking in Tongues
a.k.a. The Miracle of Pentecost Anew

It seems to me
that every individual
has his or her
own personal language.

"What's happening"
is inevitably filtered
through an intensely idiosyncratic
complex of words
and concepts, developed
and adapted

over years of hit and miss,
and the perceived experience
of what works,
and, more particularly,
what doesn't.

Supposing, on the other
hand, that someone comes up
with the (albeit improbable)
notion that there is
actually something that
everybody needs to know;

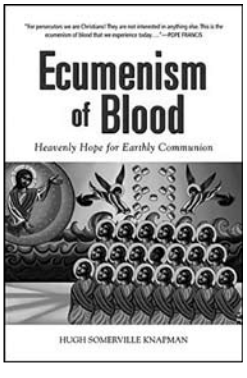
how is his situation
not hopeless?

". . . at this sound
they all assembled,
each one bewildered
to hear these men
speaking his own language."
Acts 2:6-7

Well, for all that —
why not?

Jared Barkan

Book Review



ECUMENISM OF BLOOD: HEAVENLY HOPE FOR EARTHLY COMMUNION
Hugh Somerville Knapman, OSB
New York, New York: Paulist Press, 2018
128 pp., $16.95

The question raised by this book is rather simple: Can the Catholic Church give some formal recognition of the canonization by the Coptic Church of martyrdom at the hands of Daesh/ISIS soldiers? The question arises because several recent popes have used terms that informally recognize a reconciliation between these Christians and the Catholic Church.

Pope Francis, in particular, has used the term "ecumenism of blood." Some critics have balked at the expression and feel that it is wrongly used of people who belong to churches which are considered to be schismatic or heretical. They argue that there is a tradition of not recognizing martyrs who are not Catholic, especially in a formal way;

otherwise it is dangerous and confusing.

The author has put together a short and readable version of his Master's dissertation on the subject, which carefully considers, including the ecumenical developments in Vatican II and post-conciliar theology and papal statements, a doctrinal development that would allow both an informal and a formal recognition of the martyrdom of Coptic Christians by the Coptic Church of Egypt and Libya.

The strongest support for this view comes from statements and actions taken by popes of the last century; the ecumenical developments in Vatican II and post-conciliar theology, the use of *analogia fidei* and doctrinal development. The author is very careful to point out that he is not advocating canonization by the Catholic Church of people killed out of hatred for the Christian faith by persecutors. He is seeking to describe theologically why the Catholic Church might give formal recognition of the reconciliation "by blood" of Christians not in full communion with Rome.

The closest argument in this direction is the teaching of baptism of blood which has a long life in the Christian tradition, and gives the possibility of using the teaching of Vatican II in matters ecumenical.

Hugh Knapman OSB, received his STB from the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome in 2008. For his Master's in Philosophy at the University of Bristol, he presented a dissertation on the ecumenism of blood. His earlier studies in theology were at Blackfriars Hall Oxford and Sydney College of Divinity in Australia. He is well prepared to handle the subject of his book

Knapman edited his dissertation for publication in the Paulist Press volume for a wider readership. While there are many obstacles to "canonization" by the Vatican of persons of other Christian churches, the process of Eastern churches is simply to place them in the list of saints in the martyrology — rather than a process like Rome's. There are other problems involved in such a process, e.g., there is a distinction between people who are killed for political reasons and those who belong to a church that is considered to be schismatic or heretical. The main points of the thesis Knapman proposes is that some formal recognition of the martyrs belonging to other Christian churches is not opposed to the long tradition of canonization. Indeed, there is a development that makes a good case for this recognition.

Pope Benedict XVI
What is new in Knapman's presentation is the idea that beginning with the tradition of baptism of blood which was recognized in the early Church, and the work of Pope Benedict XIV on invincible heretics, there is something in the Christian tradition that is a foundation for a development of doctrine.

The theological position of Benedict XIV *(Prospero Lambertini)* about the invincible heretic (*l'heritique invincibiliter — "in good faith*") is important. He explains that people in other Christian traditions (Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, Reformed/Calvinist, etc.) should not be considered to be schismatic or heretical; rather, they are not aware of their status. They cannot be blamed for following their conscience, and have a right to religious freedom.

Pope Francis
Pope Francis spoke to ecumenists gathered at the Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome on January 26, 2015. He stated that ecumenism opens the minds and hearts of Christians to recognize the unity they share as Christians when they view together the faith and courage that Christians have in the midst of persecution. Francis points out that the persecutors do not ask to what church people belong. They are killed simply because they are Christian (cf. *Catholic Herald,* January 26, 2015). He also spoke on the same subject in *Evangelii Gaudium*. Pope Paul VI made special mention of the Anglican Christians who were martyred along with Catholic Christians in Uganda during his pontificate.

One could safely follow the guidelines and values stressed by Pope Francis, Pope John Paul II, and Pope Benedict XVI, that there is an ecumenical spirit bringing Christians together in recognizing whether informally or formally that the "communion of saints" is at work and the ecumenical spirit is shown. Benedict XVI also noted that Christians who are persecuted because of their faith give witness to that faith in a dramatic way. While this is sound theology and an ecumenical view, it has a firm base in what Knapman traces as the trajectory from apostolic times to the present.

Ernest Falardeau, SSS
Senior Associate and Ecumenist
Saint Jean Baptiste Church
New York, New York

EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

Christine Anderson

Cleveland, Ohio

How does one know when the soul has been touched by the gentleness of the Eucharist — that subtle spark that ignites a need to have a single relationship with God? How does one describe the experience and explain the breadth of that moment?

While holding my father's hand, walking into Mass one Sunday, it dawned on me that our church, made of simple brick and mortar, had no cross in the final architectural design. There was no cross to welcome families through the front doors. In its place, where I thought a cross should rise, stood a monstrance, a vessel which held the Eucharist for us to witness. It was that single moment of explanation when I learned *God also dwells in me*.

Through the years, I found God in everything: being with my family, sitting around a dining room table with friends, playing in fields, sitting quietly, laughing, enjoying a new love, and experiencing birth. Every moment I spend with God strengthens our bond. Every Eucharist I receive reminds me our relationship is alive and very real. God's love touches me deeply, and I welcome the change in my human self as God continuously transforms me, like an unfinished piece of art.

The desire to understand and to know God grows. I need God to fill me completely, to show me the better version of my true self: my potential beyond my free will. I need God on my journey through life, beside me, guiding me on my path. During negative times, I find God's gift of strength; during positive times, I find my gift of gratitude.

It is through my human imperfections and transgressions that I find the desire to savor a nourishing relationship with the one true God who awakens my senses and shows me how to forgive myself and others completely, and love unconditionally.

Through partaking in and receiving the Eucharist, I have come to believe that when my days are done and my eyes close for the last time, God will unveil God's masterpiece in me. . . and I look forward to meeting her.

"Each person has their own mission near the Blessed Sacrament."

Eymard
sp S.S.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

"While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing,
broke it, and gave it to them, and said, 'Take it; this is my body.'
Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them,
and they all drank from it. He said to them,
'This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many.
Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until
the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'
Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives
(Mark 14: 22-26 NABRE)."