Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality

January/February 2020

Website and Digital Edition

Emmanuelpublishing.org now features easy on-site access to the digital edition of *Emmanuel* along with additional access to thought-provoking web-based theological, liturgical and ecumenical reflections.

All print subscribers can request free access to the digital edition by contacting us with your name and mailing address through our website: emmanuelpublishing.org - or - by email at: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com.

EMMANUEL MAGAZINE (ISSN 0013-6719) is published bimonthly with 6 issues a year, by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. Phone (440) 449-2103. E-mail: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, Ohio and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS (print subscription includes access to digital edition): individual (U.S.) $35.00 one year/ $65.00 two years; Canadian and foreign $40.00 one year/ $75.00 two years, U.S. currency; single issues $8.00 plus postage. EDITOR: 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland OH 44143. POSTMASTER: send address change to Emmanuel Magazine, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. ©2020

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

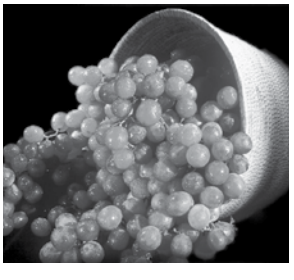
emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

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

Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 126 Number 1



FROM THE EDITOR

There are moments and experiences in life that lift our sights beyond the immediate. This is true for all of us, lay, consecrated religious, and ordained. It might be witnessing the birth of a long-awaited child or standing beside the bed of a fellow believer completing his or her journey home to God. It might be sharing a glass of wine and dinner with a good friend or listening to powerful preaching or sacred music at Mass. It might be gazing at the splendor of the Grand Canyon or watching a glorious sunset over the ocean or a peaceful lake after a long day of ministry. All of these are hints of something outside life's temporalities, the eternal.

The Eucharist is that for us as well. The eschatological dimension of the sacrament can easily be overlooked in our rightful focus on the memorial of the Lord's death and its saving effects in our lives as committed disciples amid the challenges of the day.

Pope Francis has spoken and written quite extensively about the Eucharist in this light. In his Angelus message at the Vatican on August 19, 2018, the Holy Father said that the Eucharist is where Christians find "that which feeds us and quenches our thirst today and for eternity. Every time that we participate in the Holy Mass, we hasten heaven on earth in a certain sense because from the Eucharistic food — the body and blood of Christ — we learn what eternal life is."

The apostle Paul exhorts: "If then you were raised with Christ, seek what is above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Think of what is above, not of what is on earth" (Col 3:1-2). Again, quoting Pope Francis: "Happiness and eternity of life depend on our capacity for making the evangelical love we received in the Eucharist fruitful."

An image might help. In Phil Alden Robinson's 1989 adaptation of W. P. Kinsella's classic novel about family and baseball, *Field of Dreams,* there

is a dramatic scene where an aged man, weary from life's battles, steps over the foul line onto the playing field of his youth and is transformed into a wide-eyed athlete filled with dreams of baseball immortality. Similarly, the Eucharist transports us not only back to the redeeming sacrifice of Christ on Calvary, but forward to its fulfillment in the heavenly banquet of the Lamb recounted in the Book of Revelation. Dr. Scott Hahn, the noted speaker and apologist, confesses that it was this insight into Catholic worship that led to his conversion.

Capuchin Raniero Cantalamessa, longtime Preacher to the Papal Household, states that the Eucharist is "the sacrament that reveals to us, pilgrims on earth, the Christian meaning of life" and, "like the manna, . . . nourishes those who are journeying toward the Promised Land." It "reminds the Christian constantly that he is a 'pilgrim and a stranger' in this world; that his life is an exodus." The Eucharistic bread "sustains us during the whole of our journey in this life."

Anthony Schueller, SSS
Senior Editor

In This Issue

January and February are months where we often find ourselves contemplating the passage of time. We look forward with hope as a new calendar year begins, and we also recall the nature of passing things with the approach of the Lenten season. The theme of time, so beautifully portrayed in Nicora Gangi's cover painting entitled, "The Time is Soon," unifies many of our articles in this issue. John Thomas Lane, SSS begins a series in our Pastoral Liturgy column exploring the deeper meaning of the Liturgy of the Hours. John Zupez, SJ ponders eternity and the fruits of our work in time. While Michael DeSanctis explores how a young, un-churched generation encounters historic sacred spaces. These in addition to Dennis Billy CSsR's examination of Flannery O'Connor's eucharistic theology and Lisa Marie Betz's thoughtful scripture reflections mark the unfolding of the liturgical year.

EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Our Good Deeds Follow Us: A Reflection on the Secondary Joy of Heaven

by John Zupez, SJ

Everyone wants to experience the joy of heaven, but how do our good deeds affect our eternal joy?

John Zupez, SJ, has taught in seminaries and has written over 50 articles published in Catholic journals, mainly on the theology of St. Paul, the Church's liturgy, and social justice. Now 82, he works in prison ministry.

There are places in the New Testament where we are told that our good deeds follow us to heaven, and presumably increase our joy there. If we can gain a better understanding of this joy, and why it is not selfish to work for it, we might serve God better in this life and enhance our participation in the community of saints forever. What then do we know about what is called, "the secondary joy of heaven," and about working toward increasing it?

I have asked people involved in social work whether a reward in heaven motivates them. Most are not clear on this. Helping the needy in a spirit of universal charity offers fulfillment. In fact, any unselfish good deed gives people a sense of fulfillment in this life. This is perhaps the fruit of the Spirit, the joy and peace that follow love, or living for others (Gal 5:22). Beyond that I find people pleading ignorance of how their good deeds might bring them a "secondary joy" in heaven.

The Church's tradition does speak of some reward in heaven besides the beatific vision of seeing God directly. The Council of Florence defined that there are various degrees of beatitude in heaven corresponding to the various degrees of merit (Denz., n. 693). And the Council of Trent in its "Decree on Justification" affirmed that the faithful will experience heaven differently, based on the merit of their good works (Canon 32). Earlier in the decree, the Council noted several scripture passages that teach about the importance of good works regarding our enjoyment of heaven, such as Romans 2:6 which says that God "will repay according to each one's deeds." The Catholic Encyclopedia explains: "God, in his infinite justice and holiness, must give virtue its due reward. But, as experience teaches, the virtuous do not obtain a sufficient reward here; hence they will be recompensed

hereafter." It goes on to say of "the secondary object of the beatific vision" that "the blessed see each other."[1]

I suggest that we use this mention that, "the blessed see each other" as the basis for our understanding. It is at least one important aspect of the secondary joy of heaven. And it is in accord with the statement of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP, in his book *Life Everlasting*, that "each has a special joy in seeing his own good recognized and appreciated."[2]

Our Own Personal Reflection of God

As St. Paul teaches, charity remains; our charitable deeds follow us to heaven when we die. Jesus' mother Mary, great saints and martyrs, right down to each of us will reflect God's own glory through our heavenly bodies, according to the degree of charity in our hearts when we die. We will reflect the truth, beauty and goodness of God through our own personality, our own image and likeness to God, by the grace of God to us, to the extent that we have cooperated with that grace. The more we reflect God in our own personal way, the more others will rejoice at seeing God's goodness in us, and *the more joy this will bring us*. This may go a long way toward explaining how our good deeds follow us, and the secondary joy of heaven.

There's nothing selfish about desiring this joy. Our joy at rejoicing in others will be like the joy that God finds in sharing the beatific vision, and in this way will bring happiness to others. With divine magnanimity, God shares even this very personal joy with us.

Lest we think that we are bringing God down too much to our own level, by allowing that God rejoices at making people happy, Cardinal Walter Kasper, in his book *Jesus the Christ,* and many other Catholic theologians firmly deny the immutability and impassibility of God. They distinguish between the God of Greek philosophy and the God of Jesus Christ who freely chooses to suffer along with the divine Son, and also to rejoice with God's people.

God's Purpose in Christ

The poet Gerard Manley Hopkins has written: "Christ plays in ten thousand places / Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his / To the Father through the features of men's faces."[3] This reflecting God, as Jesus reflected God, begins here on earth. Jesus tells us, "your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and

glorify your heavenly Father" (Mt 5:16). Why should our good deeds bring any less glory to God when we are fixed in charity for all eternity? And how can this not bring joy to us in heaven?

In this regard, it helps to reflect on the contrast between our few years on earth and the eternity of joy that awaits us. Luke's gospel expresses our earthly task quite bluntly: "Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven. ... For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Lk 12:33-34). Paul says clearly that we will receive a reward for our labors, "For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). More fundamentally, we are here to "put on the new self, which is being renewed, for knowledge, in the image of its creator" (Col 3:10).

The more we reflect God in our own personal way, the more others will rejoice at seeing God's goodness in us, and the more joy this will bring us.

The joy of our charity made visible may not be the only way in which heavenly joy is experienced more by some than by others. However, God wills the fullness of our growth in Christ Jesus. We work toward this as loving children of God, in the sure hope of heavenly reward, "Do good. ... Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High" (Lk 6:35). In Matthew's gospel Jesus treats us like children, frequently enticing us with promises like that of being, "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 18:4) if you "store up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Mt 6:20-21; 5:11; 19:21). The book of Revelation also mentions that our good deeds follow us (Rev 14:13). The best explanation of this at a deeper level is that the greater our growth in charity, the more we will reflect the goodness and beauty of God in the community of saints forever. We will have "produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God." (Phil 1: 1-2)**.**

Notes

[1] http://w.newadvent.org/cathen/07170a.htm accessed September 26, 2019

[2] Reginald Garrigou-LaGrange, OP, *Life Everlasting* trans. Patrick Cummins, OSB (Queen Square, London: B. Herder Book Co., pg 248).

[3] Excerpt from the poem, "As Kingfishers Catch Fire" as found in Gerard Manley Hopkins: Poems and Prose (New York: Penguin Classics, 1985).

Keeping Time: Jazz and a Eucharistic Perspective of Time

by John Christman, SSS

How does the Eucharist shape your experience of time?

I HAVE A RUNNING JOKE WITH A LONGTIME LEADER OF MUSIC MINISTRY AT MY local parish. It started once when we were talking about a Sunday liturgy and she suggested trimming the length of something to make it a bit shorter and move the mass along. I responded, somewhat cantankerously, "Because it's all about time." She laughed and said, "That's right, because it's all about time." What's interesting, however, is how often this conversation has been repeated in one way or another. It's turned into a joke for the two of us because there are so many instances in the liturgy when we are conscious of the time. How long something is going to take, what comes next? Unfortunately, this mentality stretches well beyond the liturgy. Daily life itself can become an endless stream of rapidly occurring events. But who among us asks, "What are we racing to?" And "when do we finally arrive?" We are racing through time so fast we very rarely, if at all, stop to evaluate what are we racing for?

John Christman, SSS is a member of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and editor of Emmanuel. He is an artist, musician and frequently writes on the topic of theology and the arts.

There is a tragic phenomenon taking place in Japan that shows the consequence of such non-stop activity. After the Second World War, when the country was completely devastated, the Japanese people focused much of their energies upon rebuilding their country. Eventually Japan became one of the great economies in Asia. But it came with a price. Ceaseless hours of work: (12 hour days, 6 and 7 days a week) created such stress and exhaustion that young workers were dying. Doctors and government officials have even given it an official legal term, "karōshi" which literally means, "death by overwork." It's frightening, but society pushes us relentlessly on, without deeper reflection upon why *or* considering the negative impact upon people's lives. So much so that we're losing our Christian understanding of time and the values associated with time.

Two Concepts of Time

The ancient Greeks had two words for time: *chronos* and *kairos*. And each word described a different aspect of time. *Chronos* speaks about time as a quantifiable and measurable reality. It is time as it passes from the future to the past. It is very much that scientific, observable reality that we mark on our clocks. This is where we get the word, "chronology." We all know *chronos*. In fact, *chronos* has increasingly become the only way we look at time. "When will this be finished?" "What's next?" "How long will it take?" We have become fixated on *chronos*, filling time with one event after another.

But, there is another Greek word for time that speaks of a different understanding, one that has become deeply entwined with Christianity. And that is *kairos*. *Kairos* is the moment. Right now. And it is expansive. *Kairos* doesn't speak about the *quantity of time* but rather the *quality of time*. It acknowledges that there are special times. In fact, there are times so special, that we lose track of the passage of time all together.

And we all know this experience of time. Whether it's the experience of falling in love, holding your newborn child, the depth of prayer or engagement in a meaningful ministry. In those moments time ceases to be a sequence of events and becomes the eternal now, where everything is significant. Sometimes it happens in a moment of creativity, making music with a group of musicians, or cooking a new recipe. Those moments truly fill us and nourish us. In fact, I'd say we live for those moments. We are a *chronos* people who long for *kairos*. We long for truly meaningful and nourishing times.

Chronology vs. Salvation History

At the beginning of the calendar year we often find ourselves contemplating the passage of time. We look forward with hope as a new year begins. We make resolutions. We also recall the nature of passing things with the approach of the Lenten season and it's recounting of the paschal mystery.

As we move through the readings of the lectionary we may be tempted to consider the events described as a chronology: a series of events. However, it is so much more than *chronos*, because each event that we recount is an in-breaking of God's grace, love and mercy into our world.

Each moment we recount contains *kairos*. From Genesis, when God created time and all things, and God gazed upon it all and said, "it is very good" (Gen 1:31). To God's covenant with Abraham that has yielded all the religious descendants of Abraham. From God's great salvific actions in human history, bringing the people out of slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land. To the very transformation of time and history itself, through the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is not merely a chronology of events: it is salvation history.

But in our ever increasing, mad-panicked lives, racing from thing to thing, time tends to lose its luster. We often find ourselves just punching time cards, fulfilling our schedules, attending to the lists of things to be done. Time loses it's meaning. Everything becomes the same. History becomes just a string of events. We're born, we live, and we die. We start to think that's all there is. What a tragedy that is! What a loss! To feel like there's nothing beyond our chronology. Sadly, for many people their chronology is filled with a fair share of sorrow and suffering. This is a very bleak way to perceive life.

But that's not Christianity, thank God. Jesus offers us so much more. In fact, Jesus rescued us all from the fate of being finite beings at the mercy of chronological time. Jesus rose from the dead, breathing eternity into time. *And*, he offers the gift of eternity to all of us. Through the beautiful sacrament of baptism we are welcomed into eternity. As the eucharistic Preface I For the Dead in the Roman Missal says so eloquently: "In him the hope of blessed resurrection has dawned, that those saddened by the certainty of dying might be consoled by the promise of immortality to come. Indeed for your faithful, Lord, life is changed not ended, and, when this earthly dwelling turns to dust, an eternal dwelling is made ready for them in heaven." Those are such inspiring words, and that profound hope is ours through baptism.

Jazz and Eucharistic Time

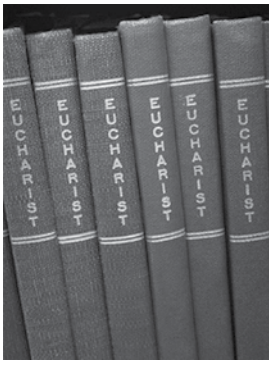
The great jazz pianist and composer Dave Brubeck is probably best known for his 1959 hit album entitled Time Out. The title refers to the preponderance of unconventional time signatures of the jazz compositions on the album. It was a daring and creative decision to break with the conventional jazz time signatures of the era. After all, as Duke Ellington's classic tune from 1931 proclaimed, "It Don't Mean a Thing (If it Ain't Got That Swing)." But Brubeck and his quartet proved jazz was up to the task. It could swing and so much more. Pieces like

Blue Rondo à la Turk (in 9/8 time) and Take Five (in 5/4 time) have long since become popular jazz standards. In fact, it's difficult to sing the popular processional hymn Sing of the Lord's Goodness by Ernest Sands and not think of Take Five and the lasting influence of Time Out with it's differing presentations of time.

For jazz musicians playing a musical composition together, time is a multifaceted experience. *Chronos* is necessary. It's the glue that holds the music together as each musician is attentive to "keeping time" and staying on beat. But within this there is space to be creative. The beat can be syncopated, and musicians can create exciting dynamics by playing "off time." And, in jazz, each musician is attentive to the others, responding to the creative choices of each other. A lively solo, an unexpected drum fill, a soulful base note, and the piece of music can take on it's own life. A spirit emerges. It's palpable to the musicians, and *chronos* opens to *kairos*. Multiple experiences of time unfold at once and it's a complete joy.

A eucharistic understanding of time can shape our experiences in a similar manner. *Chronos* is a gift from God. We have been given the gift of time for our lives to unfold. We have been given the minutes, hours, days and years to fashion our own unique chronologies. That is a tremendous gift. Our lives are held together in time. But chronology without *kairos* robs life of it's meaning and becomes burdensome. It lacks spirit and joy. There's little to sing about when everything is just *chronos*. The band needs the possibility of *kairos*.

Eucharist breathes eternal salvific wonder into time. A eucharistic experience of time is attentive to God's life-giving presence in unexpected moments and unexpected encounters. It doesn't negate our responsibilities, or remove our schedules, but holds out the possibility that something beautiful could emerge from our labors. Eucharist transforms the structures in our lives into opportunities for the spirit to emerge. In the Eucharist we don't feel like we're just trying to "keep time," stay on beat, and keep pace with our busy lives. Instead, in the Eucharist, Christ keeps us in God's time. We experience a foretaste of God's eternal loving embrace. And through that belonging, we discover the courage to enter into the depths of everyday chronological time, and work for the flourishing of all. Without that eucharistic perspective we may easily find ourselves asking, "When will this be finished?""What's next?""How long will it take?"



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

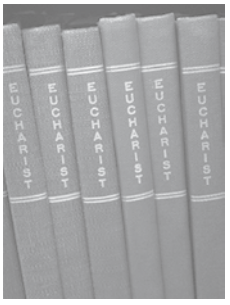
Flannery O'Connor on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

The Catholicism of the great twentieth century author Flannery O'Connor is well documented, but what can we glean of her eucharistic theology?

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964), one of the prominent American fiction writers of the twentieth century, was born in Savannah, Georgia to devout Catholic parents. In 1938, her family moved to Milledgeville in central Georgia. She attended Georgia State College for Women, where she majored in social science and was the editor of and contributing author to the *Corinthian*, the college's literary magazine. In 1945, she received a scholarship to study journalism at the State University of Iowa and, after a semester in that discipline, decided to switch to creative writing under Paul Engle, head of the Iowa Writers' Workshop. She completed her M.F.A degree in 1947, won the Rinehart-Iowa Fiction Award then spent several months at Yaddo, an artists' retreat in Saratoga Springs, New York, and some time in Manhattan and Milledgeville. In 1949, she moved to Ridgefield, Connecticut and lived nearly two years in the garage apartment of her good friends Sally and Robert Fitzgerald. In 1950, she came down with lupus, a deadly disease that eventually took her life. This diagnosis prompted a move in 1951 back to the family farm, Andalusia, just outside Milledgeville, where she would spend the rest of her life writing fiction, answering letters, raising peacocks, and practicing her Catholic faith. She published her first novel, *Wise Blood*, in 1952 and won a number of literary awards for her fiction in her remaining years. She succumbed to the disease on August 3, 1964. In 1972, her posthumous collection, *The Complete Stories*, received the National Book Award. In 1979, *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, edited by her longtime friend, Sally Fitzgerald, hit the literary world and received excellent reviews.[1]

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.



O'Connor's Spiritual Outlook

O'Connor's spiritual outlook stems from her devout Catholic upbringing. Her parents came from two of Georgia's oldest Catholic families and taught her to practice her faith and to love it, despite the flaws exhibited by many of its members. During her early childhood in Savannah, nuns in the local parochial school educated her. When she moved to Milledgeville at the age of thirteen, she attended the local public high school, for lack of a Catholic alternative. Because the atmosphere in the Deep South at the time was prone to bigotry and hostile to the Catholic minority, she learned the necessity of delving beneath the externals of her faith, identifying its essentials, and embracing it with both mind and heart.

O'Connor's father died of lupus when she was just fifteen, the same disease that would eventually take her own life. This tragic loss at such an early age made a deep impression on her and caused her to probe the meaning of life, appreciate its preciousness, and mourn its eventual demise. Beneath the appearances of things, she could sense the ongoing struggle between life and death, and looked to Christ and the Church for a remedy. She was saddened by and impatient with those self-righteous Catholics who practiced a shallow, surface version of their faith and who criticized the Church because of the flaws of its members without taking into account the internal movement of the Spirit. She took Jesus' words in Luke's gospel to heart, "I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners" (Lk 5:32).[2]

O'Connor believed that the Church, with all its flaws and imperfections, was the Body of Christ and that Christ loved the Church as he loved his own self. Whether good or bad, those who accepted the Church's teachings were members of Christ's body and had recourse to the sacraments in their struggle to break evil's hold on them and walk the way of holiness. Rather than judging others, the Catholic faithful should put aside any tendencies they might have toward self-righteousness and become more conscious of their own sinful tendencies. In the words of Christ, "You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then will you see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye (Mt 7:5)." Rather than being smug and self-satisfied, she believed all Catholics should come out of their stupor of complacency and strive to lead holy lives and walk the way of virtue.

Much of O'Connor's fiction has to do with those who give lip service

to faith, but do not believe it deep down inside. The character of Mrs. May in the short story, *Greenleaf*, fits this description, "She was a good Christian woman with a large respect for religion," O'Connor writes, "though she did not, of course, believe any of it was true."[3] Such people attach themselves to the externals of the faith, but have failed to penetrate its deep inner meaning. Much of her fiction also focuses on those who have turned the practice of religion to an empty, yet lucrative, cultural artifact. The character of Hoover Shoats, who in her novel, *Wise Blood*, changes his name to Onnie Jay Holy and grows rich in his ministry at the, "Holy Church of Christ Without Christ," is one such example.[4] These are just two examples in O'Connor's fiction of how she presents Christianity as having been compromised by the secular outlook of the modern world.

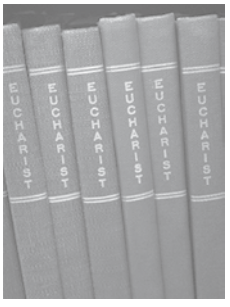
For O'Connor, the Eucharist was more than a mere symbol. If it was only a symbol, then it had no meaning for her.

The spiritual poverty of the characters in O'Connor's fiction is a symptom of a world that has abandoned Christ and, as a result, become ugly, even grotesque. Writing in her southern gothic style, O'Connor depicts a world that has rejected the redemption offered it by Christ. In her writing, she seeks to heighten the reader's sensitivity to the need for redemption. Evil flourishes in a world without Christ. Catholicism, she believed, was the only remedy to the world's descent into evil. The Eucharist, for her, was central to the world's redemption.[5]

O'Connor's Teaching on the Eucharist

O'Connor's deep love for the Eucharist comes through in her fiction and especially in her letters. In one letter, she recounts an incident at a party hosted by the novelist Mary McCarthy, an ex-Catholic and now nonbeliever, who said that she had once thought of the Eucharist as the Holy Ghost, but now thinks of it as merely a very good symbol. To which O'Connor replied, "'Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it.' That was all the defense I was capable of but I realize now that this is all I will ever be able to say about it, outside of a story, except that it is the center of existence for me; all the rest of life is expendable."[6]

For O'Connor, the Eucharist was more than a mere symbol. She was a sacramental realist, who believed that the sacrifice of the Mass made the bloody event of Calvary present in an unbloody way, that



the consecrated bread and wine contained the Real Presence of Jesus' resurrected body and blood, and that the entire celebration was a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. The Eucharist was the center of existence, because it brought the sacrificial offering and love of Jesus, the Redeemer, into our midst. All else was insignificant and paled in comparison. If it was only a symbol, then it had no meaning for her. She was wary of those who sought to rationalize this great mystery of the Catholic faith by reducing it to facile ideas and neat human concepts. Her heart would resonate with the Second Vatican Council's depiction of the Eucharist as, "the source and summit of the Christian life."[7]

Of all her short stories, O'Connor's "A Temple of the Holy of the Holy Ghost" contains the most clearly evident Catholic themes and has much to say about the Eucharist. Told through the eyes of a twelve year old girl from a devout Catholic family, the story relates the child's time with two fourteen year old cousins, Susan and Joanne, who ridicule the advice given them by a nun at their convent school, Mount St. Scholastica, that the best way to handle boys who wish to have their way with them is simply to shout out, "Stop sir! I am a temple of the Holy Ghost!"[8]

During their visit, it is arranged that Wendell and Cory Wilkens, two sixteen-year-old farm boys from the Church of God, will take the two girls to the local fair. When they first meet, the boys and girls look each other over from a distance and start singing of religious songs back and forth. The boys, who according to the twelve year old, "were both going to be Church of God preachers because you don't have to know nothing to be one," start out with, "I've Found a Friend in Jesus" and then, "The Old Rugged Cross."[9] The girls giggle and respond by singing the Latin, "Tantum Ergo."[10] Not understanding what the girls were singing, Wendell responds, "That must be Jew singing."[11] The girls giggle at him, but the twelve year old, who was eavesdropping, standing on a barrel hidden in some bushes on the side of the house, stamps her foot on the barrel and says, "You big dumb ox! . . . You big dumb Church of God ox!"[12] The scene depicts the prejudices of the characters. The "Tantum Ergo," written by Thomas Aquinas who in his youth was sometimes likened to a dumb ox, is one of the hymns used during Benediction and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and underscores the Catholic belief in the Real Presence, one of the main differences between Protestant and Catholic teaching. The scene also depicts how some believers possess a very shallow understanding of the faith, while others a much more profound, childlike trust in God. The words of Jesus come to mind, "Amen, I say to

you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it. (Mk 10:15)"

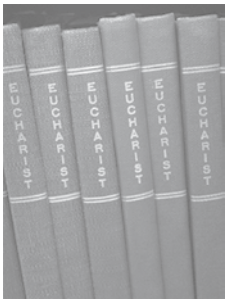
The older girls return at about a quarter to twelve. Their giggling wakes the twelve year old, who gets them to tell her about the hermaphrodite they had encountered at the fair that night and how this half man/half woman kept telling the audience, "This is the way He wanted me to be and I ain't disputing His way," and later, "I am a temple of the Holy Ghost."[13] As it turns out, the police at the instigation of some local Protestant preachers shut down the fair. That night, while lying in bed, the child thanks God that she does not belong to a Church of the self-righteous, but of sinners. She knows she is a sinner, and that she will never be a saint (although maybe a martyr if they killed her quickly).[14]

The Eucharist, for O'Connor, is the center of existence and is the source of the Church's healing, transforming power.

The next day, the girls are brought back to Mount Saint Scholastica in their brown uniforms. The child and her mother come with them and are asked to stay for Benediction by one of the nuns. The child was not happy about this at first, but realizing that she is in the presence of God, her prayer begins: "Hep me not to be so mean, she began mechanically. Hep me not to give her so much sass. Hep me not to talk like I do. Her mind began to get quiet and then empty but when the priest raised the monstrance with the Host shining ivory-colored in the center of it, she was thinking of the tent at the fair that had the freak in it. The freak was saying, "I don't dispute hit. This is the way He wanted me to be."[15] The story ends with some beautiful Eucharistic imagery, "Her mother let the conversation drop and the child's round face was lost in thought. She turned it toward the window and looked out over a stretch of pasture land that rose and fell with a gathering greenness until it touched the dark woods. The sun was a huge red ball like an elevated Host drenched in blood and when it sank out of sight, it left a line in the sky like a red clay road hanging over the trees."[16]

Some Observations

Although the above summary of O'Connor's views on the Eucharist does not do justice to the richness of her appreciation of the sacrament,



it provides a solid backdrop against which the following observations come to light.

1. To begin with, O'Connor was keenly aware that the Catholic faith in the Real Presence could be compromised by worldly attitudes influencing the Catholic faithful. The ridicule that Susan and Joanne have for the nun's advice to ward off the sexual advances of men by saying that they are temples of the Holy Spirit represents an adolescent scorn for the faith that could easily overflow into other areas. At the same time, she was also conscious of the impact devotional Catholic practices such as Benediction could have on young children. One wonders if the twelve year old will eventually become like Susan and Joanne, or if Susan and Joanne will eventually come to a deeper understanding of their faith.

2. For O'Connor, the Catholic Church was meant to be a home for sinners who looked to its sacraments as a source of healing. It was a home for the child and her mother, the nuns at Mount Saint Scholastica, and even students like Susan and Joanne. At the end of the story, the Eucharistic imagery present in the setting sun as it dips below the horizon brings a more universal dimension to the sacrament. The Eucharist can be viewed as the sacrament of the new creation. It is home not to the self-righteous, but to the broken people of the world, to the hermaphrodite in the circus tent and to the struggles deep down inside each of us. One wonders if O'Connor viewed herself in this way with regard to her lupus: "This is the way He wanted me to be and I ain't disputing His way."[17]

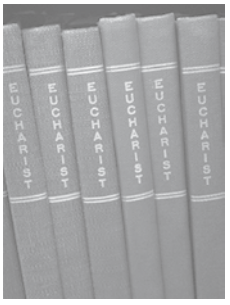
3. O'Connor would be very much at home with Pope Francis' description of the Church as a field hospital.[18] It is a very big tent with all kinds of people in it, each of whom has sores to be cleansed and wounds in need of healing. The Eucharist, for her, is the center of existence and is the source of the Church's healing, transforming power. It is, we might say, the "medicine of immortality."[19] These words of Ignatius of Antioch would resonate deep within her soul. The Blessed Sacrament, she understands, is more than a mere symbol, since it brings the believer into the presence of God. By partaking of the Eucharist, the believers receive the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, who suffered and died for the sins of humanity and who rose again on the third day. As a result, each person becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. The ridicule of Susan and Joanne does not displace the affirmation of the hermaphrodite. By virtue of our sinfulness, we are all in need of healing in the eyes of

God. God alone can heal us. In the Eucharist, God meets us where we are and slowly draws us close.

4. O'Connor understood the need for Catholics to push back against the world's secularizing tendencies and its negative impact on the Catholic faithful. Her terse response to Mary McCarthy ("Well, if it's a symbol, to hell with it.") demonstrates her willingness to voice her objections to the rationalizing tendencies of the modern world. Raised in an environment that was hostile to Catholicism, she recognized the importance of probing one's faith more deeply and defending it when it came under attack, was ridiculed, or simply discounted. She wanted to preserve the mystery of the faith and preserve it from those eternal, reductive, and rationalizing tendencies that have attacked it for centuries and continued to do so in her day. She knew that the meaning of the Church and its greatest treasure, the Eucharist, lies beyond the powers of human comprehension and could never be fully explained. The Eucharist, like the Church, is the Body of Christ and will always remain a mystery.

By immersing us in the world of the unredeemed, O'Connor's fiction kindles in us a hope for a better world, the one originally envisioned by Christ, not the one that has been distorted so often by his would-be followers. When seen in this light, the Eucharist is a concrete sign that God has not abandoned this world.

5. Like the child in, "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," O'Connor thought that belief in the Eucharist must be simple, devout, and childlike. It asks us to put aside all ridicule and skepticism and to rid ourselves of our tendencies toward self-righteousness that trap us in ourselves and prevent us from growing in our spiritual lives. As Catholics, we must recognize that the Eucharist, not the fallen and wounded self, lies at the center of the moral universe. The sacrament bids us to come out of ourselves and place Christ at the center of our lives. To be a temple of the Holy Ghost means that a person is a child of God, someone who calls God, "*Abba*, Father!" (Rom 8:15), who accepts the mystery of the Eucharist with childlike faith, and who, despite ones flaws and weaknesses, understands that, in the end, faith, hope, and love are the only things of enduring value and that all else is secondary.



6. The Eucharist, for O'Connor, is also a sacrament of hope. In "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," the child prays from her heart, asking God to help her become a better person. She knows she is not a saint, turns to God for assistance, yet also recognizes that God loves her just as she is. The words of the hermaphrodite resonate inside her, "I don't dispute it. This is the way He wanted me to be."[20] The desire to be a better person, to become holy, is a mainstay of Catholic spirituality. This aspect of faith, however, does not discount the truth that God loves us just as we are. We seek to become holy, not because God will love us more, but because we wish to become more and more Christ-like. This element of hope comes through in the story's ending with the sun, "a huge red ball like an elevated Host drenched in blood" sinks over the gathering greenness and the dark woods, leaving a red line in the sky hovering over the trees.[21] The Eucharist puts us in touch with the passion and death of Christ. The sun sinks over the western sky only to rise the next day to help us begin life anew.

7. Finally, much of O'Connor's fiction depicts a grotesque world that has rejected God's love and wallows in the aftermath of the evil that has been unleashed from the human heart. This unredeemed world, dark and dreary as it is, forces us to delve beneath the surface of life and to focus on things that really matter. In doing so, we become aware of our own hardness of heart and seek a remedy for the pain and suffering in which we are immersed. O'Connor's fiction shakes us to the core and prepares our hearts to hear the Gospel message as if for the first time. By immersing us in the world of the unredeemed, it kindles in us a hope for a better world, the one originally envisioned by Christ, not the one that has been distorted so often by his would-be followers. When seen in this light, the Eucharist is a concrete sign that God has not abandoned this world. Much more than a symbol, it is the center of existence and promises to transform even the grotesque world of O'Connor's fiction in God's own good time.

Conclusion

Flannery O'Connor was an eccentric woman from the Deep South and with an even deeper Southern drawl. She had a natural talent for the craft of writing and in her short life developed that talent into making her one of the most prominent literary American voices of her day. Among Catholics, she is revered as a standard bearer for the quality and depth that Catholic authors should aspire. Her fiction and correspondence show her to be a woman of deep faith who firmly

believed that what appeared to be irredeemable was not outside the reach of the purview of God's plan of redemption.

O'Connor's fiction is in the style of Southern gothic. She paints an irrational world peopled with grotesque characters, who act on impulse and are alienated from themselves, others, and the light of divine grace. In the midst of this darkness, there is little hope for those who hold merely to the external trappings of the Christian faith. In the face of such darkness, the evil forces that have been unleashed in the world by the unruly passions of the human heart easily swallow up such people. The dark humor of it all is that such people often come to their senses when it is too late, when the unfolding tragedy has already taken its toll.

O'Connor's writing bids her readers to delve beneath their half-hearted convictions and go to the heart of things, to the quiet beneath the chaos, to the gentle being beneath the growing turmoil. Her spiritual outlook was shaped by her devout Catholic upbringing and the awareness of the need to push back against the moral bankruptcy of her day and the secularizing tendencies of the modern word. She had little time for the subtle (and not so subtle) sarcasm that nonbelievers hurled against her faith and even less time for those self-righteous who judged others while being unaware of their vapid moral smugness. She believed that the Catholic Church was the Body of Christ made up of a wide assortment of personalities, all of whom were spiritual pilgrims journeying through a fallen world with the Eucharist for their food and sustenance.

Notes

[1] All biographical references in this section and the following one come from "Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)" in *New Georgia Encyclopedia*, https://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/ articles/arts-culture/flannery-oconnor-1925-1964.

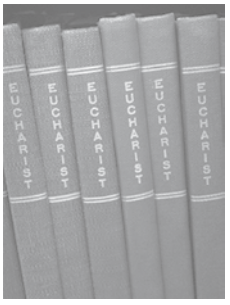
[2] All Scripture quotations come from *The Catholic Study Bible New American Bible Revised Edition*, 2ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[3] Flannery O'Connor, "Greenleaf," in *Flannery O'Connor: The Complete Stories (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux*, 1979), 316.

[4] Flannery O'Connor, *Wise Blood* in *3 by Flannery O'Connor* (New York: Signet, 1962), 82-89.

[5] For more on O'Connor's spiritual outlook, see George N. Niederauer, "Flannery O'Connor's Religious Vision," *America* (December 24, 2007), https://www.americamagazine. org/issue/639/article/flannery-oconnors-religious-vision.

[6] Sally Fitzgerald, ed., *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor* (New York:



Vintage Books, 1979), 124-25.

[7] Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* ("The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church"), no. 11 in Austin Flannery, gen. ed *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents* (Northport, NY: Costello, 1981), 362.

[8] Flannery O'Connor, "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," in *Flannery O'Connor: The Complete Stories*, 238.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 240-41.

[11] Ibid., 241

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 245-46.

[14] Ibid., 243.

[15] Ibid., 248.

[16] Ibid. For more on O'Connor's understanding of the Eucharist, see Stephen Sparrow, "This is My Body: The Mystery of the Incarnate God in Flannery O'Connor's Short Story 'A Temple of The Holy Ghost,'"(February, 2006), http://www.flanneryoconnor.org/ssmybody.html.

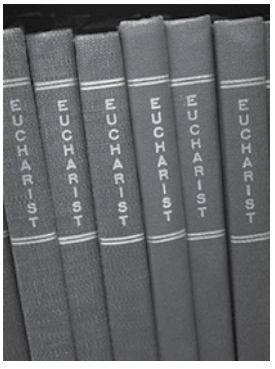
[17] Ibid., 245.

[18] Antonio Spadaro, "A Big Heart Open to God: An Interview with Pope Francis, *America* (September 30, 2013), https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2013/09/30/big-heart-open-god-interview-pope-francis.

[19] Ignatius of Antioch, "Letter to the Ephesians," 20.2 in *Early Christian Fathers*, Cyril C. Richardson, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 93.

[20] Flannery O'Connor, "A Temple of the Holy Ghost," 248.

[22] Ibid.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Frequent Communion: Reward or Spiritual Need?

The Continuing Relevance of the Eucharistic Teachings of Pius IX and Pius X

by Ernest Falardeau, SSS

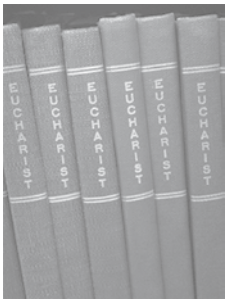
Who were the voices promoting frequent communion during the First Vatican Council and ensuing years? Who are those voices today?

Blessed Sacrament Father Ernest Falardeau has dedicated his life and ministry to the promotion of Christian unity. He served for many years as the Ecumenical Officer of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico and has written extensively on the topics of ecumenism and Eucharist.

Introduction

Pius IX (1846-1878) and Pius X (1903-1914) have much in common and differ in many ways as well. Pius IX lived in a time of transition. New philosophies were affecting dramatic changes in the world and in the Catholic Church. John W. O'Malley, SJ has described these changes in his outstanding history of *Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane Church.*[1] Beginning with the Enlightenment of the seventeenth century and the tragic changes wrought by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic era with the humiliation of Pope Pius VII followed by the creation of national states, moved the whole world into a new reality. Pope Pius IX asked the cardinals of the Roman Curia whether an ecumenical council was needed in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Their answer was yes. It was necessary and the only power (an absolute power) that could prevent the chaos that was threatening. Pius IX called the council together, but the soldiers of Garibaldi pierced through the wall of Porta Pia on the Via Nomentana ending both the Papal States and the council, and began a new era for Europe and the world.

Pius IX was *"A Pope who would be King."*[2] He was a prince of the Church and state. In 1854 he declared that the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary to be dogma of the Catholic Church and must be affirmed by all Roman Catholics. He approved the *Syllabus of Errors,* much debated by many theologians of the time and questioned by the *Resourcement* of the Second Vatican Council. The Ultramontane delegates of the First Vatican Council believed that only the absolute authority of the pontificate was strong enough to dam the murky waters of the Enlightenment and the political forces working at that time.



Pius X came from another world. He was from Riese, a small town in northern Italy, from parents who were peasants and farmers. He was a pastor. He was interested in the sanctity of Christians, not their political interests. Like Pius IX he was a strong opponent to Modernists and Relativists, as well as Jansenists. He published a Roman Catechism as well as encyclicals on Church music (especially on Gregorian Chant and polyphony) and reformed Canon Law, making the way for the first Code of Canon Law in 1917.

Of particular interest concerning the Eucharist are two decrees published by Pius X on Frequent Communion (1905) and on the First Communion of Children (1910), which Pius X approved and was prepared by the Pontifical Council on Sacraments. These two documents address the problem of indifferentism of the laity on the use of the Eucharist, and the many obstacles placed to prevent the early reception of the First Communion of children and their frequent reception of the Eucharist. The latter position was held by the Jansenists before and after the pontificates of Pius IX and Pius X.

Also significant during this time is the contribution of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament and the theologian and Superior General, Very Rev. Eugene Couet, SSS.[3] This contribution is lesser known, even by many of the members of the Congregation. Nevertheless, it is a contribution that is still significant today.

Sacrosancta Tridentina Synodus **(On Frequent and Daily Reception of Holy Communion) (1905)**[4]

Sacraosancta Tridentina Synodus promotes and defends "frequent and even daily reception of the Eucharist," and refers to the Holy Tridentine Council that affirmed the scriptural, canonical and liturgical foundations of this proclamation as clearly in the words of institution of the Eucharist and the tradition of the fathers of the Church and liturgical practice since the beginning of the Church. Pius X approved the document of the Pontifical Commission on Sacraments.

Pius X shared Pius IX's views on the Eucharist. He was clearly opposed to the obstacles placed by Jansenists and others who would limit the Eucharist to infrequent and determined times, out of reverence for receiving the Eucharist. The decree simply requires that one receive Communion to please God, draw closer to God by charity, and receive the divine remedy for weakness and defects. They affirmed that

the Eucharist was not a reward, but a need for spiritual growth and defense against daily sins and mortal sins.

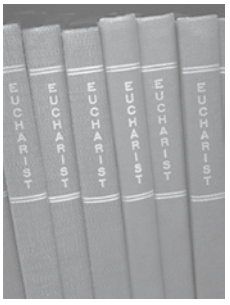
Pius X shared Pius IX's views on the Eucharist. He was clearly opposed to the obstacles placed by Jansenists and others who would limit the Eucharist to infrequent and determined times, out of reverence for receiving the Eucharist.

Both Pius IX and Pius X opposed the Jansenists who required dispositions which one must have to receive frequent and daily Communion. *Sacra Tridentina Synodus* describes Jansenism as "a widespread plague" and their writers, who vied with each other in demanding more and more stringent conditions to be fulfilled for frequent communion. The decree condemned the idea that merchants and married persons should be denied frequent communion.

Quam Singulari **(Children's First Communion) (1910)**[5]

In 1910 Pope Pius X approved a second document of the same Pontifical Commission admitting children to First Holy Communion and frequent communion when they are able to distinguish the difference between Holy Communion and ordinary bread. "Let the children come to me" (Mk 10:14) is cited from scripture and the tradition of the early Church to permit infants to receive the Eucharist with Baptism and frequently. The Council of Lateran IV (1215) reminds the Church that children who have the age and use of reason (usually around 7 years of age) were obligated to observe annual confession and communion. The practice "died out" in the Latin Church after Lateran IV. The Council of Trent returned to the earlier tradition. "All Christians of both sexes are bound when they have discretion to receive every year at least at Easter."[6]

Quam Singulari made an important point, stating that it was wrong to separate what was required for Penance and Eucharist. Jansenists and others said it was sufficient to know right from wrong for Penance, but a greater age and a fuller knowledge of matters of faith and better preparation of the soul was required for the Eucharist. Some required that the children should have 10, 12, 14 or more years to be admitted to First Communion. The Decree reaffirmed the Lateran IV and referenced the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas and Pius IX's letter



to Cardinal Antonelli to the Bishops of France "severely condemning the growing custom existing in some dioceses postponing the First Communion of children."

The age of discretion for confession and Eucharist are the same. A full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine is not required for First Communion – Christian doctrine is to be learned gradually. The decree also condemned not admitting children to Viaticum and Extreme Unction and burying children with the rite for infants as "an intolerable abuse."

The Controversy

Pius IX and Pius X had similar problems at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. On the one hand there was modernism and on the other Jansenism. Pius X approved the two documents described above, pastoral documents about frequent communion and the First Communion of children. He also defended the Church against modernism. Both popes have been canonized in modern times. John W. O'Malley SJ, who has written splendidly about the world of Vatican I, Vatican II, and the Council of Trent, believes that the influence of these councils endures in our time.

How do we keep a balance between a world that is increasingly secular and materialistic, scientific and faithful, working for social justice and spiritual growth? The theologians of our time and the past are trying to understand a new game and how to play it, in a world that changes rapidly and profoundly. Pius IX urged restraint, accuracy and respect for the tradition of the past. Pius X urged correct interpretation of sacraments and reverence, as well as spiritual need for children and the laity.

Very Rev Eugene Couet, SSS[7]

Father Eugene Couet, SSS entered into the controversy with a doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and a preparation by St. Peter Julian Eymard, founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. He was born in the diocese of Angers in France in 1858. He received a bachelor's degree, and when he was 20 years old, he entered the novitiate at St Maurice, taking the religious garb on Christmas day, 1878. Two years later he was in Brussels because of the expulsion decrees in France, where he pronounced his first vows. He

was ordained in Rome in 1884 and obtained his doctorate in theology the following year.

Fr. Couet was elected Superior General of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in June 1913 after Fr. Louis Estevenon, SSS died in December 1912. He was the director of the *Annales du Tres Saint Sacrement,* as well as Assistant General of the Congregation. He was the first director of the Priests' Eucharistic League. It was in this capacity that he attended the International Eucharistic Congress in Rome and met with many ecclesiastics. He published in a series of articles by a Spanish Mercedarian, Fr. O. Coppin of St. Servais in Namur, entitled *La Sainte Communion ou Pain Quotidien* (Holy Communion or Daily Bread). Abbé Chatel in Brussels criticized this new translation and got a response from Father Lintello, SJ who retorted that he was pleased to be identified with Fr. Eugene Couet whom he lauded for his splendid work and "*who was virtually alone in defending the teaching of the Church*"[8] on the issue. Thus it is all the more impressive that Pope Pius X's decree of 1905 vindicated the Church's teaching about frequent communion that had grown cold after the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 but was reasserted in the Council of Trent, hence the name of the decree of 1905, and the end of the controversy about frequent communion.

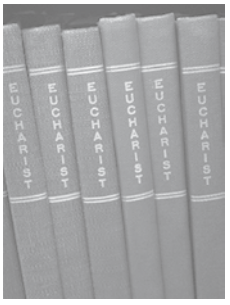
A full and perfect knowledge of Christian doctrine is not required for First Communion – Christian doctrine is to be learned gradually.

Conclusion

John W. O'Malley's scholarly treatise on Vatican I indicates that Ultramontane is a phenomenon that continues to influence issues in our time. There is ever a need to study the history of the Church and it's teaching. Sometimes the light of scripture and the Holy Spirit is diminished by the preoccupations of the times. Reading the signs of the times in the light of scripture and tradition is always needed and available.

Notes

[1] John W. O'Malley SJ. Vatican I: The Council and the Making of the Ultramontane



Church. Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018.

[2] David I. Kertzer. *The Pope Who Would Be King: The Exile of Pius IX and the Emergence of Modern Europe*. New York: Random House, 2018, xxx, .474p

[3] Norman B. Pelletier, SSS. *In God's Time: A Brief History of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament after the Death of Saint Peter Julian Eymard (1868-2018).* Cleveland, OH: Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 2018. especially chapter 8. A Long Stretch, p. 139-147 devoted to Fr. E. Couet.

[4] Pius X, Pope. Sancta Tridentina Synodus (1905) On Frequent and Daily Reception of Holy Communion. Issued and approved by Pope Pius X on December 20, 1905. www.ewtn.com/libary/CURIA/CDWFREQ.HTM.

[5] Pius X, Pope. *Quam Singulari (1910)*. Decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of Sacraments on First Communion (1910] www.papalencyclicas.net/pius 10/p10quam.htm.

[6] Lateran IV (1215) chapter 21 (*on obligation to receive Penance and Eucharist at least at Easter)* Denzinger-Schonmetzer #812.

[7] Norman B. Pelletier. *In God's Time.* Chapter 8. A Long Stretch, p. 139-147.

[8] Norman B. Pelletier. *In God's Time.* P. 142

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 A, B, C, D, and E are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during January and February.

EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Built of Living Stones at 20

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

What does the Church teach us about designing liturgical spaces?

Take a moment to think of a beautiful building that moves you, or that holds a special place in your life. Was it a family home, worship space, art museum, library, or a performing arts center? Certain places touch our spirit deeply and remind us what our lives are for.

Many Catholic Christians recognize the sacred space that is their parish church, or marvel at ancient cathedrals and basilicas built throughout the world to the glory and grandeur of God. As a pilgrim people, we also encounter magnificent architectural achievements of different religious communities throughout history. Certain holy sites remind us that heaven and earth commune in certain times and places.

This happens in your own parish church, at the altar. We celebrate the most important "communion" of our lives in this space: Eucharist. The People of God are formed by this architectural space and the eucharistic liturgy. In the church building the community gathers together, experiences nourishment and renewal, and then is sent forth from that space to proclaim the gospel, and live eucharistic lives.

Twenty years ago, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), compiled a new set of guidelines and laws for the Church of the United States of America concerning liturgical art and architecture. This new document *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* (BLS) gathered together the rich tradition of the Church's process of designing new worship spaces in order to aide parish communities in one of the most beautiful, significant and formative experiences in the life of a local church.

BLS sought to assist the challenging process of building a new church, renovating an existing one, or make changes to a sacred space. BLS

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane, SSS holds degrees in music, education and liturgy. He currently serves as pastor of his home parish, Saint Paschal Baylon Roman Catholic Church, Highland Heights, Ohio but has also been a pastor in Houston, Albuquerque, vocation minister, and diocesan director of liturgy. For questions, other resources or workshops he could do for your parish, contact him at jtlanesss@gmail.com or (440) 442-3410.

gathered the resources of liturgical documents since the Second Vatican Council (i.e. the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, pertinent codes in the *Code of Canon Law*, the *General Instructions of the Roman Missal*) and previous guidelines (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*) to codify a process for the Church of the USA. Twenty years later, BLS holds up well through the test of time and is truly a thorough, well thought out document that leaves "no stone" left unturned. Quite comprehensive, BLS continues to help communities see the importance of every aspect of liturgical space, liturgical rite (e.g. Eucharist, Liturgy of the Hours, weddings, ordinations, funerals or typical Sunday masses) and liturgical season (e.g. the Triduum, Christmas and parish's holy days to name a few).

Built of Living Stones anniversary year gives us the opportunity to pause and truly appreciate our sacred spaces and liturgies. It gives us the opportunity to observe anew the importance of the unique aspects within our church buildings that, like stones of faith and lives of hope, work together to provide amazing dwelling places.

BLS's anniversary year gives us the opportunity to pause and truly appreciate our sacred spaces and liturgies. It gives us the opportunity to observe anew the importance of the unique aspects within our church buildings that, like stones of faith and lives of hope, work together to provide amazing dwelling places. Through the course of this anniversary year *Emmanuel* will offer articles that explore how sacred spaces continue to shape the many different facets of our lives. BLS's envisions how we best build a place for God and ourselves to dwell in time, to give communal praise and worship to God, to pause for personal prayer and meditation, and to be reminded that we are the Body of Christ. This important work continues today. The houses of God on earth are built to renew us for mission – may they continue to inspire and witness to a living faith.

EUCHARISTIC LITURGY

Church Buildings and the Disciplining of the Mind: Bringing an Un-Churched Generation into Sacred Spaces

by Michael DeSanctis

With beautiful historic church buildings crumbling, and Catholic demographics shifting, how do we share the rich heritage of sacred architecture with an un-churched generation?

Several years ago, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) launched its ingenious "I Look Up" campaign, an attempt to raise public literacy about the art of building by encouraging people of all stripes to lift their gaze from hand-held electronic devices to the architectural environments that surround them. The program has proven especially popular with young people throughout the country enrolled in schools of art, digital media, filmmaking and the like, who've used social media to distribute both still and moving images of architectural structures of interest to them. Though photographs, video and film, as two-dimensional media, can never completely capture the all-important spatial quality of a building, they do at least record for posterity something of its site, size, shape and significance. In fact, as I discovered early in my teaching career through assignments of my own designed to foster appreciation of architecture on the part of students in both my fines arts and theology courses, consigning a building to film or any digital medium turns out to be a valuable way of disciplining both the eye and the mind. Composing a photograph is a kind of "Occam's Razor" affair requiring its user to make a series of evaluative decisions that determine what will and will not appear in the final image. Producing a digital trace of something as large as an edifice involves an act of evaluation requiring the eye and mind to pare away for the sake of expression what is of least consequence to the subject at hand, that is, to take a stab at a kind of poetry composed of the fewest words. Beyond this, when students enrolled, say, in one of my Theology of Worship courses were once asked to photograph or film a local example of sacred architecture, they could not only "look up" in the manner of the AIA campaign but were required to peer deeply *inward* to determine whether the structures Christians

Michael E. DeSanctis, Ph.D., is a retired professor of fine arts and theology at Gannon University, Erie, Pennsylvania. He writes widely on the subject of sacred architecture and is the author of *Building from Belief: Advance, Retreat and Compromise in the Remaking of Catholic Church Architecture* (The Liturgical Press, 2002) and *Renewing the City of God: The Reform of Catholic Church Architecture in the United States* (Liturgy Training Publications, 1993).

regard as sacred have any effect on their souls. More important to me than having them capture the surface appearance of one or another church building was that they absorb its deeper and subtler qualities, those they could only be experience by actually walking through its spaces, touching its walls, taking in the quality of its light, its aromas, and the affective power of its acoustics. This was especially true with regards to buildings erected by Christian communities whose mode of worship was to any degree "sacramental." Inviting students to enter a Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopalian or Orthodox Church building, for example wasn't solely to have them ruminate with their minds on the fundamental "sacramentality" of what opens before them. Instead, they had to enlist their senses in hopes of determining firsthand how such metaphysical realities as grace, divine mercy, sanctification and the communion with Christ might be embodied in the physicality of stone and wood, metal and glass, light and sound. For them, I hoped, theologizing in response to an architectural environment would be a bodily affair.

Entering a Sacred Space

For my purposes, then, a church building was a much better setting in which to engage the theological imaginations of undergraduate students than any classroom on campus. It engaged them in a way that even the flashiest of today's instructional technologies couldn't, limited as the latter were to the effects of sight and sound and to a flatness no different from the effect of TV-watching. The olfactory experience alone that awaited them in churches of any age, stemming from the accumulated scents of beeswax, incense, wood varnish, plaster dust and other materials discovered there, had a way of triggering deep-seated memories and responses useful to speculating on the intentions of a God who, in assuming human flesh, would have smelled the great breadth of fragrances, smells and aromas the world has to offer just as they were able to.

A church building stands not only as an artistic response to the mystery of the Incarnation but *mimics* it through its very materiality. Christian creeds and concepts harden into construction materials. Divinity discloses itself through common skin and bone. Most of my students, I hoped, got the point.

In a more basic way, of course, I knew that the art of building would appeal to my students' fondness for practicality; they fully appreciated

that architecture — put to a religious purpose or some other — exists at a basic level to shelter, warm and protect its users. The numerous Christian churches I would lead my classes through in the course of a semester likewise offered them relief from discussions heavy on theological speculation some considered too ethereal to comprehend. They were happy when abstractions gave way to the concreteness of place—or maybe just when they could leave our campus behind for an hour spent in buildings so vastly different from the ones they'd ordinarily inhabit. Except to participate in the occasional wedding or funeral, after all, many had little reason for entering a Christian place of worship. The Christian sanctuary had become unfamiliar territory to them, its beauty and grandeur qualities they admitted to finding as intimidating as they were inspiring. In most cases, there was the hierarchically arranged and compartmentalized layout of the place, not to mention the air of solemnity that lingered about it that made them feel a little like trespassers into realm for which they were somehow unfit. They recognized in an instant that the prevailing *in*formality of their own culture, its looseness with words, gestures and appearances, would not work there, despite the best efforts of the resident clergy and others who greeted them at such sites to make them feel, "completely at home." Men in my classes registered surprise, for example, when instructed to remove their hats upon entering any of the buildings included in our church tours. Keyboards of pianos and organs, I discovered, were magnets to the hands of undergraduate church-tourists, along with candle stands, episcopal crosiers, devotional statues and anything connected with open flame or water. They were forever touching sacred things out of natural curiosity, precisely *because* they perceived them as off-limits.

… a church building is a much better setting in which to engage the theological imaginations of undergraduate students than any classroom on campus. It engages them in a way that even the flashiest of today's instructional technologies can't…

My own comportment as chief tour guide likely confused them, in part because of the relaxed style and straightforwardness with which I'd treat the sights and sounds that ensconced us. Never one to confuse sanctimony or the excesses of pietism for honest piety, I hoped to come off less like a museum guard concerned with the safekeeping of rarified artifacts than like a simple, Catholic educator willing to entrust the

splendor of God's house to the basic goodness of people, God's people — which is, of course, *all* people. What a great opportunity it was for me to evangelize *and* teach at the same time, when I'd invite non-Christian students or any number of self-described, "Nones" to gather respectfully with the rest of their classmates around a Catholic altar, ambo, baptismal font or tabernacle, unafraid that some overzealous sacristan or parish office staffer would hasten them away from these appointments. In my mind, the God to whom every Christian church building is dedicated acknowledged and welcomed their presence in God's dwelling place with open arms. All of heaven smiles, I imagined, on the rag-tag teams of would-be theologians I so enjoyed ushering into places of worship and revealed itself to them in ways far beyond anything I could have anticipated through the most detailed lesson plan. It was their *un*scripted encounters with the specialness of Christian churches, in fact, that students on end-of-the-semester course evaluations described as so "eye-opening." At least one noted somewhat humorously, "The best part of theology was the architecture." Another claimed to have left a course of mine with the impression that "God loves Gothic" — though I'd hoped that by exposing his class to the whole range of church architecture, including examples of the most modern and "mega" of church facilities in the vicinity of our campus, I'd convinced him that God appears to show little preference for style when inspiring followers to build on God's behalf.

I have no qualms with such sentiments and believe that just as the fabricators of buildings commonly speak today of the, "embodied energy" represented by a truck-load of brick, a wall frame of two-by-fours or a length of steel, so the serious student of Christian thought can talk of the *theological* content to be found in architectural materials and nod their heads in recognition of what it's meant for observers of the medieval scene to describe the era's great cathedrals as *bibliae pauperum*—"bibles for the [illiterate] poor." A Christian church building is a book that can be read like any other, a *great* book in some circumstances, as in the case of Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris or the Duomo in Florence that belong in its own way to the canon of so-called "Great Books" Western educators still consider essential to liberal learning. The student of Christian theology or sacred scripture *should* rightly see it as a monumental and permanent-seeming surrogate for the "Good Book," too, the bible itself, whose lessons have been depicted by glazers and painters for centuries on the ascending mural levels of structures we persist in calling "stories" (ME. "storeys" — L. *hi**stori**ae*). A church building is not an object or expressive *thing,*

like a work of sculpture, so much as sacred *locus*, an admittedly tiny but delimited sliver of the all-enveloping Ground of Being in which we find ourselves by the graciousness of God. Certainly for Catholics, who conceive of the tabernacles in their churches as places of safekeeping for the Christ who manifests in sacrament, the sacred setting is literally a *house* of God, a dwelling place, too, for God's "ecclesial presence," and not a colossal stand-post or totem intended merely to coax God from heaven the way, in popular mythology, a lightning rod attracts electricity from the sky.

A Student Pilgrimage

It's not overstatement, then, to suggest that the church tours to which I devoted roughly a quarter of my theology course were more like mini pilgrimages tailored to the needs of my students and they required a map for it to be most profitable. In my case, the guiding tool was a rather lengthy workbook I'd assembled over time that systematized students' analyses of buildings. In fact, the document consisted of several dozen questions they could only answer by embarking on "an ecclesiastical scavenger hunt" that took them through the entirety of a sacred setting and its surroundings. "Does the church building exhibit a discernable threshold; can you tell where the sacred space begins and ends?" read one of the workbook's questions, appropriating concepts with which any designer of sacred spaces or liturgist today would be familiar. "Does it have any clearly defined pathways through which users might process?" asked another, and "Does it offer spatial provision for singers or other musicians?" yet another.

The Christian sanctuary has become unfamiliar territory to college students, it's beauty and grandeur qualities they admit to finding as intimidating as they are inspiring.

Over the years, of course, the church communities who'd so generously opened the doors of their sanctuaries to us had gotten into the act and retained copies of my teaching materials for their own files. The tours had become opportunities for ecumenical collaboration and the expression of goodwill between the Catholic university I represented and the business offices of churches from a variety of denominations. Often their pastoral staffs were eager not only to receive my students at the doors of their facilities but to spend considerable time explaining both the strengths and the shortcomings of their sanctuaries in light

of the increased diversity of liturgical preferences each was detecting within their congregations.

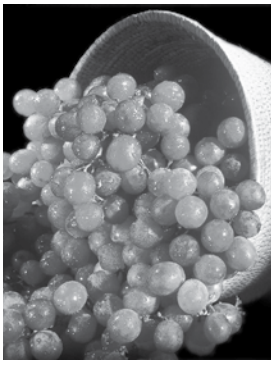
The urban location of my university's campus proved to be a tremendous asset to the work, ringed as it was by historic churches of all kinds and only steps away from the respective cathedral buildings for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Erie and the Episcopal Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania. A visit to the tomb of the namesake of my university in the episcopal crypt of the former was a highlight of the tours, just as touching a fragment of Admiral Oliver Hazard Perry's 18th century flagship, USS Lawrence, preserved in a wooden reredos, came to be at the latter. At each of the venues we visited, in fact, there was some feature that left a lasting impression with my classes—a pair of Tiffany Glass windows here, a ceiling beam half-charred in a fire and left exposed there—set within buildings whose floors creaked, whose narthexes and naves carried the distinct whiff of old age, and whose well-worn furnishings signified a history of use by people of deep and abiding faith. Often, it was the organists at these sites who most enjoyed having large groups of young people wander through their worship spaces, many of whom were eager to demonstrate the characteristics of their instruments through impromptu recitals. In other cases, it was the resident sacristan or custodian who seemed to know the most about the history and functional aspects of a particular church and jumped at the chance of turning on an extra bank of lights or two for our benefit or leading students into some belfry to try their hand at ringing its bells. I hoped that such encounters would convince students that a place of worship is peopled by persons of all kinds and in various positions of authority, all of whom bear an affection for its physical fabric and history they normally reserve for their own homes.

It was their unscripted encounters with the specialness of Christian churches that students on end-of-the-semester course evaluations described as so "eye-opening." At least one noted somewhat humorously, "The best part of theology was the architecture."

Just having students make contact with the busy streets of the urban environment in which these sites are found was important, I feel, if only because the experience offered them a view of so-called "downtown" churches in context and a chance to ponder how their basic cultural and sociological functions might differ from those of

Christian facilities erected more recently in the city's suburban fringes. Most were suburbanites by birth with little inclination to dine, shop or recreate in the heart of a city, let alone to seek God there. They admitted to enjoying the mobility their cars afforded them and the ease with which they could move through the landscaped expanses to be found *outside* the nation's older cities, not at their cores. What big box stores or drive-thru restaurants couldn't offer them, they could always find online—and what wasn't available there probably wasn't important. Still, they marveled at the beauty preserved in street-corner churches offset by old-fashioned sidewalks they'd visited and weren't sure what to make of the questions I directed their way at the conclusion of every church tour: "What should become of the things you've encountered in this place? Should your generation, which shows every sign of turning its back on traditional religion, simply clear buildings like this away for the sake of making parking lots? Should they be turned into condos or conference halls as we've seen in some cities—possibly into performance spaces? What will become of this legacy of Christian architecture and thus of the theological concepts we've examined in the classroom that seem so much more ephemeral?"

My students would squirm in their seats, as usual, and look down at their feet. The brightest caught the seriousness of my questions and what is truly at stake going forward. Christianity's way with architecture may well be worth preserving for more than only those who follow Christ, and its long tradition of ruminating on the nature of God and the world may well save us from the short and self-sightedness of our time.



EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant (Mt 24:45-51)

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

Jesus asks us, "Who is the faithful and wise servant… ?" (Mt 24:25)

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*.

THE PARABLE OF THE FAITHFUL AND WISE SERVANT BEGINS WITH A RHETORICAL question: "Who, then, is the faithful and wise servant …?" which sets the tone for this and the two parables that follow (Mt 25:1-13 and 25:14-30). Since the parable makes evident who the faithful and wise servant is, the question is actually directed to the hearers, summoning them to answer the question in light of the lives they lead.

The Narrative of the Parable

A master of the house, upon departing for some reason, puts a servant in charge of the proper distribution of food to the household. Two ways of carrying out the charge are described. In the first, the master returns and finds the servant doing as he was instructed. He is described as "blessed." (We note that in Matthew's Gospel "blessed," suggests divine favor, and not mere happiness.) The servant is then put in charge of all the master's property. In the second instance, the servant is described in greater detail. His interior deliberations about his master's return are revealed; also, he becomes abusive toward his fellow servants and behaves irresponsibly in other matters. When his master returns unexpectedly, he is punished severely and ejected from the household.

The Meaning of the Parable

In its original and simplest form, *The Parable of the Faithful and Wise Servant* may have been directed by Jesus to the Jewish leaders of his time. Jesus' hearers would have been familiar with the scriptural image of official spiritual leaders as "servants." The parable, then, is spoken as a warning to them that the time of reckoning is near and

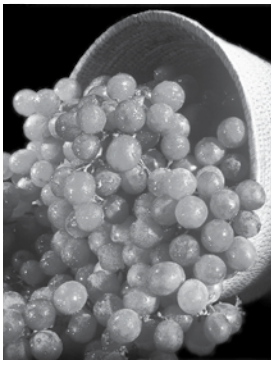
will reveal whether they have been faithful to the trust placed in them. Deliberate resistance to the message of Jesus, in whom the kingdom of God has dawned, will result in exclusion from that kingdom.

It is possible that Matthew's narration of this parable reflects concerns that were particular to the Christian community of his time. This would seem to be substantiated by a number of elements found in the parable. For example, there is reference to a "faithful and wise servant." The concept of "faithfulness," in the sense of being *reliable*, is frequently found in association with leadership in the early Church, especially in the letters of St. Paul (1 Cor 4:17; Eph 6:21; Col 1:7). Also, there are references to the task of distributing food at the proper time and to the drunken conduct of the unfaithful servant. Such references call to mind that food and "eating" sometimes serve as metaphors in the New Testament for teaching and learning (Jn 6:25-33; 1 Cor 3:2); also, that drunkenness was a problem within the early Christian community (1 Cor 5:11; 6:10; 11:21) and a disqualifying characteristic for pastoral leadership (1 Tm 3:3; Tit 1:7). The wicked servant in the parable, then, exemplifies unfaithful leadership in the community of Christians.

All of Christian life must be a constant preparation for the Lord who, "will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour. (Mt 24:50)"

In this perspective Matthew has allegorized an original parable of Jesus and addressed it to leaders of the Christian community who behave irresponsibly by failing to administer properly the goods of the community and exercise faithful oversight of its material and spiritual sustenance, and by abusing fellow Christians. In this way, Matthew is interested less in the events that will accompany the return of Jesus than in giving instruction to Church leaders as they await Christ's return in glory.

This parable, however, should be read as having application to all members of Christ's Church. The opposite of a Christian life lived in fidelity and charity and in eager expectation of the glory and joy that will accompany face-to-face encounter with Christ is a carefree attitude about life's responsibilities and the committing of sin, especially serious sin. A grave spiritual delusion would be to think that we have ample time to put things aright before the master returns. All of Christian life must be a constant preparation for the Lord who, "will come on an unexpected day and at an unknown hour. (Mt 24:50)"



EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Eymard Along the Journey: Eucharistic Reflections of Saint Peter Julian Eymard

by Jim Brown

Jim Brown is the director of the Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing in Cleveland, Ohio, and an Associate of the Blessed Sacrament. He has a Master of Arts degree in biblical studies.

January

On January 25, 1865, Father Peter Julian Eymard began what became known at the "Great Retreat" in Rome at the Redemptorist Villa Caserta on Via Merulana, which is near the Basilica de Santa Maria Maggiore, the largest Catholic Marian church in Rome. He was awaiting a response from the pope on what he referred to as the "Jerusalem plans," that is, his proposal to set up a "Cenacle" in Jerusalem. It was his dream to have a place of Eucharistic prayer and adoration in the city where Jesus celebrated the last supper.

The retreat lasted nine weeks. Every day Father Eymard wrote down his thoughts based on the meditations he organized for his prayer and reflections. Thankfully his retreat notes have been preserved, filled as they are with spiritual insight.

Though the Jerusalem proposal was eventually rejected, something more powerful happened for Father Eymard. He discovered that the "inner Cenacle" of the human heart was more important than any exterior project or ministry. Through this his sense of God's abundant love and graciousness grew tremendously. So much so he was able to say, "The earth is a cenacle for us, we can always be in this cenacle, desiring and adoring by heart."

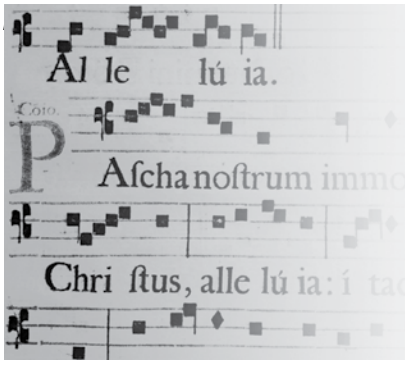
February

In 1865, while Father Eymard was on his "Great Retreat of Rome" he wrote a letter to a dear friend, Camille d'Andigne. She lived in Paris, ministered with Father Eymard preparing young adults for first communion, and received spiritual direction from him. A prolific letter writer throughout his life, there are roughly 50 letters preserved which Father Eymard wrote to her offering spiritual counsel. In this

particular letter, he wrote about a fruit of his retreat in Rome: a deeper discovery of the love of God.

This is what he wrote in part:

"Allow me to share with you a great treasure I have discovered: I hope you will reap good fruit from it. … God loves us personally with a great benevolent love, with an infinite and eternal love. This benevolent love consists in willing purely and exclusively what is good and what is best for the person who is so loved."



PASTORAL LITURGY

How to Pray the Liturgy of Hours

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

How do we make the Liturgy of the Hours a vital part of our parish prayer live?

Blessed Sacrament Father John Thomas Lane, SSS holds degrees in music, education and liturgy. He currently serves as pastor of his home parish, Saint Paschal Baylon Roman Catholic Church, Highland Heights, Ohio but has also been a pastor in Houston, Albuquerque, vocation minister, and diocesan director of liturgy. For questions, other resources or workshops he could do for your parish, contact him at jtlanesss@gmail.com or (440) 442-3410.

A previous series of columns (in 2012) detailed the important aspects of each piece of the Liturgy of the Hours (LH), the Church's public daily prayer. While it is important to know the structure, this series will dig deeper into why we pray, and uphold the tradition of praying this sacred treasury of prayer. Over the year, I'll outline steps that every "pastor of souls" is asked to follow in order to implement this liturgical rite within the parish, as well as offer ideas to assist in gathering the community to pray this "second most important" style of liturgical prayer in the Church's life.

Like Eucharist, the LH is to be celebrated in every parish. The two "hinges "of the Morning and Evening Prayer prepare us for Eucharist and also renew us for mission. Perhaps diocesan priests don't feel they have the time or energy to plan extra prayer time with the parish community. Perhaps they see this prayer as a private devotion for their own sanctification. Careful review of the instructions for the LH remind us that it is always meant to be celebrated as a community. Many forms and styles of the LH are found in Church history, from monastic and "personal recitation," to communal and "cathedral style" prayer. Today liturgical historians identify this hybrid style as the, "best of the two main traditions" of the LH that gathers us together with Christ. We gather with Christ to pray to God the Father in praise, worship, intercession and mission.

To begin a new tradition of LH in the parish, begin slowly with some catechesis. Special moments in the life of a parish when there is already a congregation present could provide an opportunity to begin celebrating LH, at least Morning Prayer or Evening Prayer. Many parishes currently have recitation of the rosary. Perhaps one day of the

week, LH could be added before or after the rosary. For parishes that have evening meetings, invite the committee, organization or ministry to gather in the chapel or church for a special prayer experience.

To begin:

- Buy books, either the "shorter" Christian Prayer book, provided by Catholic Book Publishing, or the "breviary," the one-volume book with several ribbons. Or – provide the app. It has the entire service in one place. (Many of the suggestions below are for those places that do not wish to use mobile devices).
- Develop a "buddy" system where a more seasoned minister, parish leader/volunteer (who knows the structure of the LH) sits next to a parishioner to guide them in praying the LH.
- Invite certain parishioners, perhaps a regular altar server, lector and/or sacristan to be present and assist in liturgical roles. Also have someone assist in leading the music.
- Start the LH in Ordinary Time when there are fewer pages and ribbons to flip to in the book.
- Advertise a workshop before or after a Mass to give an overview as to why the Church celebrates LH, a time when people are already gathering.
- Give a short, careful demonstration, with a "handout/outline" to the order. Many parish hymnals or missalettes give an outline of the parts of Morning or Evening Prayer.
- Have a practice time, during the time before or after an existing Mass or morning gathering of your community.
- Announce the page numbers in the LH book to assist the congregation.

In the next issue, another "how to" guide will take us through the portions of LH and remind us all of the unique structure of this liturgy.

Organizing for January/February 2020

Wednesday, January 1: Last day of the Octave of Christmas, Mary – Mother of God, World Day of Peace, Civic New Year: Take a look at the special message of Pope Francis for ideas, and the theme of this special day in religious and civil traditions.

Sunday, January 5: The Announcement of Easter and Moveable Feasts: In the Appendix of the *Roman Missal* there is a special

announcement with the rubric: "On the Epiphany of the LORD, after the singing of the Gospel, a Deacon or cantor, in keeping with an ancient practice of Holy Church, announces from the ambo the moveable feasts of the current year according to this formula…." This chant is before the one for the Nativity of the LORD, and the second appendix and sprinkling rite.

Sunday, January 12: Feast of the Baptism of the Lord: Appendix II of the *Roman Missal* provides the sprinkling rite to be used as the Introductory Rite for this weekend Mass. It is also a wonderful day to baptize infants.

Monday, January 13 – Tuesday, February 25 - Ordinary Time: A chance to clean up after the busy Christmas Season. It is also a good time to do an inventory, get ready for Lent with Operation Rice Bowl, and the other spiritual practices (i.e. Stations of the Cross).

Saturday, January 18 – Saturday, January 25 – Octave for Christian Unity: In the midst of so much division in our world the Octave for Christian Unity provides an opportunity for Christians to come together and witness to the values of the Kingdom of God. This is a much-needed counter-cultural witness in our world today.

Monday, January 20 – Martin Luther King Day: Look to the fourth volume of the *Lectionary* and the votive Masses in the *Roman Missal* for a variety of readings and prayers that will support a special time of reflection on justice and peace.

Wednesday, January 22 – Day for the Protection of the Unborn: A number of special prayers in the *Roman Missal* and possible readings in the *Lectionary* are available to lift up the value of all human life.

Sunday, January 26 – Sunday, February 2 - Catholic Schools Week: This is a wonderful chance to have our youth involved with various ministries in the liturgical celebration and highlight Catholic education and formation.

Thursday, January 30 – Anniversary of the death of Mahatma Gandhi

Sunday, February 2 – Feast of the Presentation of the LORD: Every several years we have this opportunity to bless candles, have a special

entrance procession and remind the gathered community that they are the light of the world! Notify people in advance of the opportunity to have their candles blessed, and as on Passion Sunday with palms, have this unique time for people to reflect on their "pilgrimage in life," highlighted by a special procession and song.

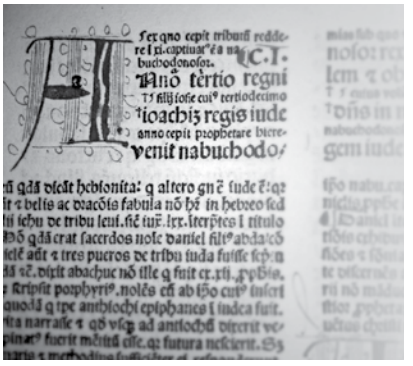
Tuesday, February 18 – Anniversary of the death of Martin Luther

Tuesday, February 25: The last day of Ordinary Time is a chance for Mardi Gras or other festivities. It is also a time for decorating and readying the church for Lent.

Wednesday, February 26: Ash Wednesday

Available in the *Lectionary Supplement* for the United States Parishes*:*

- Friday, January 3: The Most Holy Name of Jesus
- Monday, January 6: Saint André Bessette
- Wednesday, January 22: Day of Prayer of the Legal Protection of Unborn Children
- Thursday, January 23: Saint Marianne Cope
- Saturday, February 8: Saint Josephine Bakhita 



BREAKING THE WORD

Scriptural Reflections — Homiletics

by Sister Lisa Marie Belz, OSU

An Ursuline Sister of Cleveland, Ohio, Sister Lisa Marie Belz is assistant professor of Biblical Studies at St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology.

January 1, 2020
The Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8; Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

The Church concludes the Octave of Christmas with the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, or "Theotokos," "the Bearer of God," the Church's most ancient title for Mary. While celebrated on different dates throughout the Christian world, it was St. Paul VI who, in 1969, set this feast on the final day of the Christmas octave. As he explained, "This celebration . . . is meant to commemorate the part played by Mary in [the] mystery of salvation. It is meant also to exalt the singular dignity which this mystery brings to the 'holy Mother . . . through whom we were found worthy to receive the Author of life.'" Of course, the final day of the Christmas octave is also the first day of the year, which Paul VI called a "happy concurrence." By placing this feast of Mary on January 1, which he designated as "the World Day of Peace," Paul VI called the Church to a "renewed adoration of the newborn Prince of Peace, listening once more to the glad tidings of the angels (Lk. 2:14), and . . . imploring from God, through the Queen of Peace, the supreme gift of peace" (*Marialis Cultis*, #5).

For this reason, the Church begins the readings for New Year's Day with this beautiful blessing of peace from Numbers 6:22-27, where God instructs Moses regarding how Aaron and his descendants are to bless the people: "*The Lord* bless you!" The title "the LORD" translates what in the biblical text is the sacred name for God, "Yahweh," which in Hebrew is a verb and roughly translates to "the ONE-WHO-IS and WHO-CAUSES-ALL-TO LIVE." The blessing is not Aaron's or his descendants to give, but God's—the giver of life. The passage explains in what the

blessing consists: God's loving care, God's presence, and God's gift of peace. "The Lord bless you and *keep* you!" The word "keep" translates the Hebrew verb "*shamar*," which refers to the watchful and vigilant care provided by a custodian and protector. God's blessing is more than words; it is active, attentive care, experienced as God's abiding presence, what biblically is referred to as "God's face." Thus, God's blessing is the divine presence shining upon Israel, warming and illuminating the people with its radiant light. Bathed in God's loving presence, Israel comes to know God's abiding "shalom," translated here as "peace" but with a deeper meaning of "well-being," "wholeness,""wellness."

The greatest gift of God's loving presence finds its fullest expression in the Word-Made-Flesh, "born of a woman," as Paul reflects (Gal. 4:4), and who, taking the last place among us, is born in a lowly stable because there was no room for him anywhere else. It is the little ones of the earth, like the reflective young Mary, or Bethlehem's simple shepherds, who are the first to welcome good news from angels, and thus the first to recognize him as a homeless child with only a manger for a crib. This year, may our New Year's resolution be to grow, like Mary and the shepherds, more sensitive and alert to the presence of God as it comes to us in ordinary and humble wrappings. This year, let us seek out that presence, allowing it to bathe us in its light and warmth, to fill us with its peace, its wholeness, its wellness. In this way, the Prince of Peace will come to dwell in our hearts and our homes as once he came to dwell in the womb of Mary. Then we, too, like Mary, will become bearers of God to a world in need of His blessing, the light and warmth of his presence and the well-being and wholeness of his peace.

January 5, 2020
Epiphany

Isaiah 60:1-6; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13; Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6; Matthew 2:1-12

A major theme repeated in various scriptures of the Christmas season is that of the light of Christ that penetrates the thick darkness of our world. As the fourth-century Church knew when it set the celebration of Christ's birth for a date shortly after the winter solstice, winter's dark days are a perfect time to reflect on the light of Christ overcoming the darkness. Once we get to Epiphany, the days are already becoming noticeably longer. Thus, especially on Epiphany the Church offers this theme of the Christ light for our reflection.

The first reading, taken from Third Isaiah, tells us to "Get up! Shine!" because our light has come: "the glory of the Lord has risen upon us!" In the language of the Old Testament, the phrase, "the glory of the Lord" is a reference to the awesome presence of God which breaks into human reality in unexpected ways, bringing us into encounters with God's grace that change us and our world. Originally directing his message to newly freed Jewish captives just returning to Judah after two generations of enslavement in Babylon, Isaiah wanted to instill hope in his people who felt overwhelmed by the devastation of their homeland and the daunting task of rebuilding it. Thus, Isaiah encouraged them to reject despair and, instead, to be alert to the light of God's presence in their difficult circumstances, and to reflect God's light to each other in a way that attracted others to the God of Israel. Isaiah promised that at some future point their Gentile neighbors, translated here as, "the nation," who had previously conquered and enslaved them, would someday be transformed by God's light shining upon them: "Nations shall walk by your light, kings by your shining radiance." Yes, the "thick darkness" of violence, war and division covers the whole earth, not just their devastated homeland, yet, nonetheless, the presence of God dwells with them as a guiding light beckoning them forward, beyond despair, calling them to rebuild their shattered lives and broken world. This light of God's presence in them and among them would someday transform even their Gentile enemies and conquerors.

Today's passage from Ephesians refers to the healing that Christ brings to the hateful divisions between human beings. Just as in the time of Isaiah, so, too, in Paul's day, a division existed between Jew and Gentile. For the Jewish people, repeatedly subject to Gentile violence and persecution in the centuries following the Babylonian exile, that division had developed into a form of self-protective isolationism. For Paul, however, the Gospel transforms adversaries into brothers and sisters who gather together around Christ's table (Eph 2:6, 13-19) as "fellow heirs, members of the same body."

The Gospel today brings together the themes of the first and second readings in a striking way. Matthew's magi would have been Persian priests who would not have known Israel's God. Yet the light of Christ so attracts and draws them that they embrace the expense and difficulties of a long journey in their search for the newborn king of the Jews. Their gifts and their desire to prostrate themselves before him demonstrate their recognition of his global rule and their intention to

place themselves under it. Herod, appointed by the Romans as "king of the Jews" (although not very Jewish himself), is greatly distressed by the magi's visit and their message. He represents those who, preferring darkness to light, render themselves incapable of perceiving the light, or of welcoming it. The magi, on the other hand, represent those who, so attracted by the light, follow it, whatever the cost, to wherever it may lead.

Today's readings invite us to consider: Where, like Herod, are we incapable of perceiving God's light? Where do we resist it? And where, like the magi, do we recognize God's light? Where do we welcome it? Where do we allow it to lead us still?

January 12, 2020
The Baptism of the Lord

Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7; Psalm 29:1-4, 9-10; Acts 10:34-38; Matthew 3:13-17

Today's feast invites us to reflect on Jesus's sense of vocation and call. Matthew's account of Jesus's baptism immediately follows John the Baptist's announcement that one would come after him who would baptize with "the Holy Spirit and fire." Recognizing Jesus as the one who will baptize with a more powerful baptism, John hesitates to baptize him, wishing for Jesus to baptize him instead! Yet Jesus wants to "fulfill all righteousness" (3:15), to conform himself totally to the will of his Father in his complete solidarity with the human condition. Thus he accepts John's baptism and, by so doing, he receives God's anointing with "the Holy Spirit and power" (Acts 10:38).

Reflecting on Jesus's humanity, the Church teaches that Jesus, "thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart, . . . like us in all things except sin" (GS 22). Accordingly, his humanity would have the same need for religious experience as our own. In his embrace of the human condition, Jesus experiences God in a most intense way: he is affirmed as God's "beloved Son" in whom God is "well-pleased." This moment marks a profound change in Jesus's life. Prior, he lived the life of a small-town carpenter. Now, however, with a deepened sense of identity as "God's beloved Son," his world will grow beyond the narrow boundaries of his hometown. Anointed with "the

Holy Spirit and power," he will spend himself "doing good and healing all those oppressed" by the forces of evil (Acts 10:38).

By no means was Jesus the first or the only one to be called "Son of God." In the world of Jesus and the evangelists, it was not unusual for military heroes and rulers to be acclaimed as "gods" or "sons of god." Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, Caesar Augustus, among others, were each acclaimed as "Son of God." But Jesus shows us what it means to be a true Son of God, indeed, "God's beloved Son": Instead of leading conquering armies or ruling with force and violence, he will be a gentle "light for the nations," sent "to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness" (Is 42:6-7). Rejecting the common practice of the time that acclaimed military conquerors as "sons of god," the prologue of John's Gospel insists on both the singularity of Jesus' divine sonship as the incarnate Word of God (Jn 1:14,18) and its democratization: "to those who accepted him *he gave power to become children of God . . .*, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision, but of God" (Jn 1:13).

Consider it—consider this "*power* to become children of God," a power given to us in our own baptism when we were "born of water and the Spirit" (Jn 3:18). As we reflect today on Jesus's baptismal call, it would be good to reflect as well on our own: How do we allow our relationship with God to shape our identity as God's beloved daughter or son, as Jesus did? How do we allow our own baptism to shape our life's mission, our sense of call, of vocation and purpose, as did Jesus? And how do we live by the power given to us in our baptism as God's beloved children to be a gentle guiding light for others, doing good, freeing others from what diminishes or limits them, in whatever way we can, as did Jesus?

January 19, 2020
The Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 49:3, 5-6; Psalm 40:2, 4, 7-10; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; John 1:29-34

Although we've entered "Ordinary Time," observe how some themes and texts from the Christmas season reappear in the Sunday

scriptures for a while. This should remind us that there is no real break between what we celebrate at Christmas and what we are called to live throughout the New Year. Indeed, because of Christmas, there is no such thing as "ordinary" time—all time is extraordinary when lived with Christ. Admittedly, however, to perceive the extraordinary in the ordinary requires a new way of perceiving reality, others, and ourselves. It requires that we learn to see as God sees.

Take, for example, the servant described in today's reading from Isaiah. Last week we read how this servant shuns drama and attention-getting: he will not "cry out or shout, nor make his voice heard in the streets." And he's gentle: "a bruised reed he shall not break; a smoldering wick he will not quench." But just a few pages later, he is severely beaten, abused, scorned and killed (Is 50; 52:13-53:12). Nevertheless, it is this seemingly unlikely figure—undramatic, gentle, yet "spurned and avoided" (Is 53:3)—through whom God "shows God's glory" (Is 49:3). What humans see as repugnant, God sees as a "light to the nations," so that God's "salvation may reach to the ends of the earth."

John the Baptist learned to see as God sees. In today's gospel, twice he testifies that initially he "did not know" the one who "ranked ahead" of him, who "existed before" him (Jn 1:31,33). In fact, as he tells others, in the midst of them is one they do not recognize (Jn 1:26). John himself could only recognize him by seeing as God sees: "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove . . . and remain on him" (Jn 1:32). The undramatic and gentle Lamb of God, so ordinary in his appearance and demeanor, is not "known by the world" (Jn 1:10), yet he is the "light of human beings" who alone illumines our darkness (Jn 1:4-5).

St. Paul understood from personal experience what God could accomplish through the most unlikely people; indeed, God transformed him from rabid persecutor of the Church into an unstoppable "apostle of Christ Jesus" (1 Cor 1:1). This is why Paul does not hesitate to address his readers as men and women who have been "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be holy" (1 Cor. 1:2), even though the Corinthian church, still spiritually immature, is divided in many ways (1 Cor. 1:10-15;3:1-3). But Paul has learned to see as God sees, that despite its defects, the divided church of Corinth is nonetheless set apart by Christ to be God's own, which is what the word "sanctified" means: to be set apart for a holy purpose, to belong to God.

How might we live if, despite our ordinariness, even our flaws, we could

see one another as God sees us? Because of our baptism, the spirit of Christ dwells in us and we belong to Christ (Rom 8:9; 1 Cor 3:16, 6:19). Accordingly, we, too, for all our ordinariness, even our failings, are God's beloved children (Rom 8:14), consecrated by baptism as Christ's own, made holy by "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (Jn 1:29). Do we acknowledge this in ourselves? De we acknowledge this in others? Undeniably, our holiness is not our own—Christ alone is our holiness (1 Cor 1:30). We have no holiness apart from Christ. Nonetheless, God sees us for who we are as dear daughters and sons . . . and for who we can become as we grow more and more into Christ. Can we see each other as God sees us? Can we look at each other in the light of Christ? In such a light, what might we see?

January 26, 2020
The Third Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 8:23-9:3; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17; Matthew 4:12-23

This Sunday's readings take us deeper into the theme of light illuminating the darkness. In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah offers hope for areas in the Galilee devastated by violence and war, a "land of gloom" (Is 9:1) whose inhabitants had been taken as slaves to Assyria; the survivors—the "people who walked in darkness"—weren't sure if they could ever put their life back together again. In Jesus's time as well, Galilee had a reputation for political instability, violence and, during Jesus's childhood, a brutal civil war. It was a land of extremes between wealthy landowners and the underfed peasants who worked for them. The resulting economic disparity turned Galilee into a hotbed of violent revolt.

Into the darkness and gloom of the world around him, Jesus brings light. He proclaims, not another violent political revolution, but, instead, the "Gospel of the Kingdom." The word "gospel," in Greek "evangelion," means "Good News." Jesus's proclamation of the Good News of God's kingdom, of its closeness, is accompanied by an urgent appeal to conversion of life, to "metanoia," translated by the verb "repent." Yet more than the sorrow of repentance, genuine "metanoia" demands change: a change of heart and mind, a change in one's attitude, in one's way of perceiving reality. Only with the change required by "metanoia" can the nearness of the Kingdom of God be perceived.

What other New Testament writers refer to as the "Kingdom of God," Matthew's Gospel calls the "Kingdom of Heaven." However, it would be a mistake to limit Matthew's understanding of the "Kingdom of Heaven" to a happy afterlife. For Matthew, the "Kingdom of Heaven" is a spiritual reality far more expansive, powerful and real than any worldly political kingdom. Nonetheless, the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus has profound implications regarding how one is to live in *this* world. Jesus doesn't limit himself to persuasive words or to the care of people's souls. While these are important, Jesus's Kingdom message requires care for the whole person: body and soul together. Accordingly, in a world where only the rich have access to healthcare, Jesus spends himself healing the sick as a sign of the nearness of the Kingdom (Mt 4:23-24). In a world where most people never have enough to eat, he instructs his disciples to feed the hungry (Mt 14:20; 15:37). And he doesn't do it alone. Jesus invites disciples to follow him, to be co-ministers with him, "fishers of human beings" (Mt 4:19) who, with him, will call others out of their darkness into the light of God's Kingdom here on earth.

Today's second reading betrays the struggles that we as followers of Jesus sometimes fall into when we lose sight of Jesus's kingdom message. Although called to "fellowship with Christ" (1 Cor 1:9), the Corinthian church was beset by a number of problems, including sharp divisions and rivalries. Perhaps a better translation of "fellowship," what in Greek is "koinonia," would be "communion." Christians are called to communion with Christ. But communion with Christ is not lived in isolation from each other or from the Church. On the contrary, it leads us to overcome what divides us and to form bonds of communion with each other, until we become "united in the same mind and purpose" (1 Cor 1:10).

This Sunday's readings invite us to consider our own response to the darkness in our world. What is the "metanoia," the change of heart and attitude that we need in order to perceive Christ's light and welcome it? Are we like the disciples who, upon hearing Jesus's invitation to follow him, leave their former life behind to share the light of his Kingdom with others? Or, instead, are we like the Corinthian Christians, too focused on ourselves, too stuck in our own negativity, that we miss the nearness of the Kingdom and fail to perceive its light?

February 2, 2020
The Presentation of the Lord

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4; Psalm 24:7-10; Hebrews 2:14-18; Luke 2:22-40 or Luke 2:22-32

The prophet Malachi promises his people, "The Lord whom you seek will come suddenly to his temple; the messenger of the covenant whom you desire—see he is coming!" Ancient Israel had long looked to "the Day of the Lord" when God would vindicate it before its enemies, as God vindicated Israel at the first Passover, liberating the Hebrew slaves from their Egyptian overlords. But prophets such as Malachi warned their people that, because of their failures to live up to the values and requirements of the covenant, "the day of the Lord" would be a day of judgment, not vindication, a day to be dreaded and feared: "Who can endure the day of his coming?" the prophet asks. "Who can stand when he appears?"

Yet the Good News of today's gospel is the mildness with which God comes among his people. In a completely unexpected way, God comes to God's temple, as Malachi indicates, but in littleness and gentleness, in humility, in an infant's fragility, a tiny child's smile, in a way that evokes not so much dread and fear as tenderness. Jesus comes to us as one of us, "like his brothers and sisters in every way" (Heb 2:17). With the story of Jesus's presentation in the temple, Luke evokes the image of the child Samuel who is brought to the "house of the Lord" by his mother (1 Sam 1:33-24), consecrated to God as a *nazirite* (1 Sam 1:11,22). Introducing a new age in Israel's history, Samuel, as both judge and prophet, is a transition figure from the period of the judges to the monarchy. Similarly, Luke sees Jesus as a transition figure ushering in a new era, the age of the new Israel that shares God's light with the Gentiles. In fact, from the perspective of Luke-Acts, Jesus is in the center of history: his life is linked to Israel's biblical past and the future age of a multinational Church. Along with Zechariah, Elizabeth, Joseph, Mary and Anna, Simeon represents the Jewish faithful who live in "expectation of God's consolation to Israel," the restoration of God's Kingdom by "the Messiah of the Lord" (Lk 2:25-26). Taking the child in his arms, Simeon embraces the future that the child represents; he offers a prayer of praise for what God will accomplish in the child, even as he recognizes in him the sign of God's salvation for both Jew and Gentile, "a light for revelation to the

Gentiles and glory for Israel" (Lk 2:28-32).

But Simeon also understands that, for all the hope this new child brings, there will be a cost. Not all will embrace the new future this child offers: instead, the child will be a sign that will be contradicted, a clear reference to the cross. Yet, as the passage from Hebrews reminds us, more is going on than meets the eye. Nothing, not even the cross, can circumvent God's plan of salvation. On the contrary, even in the cross, God's love triumphs. By means of the cross, the ancient enemy of humanity is "brought to nothing." (The Greek word "katargeo," here translated as "destroyed," can mean "brought to nothing," "abolish" or "rendered useless.") With the ancient enemy vanquished, so too is his power over death (Heb 2:14). (Here we read an allusion to Wisdom 2:24, "But by the envy of the devil, death entered the world," a common way of interpreting Gen 3 in the New Testament period.) Thus, by means of the cross, the child will become, "the merciful and faithful high priest before God" who "helps his brothers and sisters," expiating the sins of his people (Heb 2:17).

Today's feast celebrates the presence of God that comes among us in unexpected moments, encounters and people. May we be like Simeon and Anna, alert and sensitive to God's presence however it comes, but especially as it comes to us humbly, in ordinary people and in ordinary ways.

February 9, 2020
Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Isaiah 58:7-10; Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; Matthew 5:13-16

All of us want a happy life. But what does it take to be happy? Today's readings offer some counter-intuitive insights into how to find genuine and lasting happiness, no matter what life throws at us.

Our first reading, taken from Third Isaiah, offers some surprising advice to Jewish exiles that had, shortly before, returned to their ancestral homeland after nearly two generations of captivity in Babylon. The original anticipation and excitement they had felt about returning home evaporated when they saw the rubble of what had

been Jerusalem. There was nowhere to go, nowhere to escape the misery, hunger, disillusionment and disappointment that pressed down heavy upon them. It might have seemed to them easier to have stayed behind as slaves in Babylon than to return to the ash heaps of their homeland. How would they move forward out of the darkness and gloom? How would they not to give in to despair? Where was there any light to be found?

Isaiah tells them that yes, indeed, there is light to be found in their darkness: that light can be discovered within them and among them. Their light would begin to shine once they could look beyond themselves and their own needs and focus on the needs of others, caring for each other, especially the most needy, sharing their bread with the hungry, clothing the naked, sheltering the oppressed and homeless. Only then would their, "wound quickly be healed" (Is 58:8).

Isaiah's advice regarding how best to move forward must have seemed counter-intuitive to the newly returned exiles. I am reminded here of the good Christian people of a mission parish in Chirilagua, El Salvador, one of the hardest hit areas of Central America after Hurricane Mitch passed through in 1998, dumping three and a half feet of water in just one night. Overnight, the hurricane washed away the food supply of forty-two of the forty-six towns of the parish; houses were flooded while thick, hungry mudslides swallowed homes and roadways whole. Worse still, they lost nearly 120 people in just one night. The next day, those with flooded houses went around the town collecting food and clothing for those who lost more than they did. Much of the donated clothing was wet, of course, but it was still something they could give to those who had nothing left. As parishioners hauled in large plastic bags of clothes to the parish for distribution to the neediest, the big smiles on their faces revealed that they already knew the same truth Third Isaiah wanted to share with his people: the best way to move beyond our own loss is to focus on healing the losses of others. Only then do our own wounds heal and our, "light shall break forth like the dawn."

This is what it means to live the faith that "rests, not on human wisdom, but on the power of God," as St. Paul puts it, a faith that lives by the wisdom of the cross. This is the counter-intuitive wisdom that teaches us to relate to each other from a place of mutual vulnerability and empathy. This is the wisdom of Christ crucified who takes upon himself all our brokenness, even as he ministers to those around him from the cross, arranging for the care of his mother, forgiving his executioners

and torturers, offering comfort and peace to the man hanging on the cross next to him. And he empowers us with his Spirit so that we can do the same, regardless of our circumstances in life, getting out of ourselves, moving beyond our own pain and loss to respond with care and compassion to the pain and loss of others. This is how we let our light shine. And this is where we find genuine happiness, no matter what life throws our way.

February 16, 2020
Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Sirach 15:15-20; Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:6-10; Matthew 5:17-37

This week's readings invite us to consider the two basic choices we all have in life: the choice between what leads to life and what leads to death, between what brings well-being to all and what imperils it. That we all have a basic choice between good and evil, life and death is Torah's essential lesson, found both at the beginning of Torah in Gen 2-3, and near its conclusion, in the farewell sermon of Moses in Dt 30:1-20.

Bringing together these two passages from Torah's introduction and conclusion, Sirach offers a brief summary of Torah's basic lesson, highlighting the choice we all must make between conforming ourselves to God's law, which leads to life, or disregarding God's law, which only brings ruin. As Sirach reminds us, "keeping the commandments will save us." God's commandments challenge us to grow spiritually and humanly; they bring us well-being and prosperity (Dt 30). For this reason, twice the psalmist assures us that happiness is found in keeping the commandments and seeking God with all our heart (vv. 1-2). (The Hebrew word "ashrei," translated in Ps 119:1-2 as "blessed," means "happy.") From a merely human perspective, however, God's commands may seem impractical, inconvenient or unnecessary. Mainstream culture, with all its self-gratifying "human wisdom," is often at odds with God's commands. Nonetheless, to the spiritually mature, those who have grown beyond the self as the center of their world, God's commands, rather than whatever gratifies themselves, are true wisdom (1 Cor 2:6).

This week and next, the gospel is taken from Matthew's sermon on the mount in which Jesus focuses on what is required to fulfill Torah's great command to love one's neighbor (Lev 19:18). However, as we read Matthew, we must not imagine that Jesus is offering a "corrective" to Judaism; on the contrary, Matthew portrays Jesus as a Torah observant Jew who holds in esteem the smallest parts of God's law, or "Torah" (Mt 5:18), even as he comes to fulfill them. For this reason, Jesus calls his disciples to a fidelity to God's law that exceeds that of the "heroes" of the law, the scribes and Pharisees who were popularly admired for their great love of Torah. In typical rabbinic fashion, Jesus challenges his disciples to go beyond Torah as a way to safeguard Torah's great value for love of neighbor. Only in this way does one find entry into the kingdom of heaven. To be sure, for Matthew, Jesus is much more than any rabbi—he is the new Moses whose teachings on Torah are definitive. As such, Jesus challenges his disciples to avoid a minimalist approach to God's commandments.

For example, it might seem enough simply to refrain from killing the body. But our negative thoughts and emotions can be toxic to others, too; our resentments and hurts, our capacity to be easily offended, our malicious or self-righteous gossip, etc., can kill the spirit of others. Thus Jesus challenges us to consider how we relate with each other, how we talk to (or refuse to talk to) each other. (In Mt 5:22, the word "raqa" is Aramaic for "empty-headed idiot.") Similarly, it might seem enough simply to refrain from the physical act of adultery. But Jesus cautions us to consider what is going on in our minds and hearts and warns against viewing others as objects instead of persons. Using "Semitic hyperbole" to emphasize his point, he insists on completely uprooting anything in ourselves that prevents us from choosing what brings life and well-being, both for ourselves and others.

For Jesus, a minimalist approach simply won't do; we must go deeper, beyond externals, and conform our hearts and minds to the values inherent in God's commands. The self-discipline that this requires will ultimately bear fruit in an ordered life given in love to our families, our communities and our God. And that is where we discover our greatest well-being, satisfaction and happiness.

February 23, 2020
Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13; 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48

What does it mean to be holy? Often our ideas of holiness are a bit limited. We tend to equate holiness with religious devotion or prayerfulness. We might even imagine ourselves as holy because of our religious practices or prayerfulness. True, a regular prayer life fed by a faithful and generous participation in Eucharist helps us grow in holiness. But notice how today's readings redefine what it means to be holy, challenging us to grow beyond incomplete notions of "holiness."

In today's first reading, God instructs Moses to speak to the *whole* Israelite community. Holiness does not belong to religious professionals alone; it must characterize *all* the people of God. Further, authentic holiness imitates God's own: "Be holy, for I, the LORD, your God, am holy." Today's psalm describes God's holiness as "kindness and compassion" (Ps 103:4). The Hebrew word translated here as "kindness" is "chesed," meaning "steadfast love," while "compassion" is "rachamim," a Hebrew plural noun derived from the root "rechem," meaning "womb": God's compassion is characterized by a maternal tenderness and care. As a plural noun, however, a more literal reading would be "deeds of tender maternal compassion," thus God "crowns you with steadfast love and deeds of tender maternal compassion." The rest of the verse develops the idea of God's tender compassion as "slow to anger and abounding in *chesed* [steadfast love]." Genuine holiness reflects God's own tender maternal compassion and steadfast love.

To put it another way, holiness is defined by the quality of our relationships with each other and with ourselves. It is a refusal to give space in our heart to anger, revenge or grudges (Lev. 19:17). Loving our neighbor as ourselves requires first that we learn to love ourselves as God loves us: just as we are, flaws and all. It might require growing beyond our lack of self-esteem, or refusing to give attention to negative self-talk. It also requires that we love others as God loves them: just as they are, flaws and all. When we make mistakes, for example, we don't want others to draw attention to them. Nor do we want others to focus on our flaws and shortcomings, or to make us the target of their

negative gossip. Loving our neighbor demands that we give to others what we hope for ourselves: viewing them in the light of their goodness, not their defects, their best days, not their worst. It requires that we not indulge our negative feelings with gossip. A few verses later, Leviticus expands the command to love our neighbor with the injunction to love the immigrant as ourselves, refusing to mistreat the immigrant, treating the immigrant as we would a native (Lev. 19:33-34). The immigrant is also our neighbor whom we are commanded to love.

In today's gospel Jesus goes even further, insisting that the command to love our neighbor includes even our enemy. To love those who do not love us is what makes us true children of our Father in heaven. Luke's gospel has a slightly different take on this teaching of Jesus. Where Mt 5:48 tells us to "be perfect" (in Greek, "teleios," also meaning "complete," "mature") as our "heavenly Father is perfect," Luke 6:36 says "be compassionate as your Father is compassionate." Luke uses "oiktirmon," which has the sense of feeling another's pain, which is meant by "compassionate." In other words, when harmed, we refuse to enter into the spiral of violence and negativity, choosing instead to view the one who harms us as the broken human being he or she is, in need of compassion, not hostility.

Thus, to be holy means to imitate God's compassion and steadfast love, to be "perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect": to love *all* as neighbor, not just those who love us, but even those who, for whatever reason, are incapable of loving us, and to hold them, too, without exception, within our heart's compassion, within our love and care.

Art • Music • Film • Poetry • Books

Art Review

People who have a sacramental worldview often place greater meaning upon everyday objects. They are perhaps less likely to embrace the type of "throwaway culture" that Pope Francis has criticized in his encyclical Laudato Si, because the objects in their lives have become significant through use. Theologian Leonardo Boff speaks of the meaningful objects in our lives as "human sacraments" that "reveal" something about who we are, and the meaningful relationships in our lives.[1] I think many artists intuit this, whether or not they are Christian or even know what a sacrament is. For example, if we consider the time, care and effort artists take in selecting and depicting the objects in their artwork, we quickly comprehend that these are not simply random, insignificant things. Instead, the objects carry meanings, and for those who take the time to gaze upon and ponder the objects depicted, the objects may just "reveal" their meanings.

THE TIME IS SOON
Nicora Gangi
Pastel
2016

John Christman, SSS

Nicora Gangi's art is populated with numerous objects. She is a masterful still-life artist. Her subtle use of light and color, her creative compositions, and her deft handling of the medium all attest to her great abilities. Just linger for a moment over her magnificent pastel drawing entitled The Time is Soon. The sumptuous red apple, the well-worn brown leather book covers, the golden reflection of the pocket-watch, all rendered in an atmosphere of timeless stillness through the often unruly medium of pastel chalk. It is a marvel to behold. Yet beyond the breath-taking technique, the objects themselves wait to "reveal" their meanings.

So what do we see? On the face of it we see a stack of well-worn books, bookmarks or notes pressed between the pages, what appear to be three clocks, one with a price tag reading "2 cents each," and a fresh apple with a bite taken out of it. Yet the golden light that illuminates these objects and the meticulous manner in which they are rendered

cause us to gaze upon them with greater care, perhaps even reverence. The composition and light lead our eyes first to the open clock at the top of the image. Upon it's metal surface we see sparkling lights reminiscent of stars. This poetic evocation of the universe, or "the heavens" placed upon a clock presents us with differing notions of time. The seconds, minutes and hours of a day are contrasted with the vast timeframe of the universe. We don't see the actual faces of the clocks. No minute hands or hour hands draw our attention to the passage of time. Though no title can be discerned upon the books, their appearance suggests perhaps a bible, book of prayer or poetry, perhaps even a diary or journal. These in addition to a piece of bitten fruit can easily lead the mind into a Christian frame evoking Adam and Eve, the unfolding of salvation history, and the eschatological future. The Time is Soon then raises the pivotal question, "How have you prepared for eternity?"

Have you tasted the fruit? Have you lived? Have you sought wisdom, both secular and sacred, in the pages of history? Have you noted its tragedy and wonder in your books? Have you gazed beyond yourself into the universe? Has time left its mark on you? Have you shared your "two cents" in the golden light of day?

Objects can be curious things. In a busy moment a pocket watch can seem like nothing more than a practical tool to help keep up with a demanding schedule. In a more pensive moment, that same pocket watch can stir memories of time spent with loved ones and friends. In Gangi's art these well-chosen objects stir deep questions about faith and life.

Notes

[1] Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life, Life of the Sacraments*. (Portland, Oregon: Pastoral Press, 1987). Pg 29.

Poetry

the lost coin, found

silly me, i didn't hear it drop
as my hearing is somewhat lost as well
i swept the floor for my little *zuz*
then i decided to make a day of it
scrub the house before the sabbath sundown
reorganize the cupboards and the food pantry,
refill the water jars
sometimes i hide things next to the yeast
then forget they're there
i checked lit a lamp
and doubled checked
sure enough there it was
on the floor next to the bottom shelf
when i announced the news
the neighbor women and i all laughed
now i sit in sundown rest
to delight with one found coin
as well as a swept and tidy house

Sister Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

My Mother's Hands

I saw my mother's hands
moving, seeming to be
surrounded by a soft glow of light.

She is humming, working at the kitchen sink, looking out
the window;
I glimpse the thick gold wedding band
that she never took off.

Until after her death when that ring rested in my palm,
I had never really looked closely
at the lines in the ring
that went all along the middle.
From the distance it always looked so familiar

that I hadn't noticed the details.
Now I can see the etchings so clearly….
but what does it all mean,
no longer on her finger?

She took a little break,
never to be without her piano,
spinning out a ragtime rocking tune,
or the pondering, measured chords slowly advancing
of the Chopin funeral march:
so puzzling and startling,
that sudden dark statement
of death as an inevitable truth of life.

So now I seem to see my mother's hands
as a testament to the beauty of her every action,
no matter how small, mundane, or repetitive.
I can never stop wondering and admiring
at her hands that cooked food,
knitted multicolored sweaters,
hands that persevered and carried through
everything — seeing us through, yet not ever clinging,
not interfering … allowing life to move on day by day,
just as it will: harmony had its reign.
So busy, it seemed her hands were forever in motion:
strong, purposeful, and efficient.

When the stage lights went down,
and all was too quiet there at the house,
near dying for weeks, slowing down, shutting down,
poco a poco lento, lento,
then for the first time,
I saw my mother's hands still,
immobile, resting on a hospital bed,
her beautiful voice that when she spoke
was like a deep melody of song….. now
silent, only silent …..until the close,
at night,
when a caregiver,
but not I,
was there at her side.

Before the funeral

I stood in her empty bedroom, alone,
feeling as if I were standing tiptoe
on the edge
of the world.

A rush of energy could still be somewhat felt,
as a lingering mystery having occurred.

Undoubtedly there was a rhythm
to the progression ….
and the ability
of a woman to take leave of earth,
dying in her own home
in a narrow hospital bed.

That surely has a tone
full of strength,
the insistence not to be rushed
and to maintain dignity
in a world
that focuses only on a 'pace that should be';
but my mother always knew
the rhythm of life
as it really is.

If I could allow my hands
to be efficient,
even though my tasks
in no way measure up to the breadth of hers……

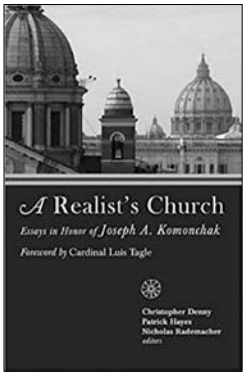
If I could learn from her to just perform
all those unsung things
without a second thought ……

If only I could sense that the rhythm of life,
even her life and ours,
is not ever so far away after all…..
no fanfare needed……

Just the moment,
just as it is.

Joan Lerman

Book Reviews



A REALIST'S CHURCH, ESSAYS IN HONOR OF JOSEPH A, KOMONCHAK
Patrick J. Hayes and Christopher D. Denny, editors
Orbis Press
Maryknoll, N.Y.
2015

The editors offer a volume of essays written in honor of theologian Joseph A. Komonchak. The authors build upon Komonchak's decades-long work in articulating the shifting ecclesiological paradigms in Roman Catholic theology over the course of the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

Komonchak's life span antedates the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council. He studied theology in Rome from 1960-1964. The influence of the Council is clear in his address of ecclesial and theological issues. Having written extensively in ecclesiology and related areas of theology, Komonchak's major contribution is his emphasis on the importance of sacred history for theology and the need for the social and human sciences for an assiduous study of that history.

Komonchak's approach reflects that of his teacher, Bernard Lonergan, S.J. who claimed that his "whole theological project was to introduce the study of history into theology and that for him, the very meaning of Vatican II was an acknowledgement of history" (p. 6).

The essays are organized under three headings: "Theologies and Histories of the Interwar Period;" "The Second Vatican Council;" and "Ecclesiology." The introduction offers an excellent summary of the "state of the question" of pre-Vatican II history and subsequent developments. Twelve essayists offer helpful analyses of some major issues in ecclesiology before, during, and following the council. Included in the volume is Komonchak's response to the essayists. Contributors include: Peter J. Bernardi, S.J.; Vefie Poels; Nicholas K. Rademacher; William T. Ditewig; Dennis M. Doyle; Ormond Rush; Massimo Faggioli; Stephen Schloesser, S.J.; Robert M. Doran, S.J.; Georgia Masters Keightley; Neil Ormerod; Ann K. Riggs.

All twelve essays offer rich contributions, thus even a brief comment on each one would be a disservice. This reviewer found the first three essays by Bernardi, Poels, and Rademacher very helpful for their treatment of the impact some interwar Catholic clashes of visions had on the discussions of Vatican II and their outcome.

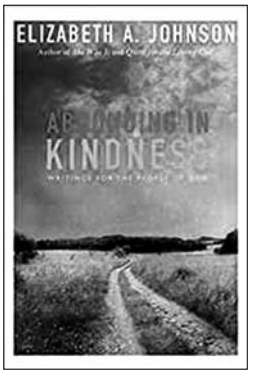
Doyle and Rush's contributions offer new vantage points to assess the Council's achievements, in place of the usual debates over continuity

and discontinuity. Stephen Schloesser, "promotes 'biopolitics' as an organizing principle with which to understand the Catholic Church's counter-cultural stance toward the secular world since the 1960's" (pg. 11). Massimo Faggioli recovers an often missed point regarding Vatican II, namely that the reform of the liturgy called for in the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* "was a prerequisite for the church to achieve a rapprochement with modern culture" (pg. 10).

Among his "grateful reflections," Komonchak updates the reader on his views of many of the issues treated by the essayists. Commenting on Ormand Rush's article, he notes that "One of the greatest failures of Vatican II was its neglect of the institutional implications of its major ecclesiological teachings. Right after the council, tentative efforts were made to institutionalize its call for the participation of all in the life and mission of the church, but in the last several decades almost all of them, at every level, were allowed to atrophy. It is indeed encouraging, as Rush notes at the end of his essay, that Pope Francis seems poised to achieve this long-delayed institutional change" (pg. 247). This is a hope shared by many.

A Realist's Church should find its place among assigned readings in graduate level courses on ecclesiology since it provides a good summary of many of the pre and post-Vatican II developments that led to the Church's countercultural stance toward the secular world.

Rev. Allan Laubenthal, STD
Rector Emeritus of Saint Mary Seminary
Cleveland, Ohio



ABOUNDING IN KINDNESS: WRITINGS FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD
Elizabeth A. Johnson
Orbis Books
Maryknoll, New York
2015

Elizabeth Johnson is readily known as one of the preeminent theologians of our time. Her scholarly research and writing have added clarity and elegant prose to our understanding of Church, God, Jesus, the Communion of Saints, Mary and other theological topics. In *Abounding in Kindness* Johnson has collected material from her lectures, published articles, presentations and books to provide a wider understanding of her more recent insights and beliefs.

In her own words at the end of her introduction Johnson states, "This book enters the list as one more effort to amplify awareness of the abounding kindness and fidelity of God, to practical and critical

effect." She accomplishes this goal by loosely arranging her material on the Christian creed in four main categories and an epilogue. The topics in each section are so varied that the chapter headings alone give the reader an overview of her wide range of theological research, beliefs and praxis.

Part I is entitled Patterns of Faith in a Questioning Time. The chapter headings include: Passing on the Faith; Atheism and Faith in a Secular World; Heaven and Earth Are Filled with Your Glory: Atheism and Ecological Spirituality; Feminism and Sharing the Faith; Come Ahead: A Story to Live By.

Part II is entitled Great God of Heaven and Earth. The Chapter Headings include: Creative Giver of Life; Creation: Is God's Charity Broad Enough for Bears?; A Theological Case for Naming God She; The God of Life in Feminist Liberation Theology: To Honor Gustavo Gutierrez; Sacred Ground at the Bedside: The Hospice Caregiver and Divine Compassion.

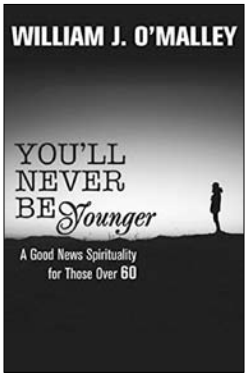
Part III is entitled Jesus the Living One. The chapter headings include: Jesus Research and Christian Faith; "Christ Died for Us"; Resurrection: Promise of the Future; Wisdom Was Made Flesh and Pitched Her Tent Among Us; Torture: "You did it to me"; Jesus and Women: "You are set free."

Part IV is entitled Kindle in Us the Fire of Divine Love: Church Matters. The chapter headings include: Remembering the Holy Spirit: Love Poured Out; Coming in from the Cold: Women Envision the Church; Interpreting Scripture through Women's Eyes; Friends of God and Prophets: Waking up a Sleeping Symbol; *Communio Sanctorum* in a Cosmic Framework; Truly Our Sister: A Critical Reading of the Marian Tradition; Hearts on Fire: A Revolutionary Song.

Clearly this is not a book to be summarized because of often unrelated topics accrued from years of study, writings, presentations and other personal materials. And yet, through a vast collection of varied topics Johnson is consistent in showing that our God truly is "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in kindness."

Maureen McCarthy, OSU, D.Min.
Ursuline College Theology Professor, retired
Cleveland, Ohio

You'll Never Be Younger is much too rich to be confined to the Medicare community. Each of the 26 short chapters of O'Malley's text offers a sentence or question worthy of a day's reflection. The author writes, "Part of the reason for this book is to stir up gratitude in those who've taken the gift of life for granted or who rebel against it as a burden." This intent crosses age-appropriate categories.



YOU'LL NEVER BE YOUNGER: A GOOD NEWS SPIRITUALITY FOR THOSE OVER 60
William J. O'Malley S.J.
Orbis Books
Maryknoll, N.Y.
2019

Chapter titles such as: *The Joy of Imperfection, Genuine Humility, Letting Go Without Quitting* and, this reviewer's favorite, *Tolerance For Ambiguity* and its list of disputed questions, offer material for vigorous conversations.

In typical O'Malley style You'll Never Be Younger is, down-to-earth, candid, profound, insightful and liberally peppered with delightful humor. O'Malley critically examines Catholic education and formation of the past, but always with a benign nod to well-intentioned teachers, parents and formators. He shows how past Catholic upbringing may have blocked or side-tracked a true understanding of Jesus and his message. Reaped from a wealth of life experience, some statements can be startling, but are unpacked in a healthy, honest appraisal.

Readers are invited to think through and confront past beliefs, rules and regulations. To this end, O'Malley offers fresh perspectives about a relationship with God (*the real God of loving and forgiving without measure!),* an understanding of the Church's function vis-à-vis its mission as expressed in the life of Jesus, and the joy available in living a life of faith here and now.

Creatively crafted, his writing evidences a classical education; the text is supported with excerpts from novels, history, movies, poetry, etc. This is not a "feel good" book, but a gentle, yet straightforward confrontation that surfaces truth—as it was perceived and as it is now—and then urges the reader to get on with life in the time remaining. So, perhaps it is a "feel good" book!

Donna Marie Bradesca, OSU, D.Min.
Director of Adult faith Formation
St. Bernadette Parish
Westlake, Ohio

EUCHARISTIC WITNESS

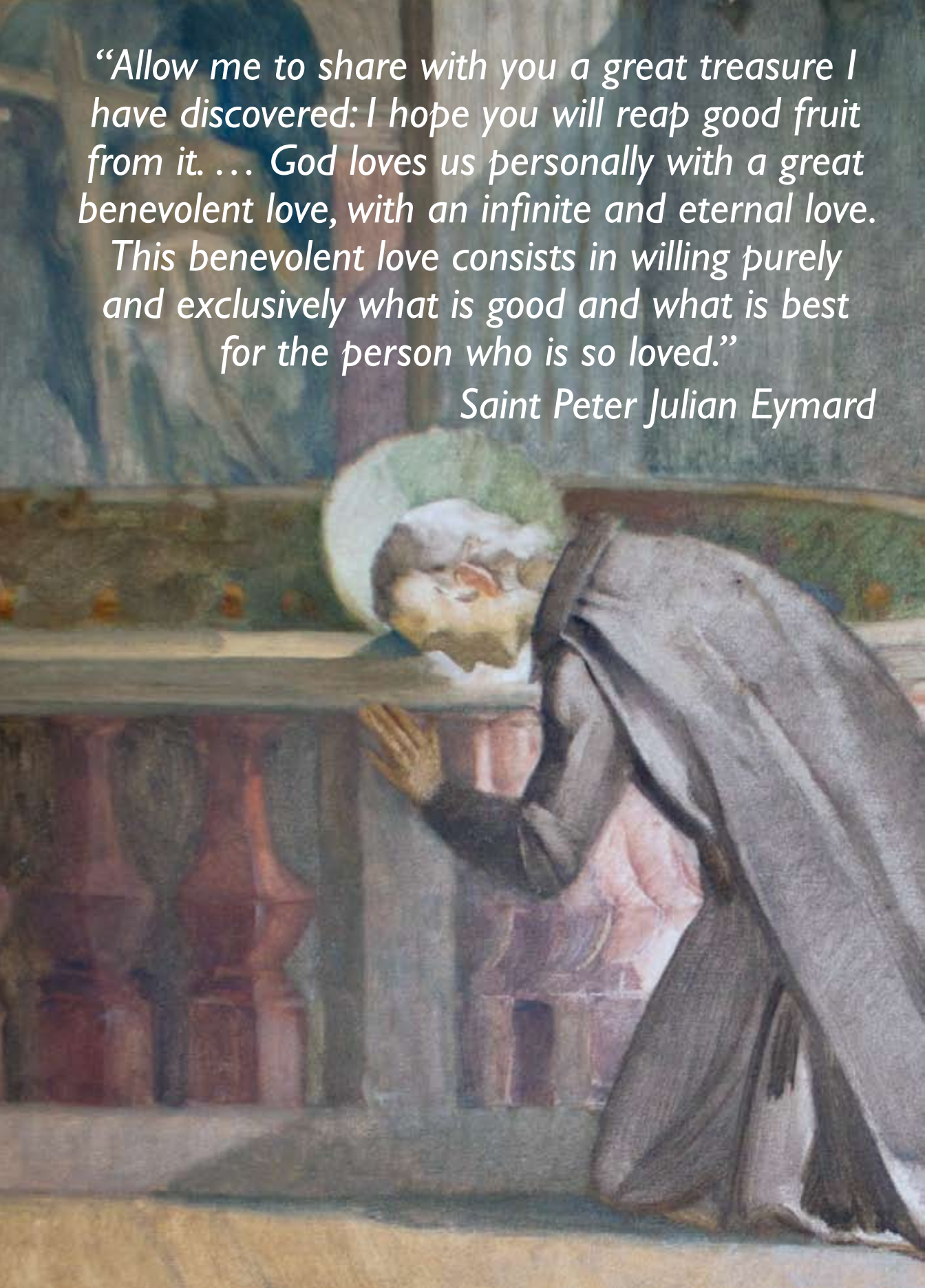
Philip C. Kolin

Hattiesburg, MS

For the last seven years, I have committed to spend one hour each week from 1:00am to 2:00am in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament at one of our local parishes. Undoubtedly, one of the greatest gifts I have received from eucharistic adoration is peace, this calm, tender embrace of my Savior before whom I sit, kneel, and listen. Peace is the cornerstone of faith. Christ's first words to the disciples after the resurrection were, "Peace be with you" (Jn 20: 19-20). The Mass herald's peace numerous times from the presider's invocation "peace be with you," to exchanging the "Sign of Peace."

Adoration has become my defense and refuge from the busyness of the world. As the poet William Wordsworth put it, "the world is too much with us." But this is not the case in adoration. Sitting silently, with my eyes closed and my heart and mind open, I wait to receive what God wants to share with me: the wisdom, counsel, guidance, or message God wants me to have and lead my life by. All God asks me to do is to listen for that small voice Elijah heard in the cave. Visiting Christ in that golden monstrance on the altar, I am prepared to hear and praise God. Many times Jesus tells me just to rest in Him, be at peace… trust, trust, trust.

In adoration, I am on God's time, not the world's time, with its quotas and worries. In fact, I am always surprised when the individuals scheduled for the next hour (2:00am to 3:00am) of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament arrive. I cannot believe that an hour has passed so quickly. God has taken me out of the world of clocks and watches in order to get to know, hear, and converse with Christ in God's immortal time. The only way I can hear God is by surrendering--both my time and my self--which opens the door to peace. I am at my most peacefully present in Adoration.



"Allow me to share with you a great treasure I have discovered: I hope you will reap good fruit from it. . . . God loves us personally with a great benevolent love, with an infinite and eternal love. This benevolent love consists in willing purely and exclusively what is good and what is best for the person who is so loved."

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

"Sow in good season, and gather together, and open your barns when it is time to do so; and plant in season, and let the clusters be cut when they are ripe, and launch boldly in spring, and draw your ship on shore again at the beginning of winter, when the sea begins to rage. And let there be to you also a time for war and a time for peace; a time to marry, and a time to abstain from marrying; a time for friendship, and a time for discord, if this be needed; and in short a time for everything, if you will follow Solomon's advice. And it is best to do so, for the advice is profitable. But the work of your salvation is one upon which you should be engaged at all times…."

Gregory of Nazianzus
On Holy Baptism, Oration 40.14-15