

# Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality



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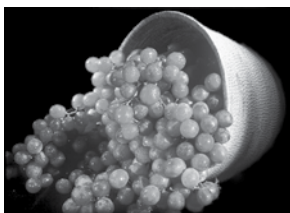
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# *Emmanuel Magazine*

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 120 Number 2



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## FROM THE EDITOR

How much do Americans spend annually on staying fit? The figure is astronomical—in excess of \$60 billion on weight-loss programs and products, health club memberships, gyms, diet drinks, and supplements. According to data from the International Monetary Fund, the economies of 100 countries did not produce in 2012 what we put out each year to stay fit. And that does not include healthcare costs.

The facts show that we are obsessed with physical health and fitness. What about our spiritual health and well-being?

The great penitential season of Lent starts on March 5, Ash Wednesday. *The Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy* states: “Lent precedes and prepares for Easter. It is a time to hear the word of God, to convert, to prepare for and remember baptism, to be reconciled with God and one’s neighbor, and of more frequent recourse to the ‘arms of Christian penance’: prayer, fasting, and good works.”

Later in the same text, we hear: “Notwithstanding the secularization of contemporary society, the Christian faithful, during Lent, are clearly conscious of the need to turn the mind towards those realities which really count, which require gospel commitment and integrity of life which, through self-denial of those things which are superfluous, are translated into good works and solidarity with the poor and needy” (96-97).

From its origins, of course, Lent has been about the preparation of candidates for initiation into the Christian life through baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist. But Lent is also about the renewal of the already-initiated, about “getting fit spiritually,” through more dynamic discipleship living.

A good place to begin is by *Looking into the mirror*. How often have we stood before a mirror and acknowledged the need to change our habits?

In *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis speaks of one of the spiritual habits we might well cultivate in this season: joy. He writes: "One of the more serious temptations which stifles boldness and zeal is a defeatism which turns us into querulous and disillusioned pessimists, 'sourpusses'" (85).

In Preface I of Lent, we pray: "For by your gracious gift each year, your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts *with the joy* of minds made pure, so that, more eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that you bestow on your sons and daughters."

Secondly, by *Looking into the soul*. Each of us can ask, what is the quality of my relationship with God? Is there fire within me, energy, zeal for the Gospel, and love of the Lord Jesus Christ?

In a book of prayers published posthumously, the great Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner confessed:

Only in love can I find you, my God. In love, the gates of my soul spring open, allowing me to breathe a new air of freedom and forget my own petty self. In love, my whole being streams forth out of the rigid confines of narrowness and anxious self-assertion, which make me a prisoner of my own poverty and emptiness. In love, all the powers of my soul flow out toward you, wanting never more to return, but to lose themselves completely in you, since by your love you are the inmost center of my heart, closer to me than I am to myself" (*Prayers for a Lifetime*, New York, Crossroad, 1989, 13).

Lastly, by *Looking into the heart*. The heart is the abode of affection and compassion. God's grace can renew stony hearts that have grown cold and indifferent to others' suffering and pain, and replace them with hearts of flesh that again radiate understanding and warmth to those around us. The traditional Lenten practice of almsgiving, expressed in deeds of self-denial, charity, and justice, is an invaluable help in this.

Let's "get fit" (spiritually) this Lent!



Anthony Schueller, SSS  
Editor



## EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

### Six Words Tell the Mystery

by Anthony Schueller, SSS

Ernest Hemingway is, in the estimation of many, the quintessential modern American writer, known as much for his tumultuous lifestyle, failed relationships, and struggles with inner demons as for his understated, economical style of writing. Hemingway is renowned for such novels as *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and *The Old Man and the Sea*.

Carolyn Kellogg, staff writer for the *Los Angeles Times* specializing in books, authors, and publishing, says: "Ernest Hemingway's writing style was significant because he was so brief and seemingly straightforward. Whereas other writers were writing very long sentences, Hemingway came in and stomped on them with his short little sentences, like army boots." Hemingway's style was shaped by his early years as a newspaper journalist in Kansas City, war correspondent, and by his wide-armed embrace of life in all its complexity.

A famous Hemingway legend concerns a challenge to him—perhaps to settle a drinking bet or to silence a fellow author—to write a great story in a few words. The narrative goes that Hemingway claimed he could do so in six words, and what he came up with was "For Sale: baby shoes never used." Known as "flash fiction," this literary genre has spawned online blogs and inspired homework assignments in high school and college writing classes.

I must say that when I first heard of "For Sale: baby shoes never used," my interest was piqued. I thought about what might be behind the words. Were the unused baby shoes simply an unneeded baby shower gift or did some sad fate befall the child and/or the parents? I was profoundly moved. On a theological-liturgical level, I wondered if it might be possible to write of the Eucharist in six words or less—to "tell the story" of this ritual which is so central to our life, our faith, and our mission as Catholics.



## Touching the Mystery

In a Corpus Christi homily given in Buenos Aires in 2009, Pope Francis (then Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio) said: "In the Eucharist, which Jesus had 'ardently desired' (Lk 22:15) to share with us, [the] dialogue of the covenant attains all of its power in the humility of the Lord's offering. ...It is here that the Eucharist, even if at times we may lay it aside for a while, is always reborn at the important moments of our life. Our Lord accompanies us on the way, even though we don't realize it, and there is always a moment in which, at the breaking of the bread, our eyes are opened and we recover the memory of his love. This is what it is to celebrate the Eucharist: to recover, or reclaim, the memory of his love."

*Can we tell the story of the Eucharist and the Lord's paschal mystery in just six words?*

He continues, "Jesus anticipated in the Eucharist the gift of himself that he was going to carry out on the cross. He concentrated in the Eucharist all of his love. For this reason, the Eucharist has the power to open our eyes, to make us 'remember,' to flood the memory of our heart with love. The Eucharist turns us into contemporaries of the cross and resurrection of Jesus. It maintains us in the covenant of love with our Lord until he comes" (Pope Francis, *Encountering Christ*, New Rochelle, Scepter, 2013, 75-76).

Pope Francis' homily echoes the liturgical and theological tradition of the church from its earliest days. Vatican II's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, states: "[From apostolic times onward] the church has never failed to come together to celebrate the paschal mystery: reading those things 'which were in all the Scriptures concerning him' (Lk 24:27); celebrating the Eucharist, in which 'the victory and triumph of the Lord are again made present' (Trent, Session 22); and at the same time giving thanks to God 'for his inexpressible gift' (2 Cor 9:15) in Christ Jesus, 'in praise of his glory' (Eph 1:2), through the power of the Holy Spirit" (6).

These quotes underscore what the church has believed and professed through the ages, namely, that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (see 1 Cor 11:26).

The paschal mystery of Jesus Christ—his dying and rising—is at the heart of the eucharistic faith and practice of Catholicism. Can we tell the story of the Eucharist and the Lord's paschal mystery in just six words? Here is an attempt to do so.



## Six Words: Remembering Love . . .

*Remembering.* “Do this in memory of me.” The command of Jesus to memorialize his death in the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup is found in the Pauline tradition of the institution of the Eucharist (1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 22:14-20). And, as the respected English liturgical scholar Dom Gregory Dix remarked in his 1945 classic *The Shape of the Liturgy*, perhaps no other command in human history has been so faithfully observed.

“Remembrance” (in Greek, *anamnesis*) is central in Jewish religious experience; and the psalmist’s call to “remember the deeds of the Lord” (Ps 77:12) has reverberated through the ages in the Jerusalem temple, in far-flung synagogues, and in the homes of devout believers.

Jewish remembrance is more than the capacity to recall past persons and events, even saving ones. Frank C. Senn, in *The New Dictionary of Sacramental Worship* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 1990) notes that “the Greek word is almost untranslatable in English. ‘Memorial,’ ‘commemoration,’ ‘remembrance’ all suggest a recollection of the past, whereas *anamnesis* means making present an object or person from the past. Sometimes, the word actualization has been used to indicate the force of *anamnesis*” (45). Through rituals and words, then, and especially in the retelling of the sacred narrative of God’s action, a past event lives again and its power can be appropriated by those who share it in the present.

*“The Eucharist has the power to open our eyes, to make us ‘remember,’ to flood the memory of our heart with love.”*

God’s greatest deed on behalf of Israel is commemorated annually in the feast of Passover. By it, Jews experience God’s liberating power anew in the hopes and aspirations of their people and of all humanity, and they look forward to its perfect realization “next year in Jerusalem!” For Christians, God’s greatest saving deed, surpassing the Exodus and on behalf of all humanity, is the new covenant effected in Christ’s sacrifice on Calvary and memorialized in the Eucharist.

*Love.* Ancient peoples worshipped their gods for various reasons: to win forgiveness, to allay punishment, to show devotion, to seek blessings or favors. Their deities needed to be placated in order to keep them from wreaking havoc in human affairs or to stir them to action.



Only the Jews held—largely as a result of the insistent preaching of the prophets—that their God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, loved them and had entered into a covenant of faithfulness to assure their happiness and well-being.

The prophet Hosea, who lived approximately eight centuries before the time of Jesus, is known as the Prophet of Divine Love. His own life mirrored the message he proclaimed to God's people.

Hosea loved a beautiful woman, Gomer, a prostitute whom he married at God's command. Repeatedly, he forgave her erring ways and sought to woo her, to bring her back to himself in tenderness and love: "I will allure her now; I will lead her into the wilderness, and speak persuasively to her" (Hos 2:14). Hosea was committed to Gomer, as God was committed to his people. Christ will reveal in time the perfection of God's love.

### ... Freely Given

It is ironic that a once self-reliant Pharisee and rigorist who prided himself on his devotion to the law and traditions of Judaism, and his observance of them as the source of righteousness, should become the foremost preacher of the Gospel of grace. When Saul the persecutor met the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, his religious worldview changed radically. Paul the apostle came to see and proclaim the utter gratuity of salvation in the mysterious plan of God, a plan "hidden from ages past" (see Eph 3:1-11).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "... Justification comes from the grace of God. Grace is favor, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God, adoptive sons, partakers of the divine nature and of eternal life" (1996).

Hosea loved his wife Gomer faithfully, enduringly. The perfection of God's love is shown in this way, as Paul asserts in his letter to the Romans,

For Christ, while we were still helpless, yet died at the appointed time for the ungodly. Indeed, only with difficulty does one die for a just person, though perhaps for a good person one might even find courage to die. But God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (5:6-8).

Pope Francis reminds us that in every Eucharist, we seek "to recover, or reclaim, the memory of his love" and live in its power.



Blessed Teresa of Calcutta recognized the intimate connection between the love of Christ on Calvary two thousand years ago and the love of Christ in the Eucharist. Paraphrasing her words we can say that when we look at the crucifix, we understand how much Jesus loved us then; when we take part in the Eucharist, we understand how much Jesus loves us now.

When the love is so real, and so redemptive, and the memory so strong, “the Eucharist turns us into contemporaries of the cross and resurrection of Jesus.”

### ... Redeeming All

In the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, we read: “Justification has been merited for us by the passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all” (1992).

God’s love for his creatures is everlasting. And it is a love that touches all aspects of our human life and reality, especially the sin that distorts the divine image within us and alienates us from God and one another. In the great act of liberation which was the Exodus, God set the people of the covenant free from bondage and servitude in Egypt. They experienced God as a liberator.

In the sacrifice of the paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ, God has broken the bonds of sin and selfishness for all people of every time, place, and circumstance. It is, quoting Pope Benedict XVI in his homily at World Youth Day in Germany in August 2005, “the hour in which love triumphs.” We share in this hour, he tells us, when we “allow ourselves, through the celebration of the Eucharist, to be drawn into that process of transformation that the Lord intends to bring about.”

Six words tell the story of the Eucharist and the Lord’s paschal mystery: *Remembering love freely given, redeeming all*. Write your own. Tell your story of this timeless ritual and of the saving mystery it proclaims.

I thank Bishop Robert F. Morneau for inspiring this reflection.





## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

### Jean Daniélou on the Eucharist

by Dennis Billy, CSsR

Born at Neuilly not far from Paris, Jean Daniélou, SJ, (1905-1974) was the son of a French politician and an educator and foundress of a well-known school for girls. He studied at the Sorbonne, passed his comprehensives in grammar in 1927, and entered the Jesuits in 1929. He taught for a time at a boys' school in Poitiers, did his theological training at Fourvière in Lyons, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1938.

During the Second World War, he served as a military chaplain in the French air force until the Nazi takeover of France in 1940, after which time he continued his studies in the church fathers and ancient Christian literature. In 1943, he completed his doctoral thesis on the theology and mysticism of Gregory of Nyssa. That same year, he was awarded a doctorate in literature from the Sorbonne and appointed to the prestigious Chair of Christian Origins at the Institut Catholique de Paris. From there, he embarked on a remarkable academic career that eventually made him one of the foremost Catholic theologians of his day. He served as a theological expert (*peritus*) at the Second Vatican Council, became a bishop and cardinal in 1969, and was elected to the Académie Française in 1972.

A prolific author and founding member of both *Sources Chrétiennes* and the international theological journal *Communio*, his major works include *The Bible and the Liturgy* (1956), *Primitive Christian Symbols* (1961), *Why the Church?* (1972), and his three-volume work on the history of Christian doctrine before the Council of Nicea: *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* (1964), *Gospel Message and Hellenistic Culture* (1973), and *The Origins of Latin Christianity* (1976). He died in Paris in 1974 under what was thought at the time to be strange and unusual circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

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

### Daniélou's Theological Outlook

Daniélou was one of the leading figures in the mid-twentieth century renewal known as the Nouvelle Théologie or the movement of



Ressourcement, which was an attempt to address the pressing theological issues of the day by returning to the sources of the church's past in the hope of getting in touch with the deeper (and often forgotten) truths of the faith, and thus move the tradition forward.

This attempt at theological renewal looked to the past not out of mere antiquarian interest, but to uncover its relevance for the present and make a genuine theological contribution for future generations. Along with such figures as Yves Congar, Henri de Lubac, and Henri Bouillard, he delved into the sources of the church's antique past and found fertile soil from which to construct a theological vision that was both continuous with the past and relevant for the believing community of his day.

Daniélou's study of the early sources of Jewish, Hellenistic, and Latin Christianity gave him a wealth of knowledge about the earliest Christian communities regarding their emerging beliefs, evolving structures, and developing modes of worship. They also led him to study the powerful symbols and typologies that permeated the mindset of early Christians and enabled them to weather the storms of external persecution and internal dissension.

Such knowledge provided him with a firm basis from which to examine a wide range of issues within the church of his day and led him to offer creative and innovative solutions, many of which received a warm welcome and others of which were severely criticized. His work and that of others in the Ressourcement movement laid much of the theological groundwork for the Second Vatican Council. Their attempt to renew the church by returning to its sources enabled her to assess her present situation from a position of historical awareness and move into the future with a deep sense of confidence in God's abiding presence and providential care.

Daniélou's theological outlook was deeply tied to his service to the church. After being made a bishop and cardinal by Pope Paul VI, he focused his energies on a comprehensive program of apologetics, catechesis, and popular defense of the faith during the turbulent years immediately after the close of the council. If his scholarly output suffered somewhat as a result of this decisive turn toward the general audience, his love for the church deepened and grew all the more intense.

His ability to combine deep scholarship with an ardent promotion of the Catholic faith reflects the deepest values of both the Nouvelle Théologie and his Jesuit order's educative mission within the church. He

worked tirelessly and suffered greatly to promote the purpose of renewal envisioned by the council. His views on the church, the sacraments, and the Eucharist reflect his deep love for the church's theological tradition, its relevance for the present, and the hope it carries for the future.<sup>2</sup>

## Daniélou on the Eucharist

In his teaching on the Eucharist, Daniélou emphasizes its common origin with all the other sacraments: "Christ formally institutes them during his ministry, he makes them efficacious by his death and resurrection, he causes them to be brought into use at Pentecost."<sup>3</sup> "The Eucharist," he maintains, "was instituted by Christ in the full reality of its signs and content by a mysterious anticipation of his redemptive action."<sup>4</sup> He is especially interested in examining the meaning of the various signs and symbols that make up the eucharistic celebration.

Daniélou points out that during the Easter Vigil the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist formed a single whole and that they immediately succeeded one another to make up the rites of initiation and that, in this context, the Eucharist included three main parts: the preparation or offertory, the sacrifice or great prayer of thanksgiving over the bread and wine, and the Communion or distribution of the consecrated elements.<sup>5</sup> He further points out that two themes constantly occur in the eucharistic catecheses leading up to the celebration: "... the Mass is a sacramental representation of the sacrifice of the cross; the Mass is a sacramental participation in the heavenly liturgy."<sup>6</sup>

According to Daniélou, the Easter Vigil represents the summit of the church's liturgical commemoration of Christ's paschal mystery. He underscores the unity of the entire process of initiation: "... from baptism to Communion, this is all a participation in Christ, dead and risen again."<sup>7</sup> In his mind, "there is no other mystery than the paschal mystery; this is the mystery which is the unique object of the whole sacramental life, and which renders present in all times and in all places to apply to souls its life-giving fruits."<sup>8</sup>

The Eucharist, he points out, is full of Old Testament figures: "It is the anticipation of the eschatological banquet, the sacrament of union, the source of spiritual joy, the document of the covenant."<sup>9</sup> At the same time, he insists that it is important to remember the two themes that dominate the theology of the Eucharist from very early on: "... that of the efficacious memorial of the passion, the resurrection, and the ascension, and that of participation in the sacrifice and the banquet of heaven."<sup>10</sup> These themes



form the basis of the church's understanding of the eucharistic celebration and must be included in any attempt at liturgical renewal.

In his study of the many symbolisms present in the eucharistic celebration, Daniélou points to the Old Testament as the primary source for the church's understanding of the ritual meal and sacrifice: "If we wish to understand why it was in the form of a meal in which bread and wine are shared that Christ instituted the sacrament of his sacrifice, we must refer to the allusions to the Old Testament contained in these rites, allusions which were present to the mind of Christ, rather than to any symbolism that we might think up for ourselves."<sup>11</sup>

For this reason, we see in the eucharistic elements of bread and wine "... an allusion to the sacrifice of Melchisedech, to the manna in the desert, to the meal in the temple; by this we understand that the Eucharist is a spiritual and universal sacrifice; that it is the nourishment of the people of God in their journey toward the land of promise; that it is, finally, the participation of all nations in the communion of divine blessings."<sup>12</sup> For Daniélou, the Eucharist cannot be cut off or separated from its Old Testament roots, for to do so would undermine "the unity of the plan of God revealed by the correspondences between the two covenants."<sup>13</sup> The sacrament, for him, "represents ... the central mystery around which the whole biblical significance of the meal is developed."<sup>14</sup>

In his treatment of the Eucharist, Daniélou also makes a fundamental distinction between the universal priesthood and the ministerial priesthood. The latter, in his mind, is intimately related to the celebration of the Eucharist: "The *sacerdos* is the one who offers the sacrifice in the name of the community."<sup>15</sup> The Eucharist, in this respect, is intimately tied to the ministerial priesthood, for the latter possesses an ontological character specifically ordered to the offering sacrifice on behalf of the believing community.<sup>16</sup> The priesthood thus has a specific nature, a definitive character, and is closely linked to Christ's own celibacy and priestly mission.<sup>17</sup> It is through the Eucharist and the other sacraments that, assisted by the Holy Spirit, the church "continues to be the source of that holiness which makes us living spiritual beings."<sup>18</sup>

## Observations

This brief exposition of Daniélou's teaching on the Eucharist underscores its deep roots in the sources of the Catholic tradition and its importance for understanding God's presence and activity in the world today. The following observations highlight some of the spiritual and theological



underpinnings of his view of the sacrament and their relevance for today's Catholics.

1. To begin with, Daniélou's views on the Eucharist were shaped by his interest in the Jewish, Hellenic, and Latin sources of the Christian tradition. His involvement in the *Nouvelle Théologie* led him to delve deeply into the foundational texts of the church's spiritual, theological, and liturgical past with the hope of pointing the church toward the path of renewal. In his examination of these sources, he gained an appreciation for the essential role the Eucharist played in nearly every aspect of the church's life. The sacrament, he came to see, brought believers into close, intimate contact with Christ's paschal mystery and was considered both a participation in the heavenly banquet and an immersion in Christ's sacrificial offering on the cross. From these key insights, he then saw how the church in its early eucharistic liturgies looked to the Old Testament for finding ways of explaining these aspects of the sacrament in the light of God's providential plan for the entire human family. When seen in this light, the Eucharist cannot be fully understood apart from its deep biblical roots and the impact they had on the life of Jesus and his closest followers.

*Daniélou's theological outlook was deeply tied to his service to the church.*

2. Daniélou's study of the doctrine and liturgy of the early church had a direct impact on the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Considered one of the leading voices of renewal in his day, his opinions on such themes as the nature of the church, the centrality of the eucharistic celebration, and the role of the ministerial priesthood carried great weight and were perceived as being very influential in shaping the direction of the council's reforms. This influence represents that side of *Ressourcement* which sought to bring the wisdom of the church's past to bear on its present concerns and pressing issues of the day. He believed that only by remaining true to the deepest roots of its spiritual, theological, and liturgical traditions would the church be in a position to be an effective evangelizing presence in the modern world. Daniélou thus looked to the past in order to shape the present and orient the church toward the future. His insights into the Eucharist came from his deep appreciation of the sacrament's central role in the life of the early church and a conviction that it should have a vital impact on today's believers.

3. In his study of the rites of initiation, Daniélou pointed out that in the early church's Easter Vigil celebration the sacraments of baptism,



confirmation, and the Eucharist succeeded one another immediately and were understood as forming a closely knit and integral unity. This insight highlighted the centrality of the Easter Vigil for the community of the faithful and demonstrated how it was seen as the most appropriate moment for catechumens to be immersed in Christ's paschal mystery and fully admitted into the church's ranks. At the Easter Vigil, catechumens were consecutively (and in close order) immersed in the waters of baptism, strengthened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and nourished with the body and blood of the risen Lord. Because this life-changing process of initiation took place within the context of the most important celebration in the liturgical year, it both highlighted the missionary character of the church (by admitting new members) and reflected the threefold creative, redemptive, and sanctifying dimensions of Christ's paschal mystery. Through his paschal mystery, in other words, Christ made (and makes) all things new by healing humanity of its sinfulness and elevating it through the transforming grace of the Spirit. These insights gave shape to the development of the rite of adult initiation for the post-Vatican II church.

*The Mass is a sacramental representation of the sacrifice of the cross and a sacramental participation in the heavenly liturgy.*

4. Daniélou's insight that the Eucharist represents "a mysterious anticipation of his redemptive action" goes to the heart of the church's evangelizing message. As a symbolic action of prophetic significance, the Eucharist both anticipates and embodies what it signifies. In this respect, it not only points to Jesus' salvific self-offering on Golgotha, but also makes it present. Moreover, since Jesus' death on the cross is itself intimately tied to the empty tomb, it follows that the Eucharist embodies the entire redemptive action of Jesus' passion, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Eucharist, in this respect, puts us in direct contact with Jesus' paschal mystery and enables us to participate in the life of the risen Christ. It looks to the redemptive mysteries of the past, makes them present for today's believers, and instills in them a hope of their ultimate transformation in the life of the glorified Lord. It embraces every dimension of time—past, present, future—and spreads Christ's redemptive action throughout the concrete dimensions of space and time.

5. Daniélou's study of the Old Testament figures (e.g., eschatological banquet, the sacrament of union, the source of spiritual

joy, the document of the covenant) gave the fathers of the early church the conceptual tools with which to understand the meaning of the Last Supper, and are especially significant because they are the very images and symbols that inhabited Jesus' prophetic imagination and inspired him to leave this sacred ritual in the hands of his disciples. These figures stand in strong continuity with the Old Testament prophets, Jesus' own prophetic vision, and the tradition of the early church. As the sacrament of the new covenant, the Eucharist thus represents the continuation of God's loving and providential care for his people, who are now understood as extending beyond the Jewish race to include anyone who looks to Jesus as their paschal Lamb, priestly mediator, and redeeming Lord. By making present Christ's eternal sacrifice and giving believers a foreshadowing of the messianic banquet, it offers a concrete way for them to gain access to the mysteries of their faith in their everyday lives.

6. Daniélou finds an intimate link between the Eucharist and the ministerial priesthood and identifies the priest as one who offers sacrifice on behalf of the community. This close connection between priest and Eucharist does not undermine the universal priesthood of all believers, but simply affirms their different degrees of participation in the one priesthood of Christ. Just as baptism gives an ontological sharing in the universal priesthood of Christ, so does ordination give a deeper ontological sharing in Christ's salvific self-offering. Daniélou maintains that there is "a difference of nature between the two" and that "they correspond to two dimensions of the Christian mystery which are opposite and complementary."<sup>19</sup> In his mind, there is no universal priesthood without the ministerial priesthood: "Just as the incarnation is the condition of the ascension, so, too, the ministerial sacrifice is the condition of the universal priesthood."<sup>20</sup> The first belongs to the order of efficient causality; the second, to the order of finality.<sup>21</sup> He believed that the crisis in the priesthood after the Second Vatican Council stemmed from a failure to make a clear distinction between the two.

7. Finally, when Daniélou was consecrated bishop and made a cardinal in obedience to the request of Paul VI, life for him became markedly different. While so much of his work prior to the council was dedicated to a meticulous scholarly examination of the sources of the Christian tradition with a view toward church renewal, after the council much of his energy was devoted to implementing the reforms of the council and defending them from possible misinterpretations. This change in focus represented not a departure from the movement of *Ressourcement*, but a deeper understanding of its purpose and scope. For the reforms of the council to be fully implemented, it was necessary



to have authorities in place who understood their origin, scope, and purpose. Paul VI identified Daniélou as someone who would help him implement the changes initiated by the council and suffer with him for the sake of the church. Until his untimely death in 1974, he worked tirelessly to promote the theological, liturgical, and spiritual reforms of the council. The centrality of the Eucharist for the life of the church and its roots in and mediation of Christ's paschal mystery were foremost in his mind.

Although these observations do not do justice to the breadth and scope of Daniélou's teaching on the Eucharist, they underscore some of its major features and highlight the impact it had on the church's program of renewal. If nothing else, they show how his deep interest in Ressourcement helped to shape the church's thinking on a wide range of issues and how it placed the mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection at the very heart of Christian theology and worship.

*The Easter Vigil represents the summit of the church's liturgical commemoration of Christ's paschal mystery.*

## Conclusion

Jean Daniélou was one of the leading Catholic theologians of the twentieth century and an outspoken agent of renewal before, during, and after the Second Vatican Council. His involvement in the Nouvelle Théologie and its work of Ressourcement brought to the fore insights that had previously been overlooked, marginalized, or simply forgotten. His study of the Jewish, Hellenistic, and Latin sources of the church's past brought a badly needed historical consciousness to a tradition that until then had relied too heavily on scholastic manuals that were overly abstract and removed from their sources.

His teaching on the Eucharist reflects both a return to the sources of the church's spiritual, theological, and liturgical past and a capacity to discern the central elements of the tradition. In his sifting through these ancient Christian texts, he was able to identify the Eucharist's roots in Christ's paschal mystery, its intimate connection with the other sacraments of initiation, its reliance on Old Testament figures for the conceptual and imaginative exposition of its meaning, and its constituent relationship to the ministerial priesthood.

These and many other insights of Daniélou's related to the nature of the church and her sacraments contributed greatly to the theological groundwork prior to the council, influenced the deliberations, and affected the implementation of its reforms. In this respect, his influence on the council was insightful, profound, and lasting. He was one of the great twentieth-century voices for church renewal, and his legacy continues to inspire those both within and without the church who yearn for authentic development and a program of seasoned change.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> For a brief biographical sketch, see Maurice F. De Lange, "Foreword" in Jean Daniélou, *Why the Church?*, trans. Maurice F. De Lange (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974), xiii-xiv. For the unusual circumstances surrounding Daniélou's untimely death, see Brian Van Hove, "The Lasting Legacy of Cardinal Daniélou," *The Catholic World Report* (October 3, 2012), [http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1629/the\\_lasting\\_legacy\\_of\\_cardinal\\_danielou.aspx#.UnJYw5GQfI](http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1629/the_lasting_legacy_of_cardinal_danielou.aspx#.UnJYw5GQfI) (accessed, November 1, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> See Brian Van Hove, "The Lasting Legacy of Cardinal Daniélou" (Internet access cited above). For an excellent synthesis of Daniélou's biblical, theological, and spiritual vision, see his book *Christ Among Us*, trans. Walter Roberts (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961).

<sup>3</sup> Daniélou, *Christ Among Us*, 135.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and Liturgy*, University of Notre Dame Liturgical Studies, vol. 111 (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1956), 127.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, 128.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, 140.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, 141.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, 160-61.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, 176.

<sup>14</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Lord of History: Reflections on the Inner Meaning of History*, trans. Nigel Abercrombie (London/Chicago: Longmans/Henry Regnery, 1958), 240.

<sup>15</sup> Daniélou, *Why the Church?*, 32.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, 34, 37.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, 38.

<sup>18</sup> Jean Daniélou, *The Faith Eternal and the Man of Today*, trans. Paul Joseph Oligny (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1970), 100.

<sup>19</sup> Daniélou, *Why the Church?*, 31.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 33.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 33-34.



## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

### Lenten Saints—I: Patrick

by Owen F. Cummings

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"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us, while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:1-2).

This quotation from the Letter to the Hebrews provides us with context for approaching these two feast days of (chronologically) Saint Patrick and Saint Joseph, both of which occur during the holy season of Lent. Hebrews reminds us of our corporate identity in Christ, that we are not simply individuals who happen to be Christian, but rather that we are members of Christ's whole and holy body, in that phrase of Saint Augustine, the *totus Christus*, the whole Christ, head and members.

That is the meaning behind "so great a cloud of witnesses." Remembering these witnesses, we are spurred on toward a fuller and deeper communion in Christ-with-God. We keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, yes, but on March 17 and March 19 we celebrate in a special way two witnesses who help us stay focused on Jesus by exemplifying special qualities of the Christian life.

### March 17—Commemoration of Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick (circa 385-circa 461) is very popular among the Irish and, indeed, has become something of a cultural figure in the United States. Not too many people, however, recall that he is a patristic figure, to be reckoned with the fathers and the mothers of the early church, and moreover, a part of the early church about which we know so very little—Christianity in Britain in the fourth and fifth centuries. He was a Christian bishop "from the embattled edge of a crumbling (Roman) Empire."

Thomas O'Loughlin, a specialist in Celtic Christianity, history, and theology, is led to say: "Patrick is probably the best-known fifth-century Christian in the world today. Theologians may argue that Augustine (354-430) was, and perhaps still is, more influential for how Christians present their beliefs, but



how many New Yorkers parade on 28 August (his feast day)?”<sup>1</sup>

How exactly Christianity arrived in Britain is unknown, but possibly it came about through anonymous traders and soldiers sharing their newfound faith with others. If so, this would be a premier example of what we might call the “old evangelization”: ordinary people witnessing to their faith in pagan territory and winning others to the love of Christ.

There are two texts which are safely ascribed to Patrick, the *Confession* and the *Letter to the Soldiers of Coroticus*, the latter probably written first. In fact, these are the only two documents that can be claimed to come from the church in Britain/Ireland in the fifth century. That makes them doubly precious. They are compared with the works of other patristic authors who were his contemporaries and warmly described by Thomas O’Loughlin as follows: “While the sermons of Caesarius of Arles and the wise instructions of Eucherius of Lyons bring us face-to-face with profound Christian learning, Patrick’s works bring us a living human being. We read Patrick’s two surviving documents and feel we are coming into contact with a real man of flesh and blood. We sense that he puts himself into his writings; we sense his hurts, angers, hopes, and fears.”<sup>2</sup>

It is from the *Confession* that we derive what we know about Patrick. The *Confession* is a literary genre, of which two major extant examples in ancient literature are the *Confessions* of Saint Augustine, written about the year 400 when he was a comparatively young man, and the *Confession* of Saint Patrick, written during the fifth century, possibly a short time before his death.<sup>3</sup>

Patrick was born in Roman Britain about 385 of a Christian family. He was the son of a *decurio* (civic official), who was also a deacon, and his name was Calpornius. A *decurio* raised taxes for the imperial Roman government, but what he failed to raise he had to make good out of his own pocket. We are also informed that he was the grandson of a presbyter, Potitus.

Patrick’s first language was probably an early form of Celtic, his second language was fifth-century Latin. His birthplace is called Bannavem Taburniae, which means something like “at Bannavem of the tavern.” Its precise location is unknown. However, speculation may be a little fruitful here.

The shortest sea crossing from Britain to Ireland was from Galloway in southwest Scotland, where we know there was a Christian community by circa 500 at the latest. That is a fact. Patrick’s one known correspondent, Coroticus, was an ally of the Northern Picts. That, too, is a fact, and the fact that would likely place his birthplace in southwest Scotland, possibly



Strathclyde or possibly Galloway. Alan Macquarrie argues well though not indisputably for southwest Scotland as the provenance of Patrick.<sup>4</sup> Other scholars, for example, Richard P. C. Hanson, locate “Bannavem of the tavern” in southwest Britain. Perhaps along with Macquarrie, I ought to let my ethnocentricity—I was born in the west of Scotland—win out on this occasion.

Máire de Paor, a historian of Celtic Christianity, having reconstructed what is possible to know about Roman Britain, describes with great probability Patrick’s situation: “Patrick is in what would seem to be a relatively peaceful and stable enclave of Roman Britain, a free man living in a Roman city, receiving a Roman education, spending his holidays at his father’s estate in the country, with servants at his beck and call, complete with all the luxuries of a Roman villa; he is secure in his father’s love, enjoys noble status, with many friends in an area where there is a large concentration of Christians; this energetic, carefree, thoughtless youth is protected by both Roman and British law and can express himself in two languages. His worldly future seems secured. . . . Then, suddenly, disaster strikes!”<sup>5</sup> The disaster was his enslavement.

### Patrick’s First Conversion

At about age 16, Patrick was seized and enslaved by Irish raiders—a common experience whereby raiders would come by boat to coastal areas to find slaves—somewhere between the Clyde estuary in the west of Scotland and the River Severn in the southwest of England. According to his own account, he was put to work as a shepherd in the west of Ireland for six years at a place called Silva Vocluti, “the forest of Foclut,” beside the western sea. This latter term, “the western sea,” is undoubtedly the Atlantic Ocean. It may be the case that “the forest of Foclut” is the Wood of Fochoill, Killala Bay, County Mayo.<sup>6</sup>

Before his capture, Patrick tells us: “I did not know the true God” (*Confession*, 1). Interpretation of the meaning of these words varies, but it may be nothing more than the fact that as a youth prior to his capture he did not take his Christian faith too seriously. The eminent Latinist Ludwig Bieler writes: “For the worldly youth that he had been, though a nominal Christian, captivity had become a means of spiritual conversion.”<sup>7</sup> It may be the case that like his contemporary, Saint Augustine, while he came from a Christian family, his own baptism was deferred until a later time when he was ready to make a definitive commitment. Of this difficult period in his life, Patrick wrote: “After I came to Ireland—every day I had to tend sheep, and many times a day I prayed—the love of God and his

fear came to me more and more, and my faith was strengthened. And my spirit was moved so that in a single day I would say as many as a hundred prayers, and almost as many in the night, and this even when I was staying in the woods and on the mountain. And—come hail, rain, or snow—I was up before dawn to pray, and I sensed no evil for spiritual laziness within. I now understand this: at that time ‘the Spirit was fervent in me.’ (*Confession*, 16). This fervent turning to God in prayer is usually referred to as Patrick’s first conversion.

*Worldly as he was before his capture, Patrick’s captivity became a means of spiritual conversion.*

Encouraged by a dream, he escaped and made his way some 200 miles to the east coast of Ireland and there he found what was probably a pirate ship. After a voyage of three days, the ship likely landed in Britain, though Patrick does not actually name the place. Eventually, he made his way back to his home. “And after a few years, I was again with my parents in Britain, who welcomed me home as a son. They begged me in good faith after all my adversities to go nowhere else, not ever leave them again” (*Confession*, 23). The wish of Patrick’s parents was not to be granted.

## Patrick’s Second Conversion

Again, as a result of a dream, Patrick made the decision to train for the priesthood. In the dream, he hears the pagan Irish making a request of him, in language reminiscent of Paul’s experience at Troas in Acts 16:9-10: “We ask thee, boy, come and walk among us once more.” Patrick is, of course, writing in Latin, and he was certainly bilingual and even trilingual. His Latin is often described as crude and inelegant, suggesting that his theological formation took place in Britain, though other interpreters locate his priestly formation in France as a disciple of Saint Germanus of Auxerre. During this time, he confessed a sin to a close friend, perhaps a spiritual director before ordination. Máire de Paor suggests that this sin may have been idolatry, i.e., sun-worship, something that was prominent in the Druid communities of Britain and Ireland.

According to the *Chronicle* of Prosper of Aquitaine, in 431 Palladius was sent to the Irish as their first bishop. Prosper’s text lists important events in history with their dates. Although he depended upon lists of dates for events prior to his own life and time, it is generally recognized that for the period approximately 425-455 Prosper is reliable. For the year 431, he makes this statement: “Palladius, ordained by Pope Celestine, was



sent to the Irish who are believers in Christ as their first bishop.”We know nothing more about this man than this.”What prompted this action, who Palladius was, and what happened to him are all unknown.

This sentence in Prosper is the one occasion that Palladius appears on the radar screen of history.<sup>8</sup> So, it appears to be the case that there were Christians in Ireland before Patrick arrived. Patrick was appointed Palladius’ successor, so he must have been at least 30 years of age, the minimum age for bishops. At this time in the development of Christianity, people in Roman towns and cities had largely been converted to Christianity. The country people, however, were still largely pagan, and there was no sustained or organized effort to go out to convert the pagans. Máire de Paor notes: “Patrick’s mission to the Irish pagans was the exception. This fact alone gives him a unique place in the history of the church.”<sup>9</sup>

Patrick remained active as a bishop in Ireland for about 30 years. His mission concentrated on the northeast and possibly the northwest of Ireland, where the Gospel had not been preached before. He secured the protection of local kings and chieftains, something that was necessary as he toured the country extensively making converts, given the omnipresence of the native Druids, a constant danger. At this time in Ireland, there were no cities in the Roman fashion. The Romans had never conquered the island. In the Christianized Roman Empire, bishops and cities went together. Patrick established episcopal foundations with quasi-monastic chapters. He never mentions his own cathedral see, as it were, though Armagh may have been Patrick’s church. In the sources such as we have them, Armagh is not actually mentioned as Patrick’s see before the seventh century.

Patrick tells us in his *Confession* that his mission to the Irish was severely criticized by the British clergy, his *seniors*, i.e., senior bishops. The reasons for the criticism are various. He is accused of taking bribes for baptisms and ordinations. The sin, as noted probably sun-worship, that he had confessed earlier was made public by his friend. Perhaps the ultimate reason was Patrick’s demand for the excommunication of Coroticus, a British prince, probably from Dumbarton on the River Clyde in Scotland, who had conducted retaliatory raids in Ireland, killing and enslaving Irish Christians.

Patrick, of course, knew experientially what it was to be a slave, and he would have known about the sexual degradation to which women slaves were particularly subjected. He describes newly initiated Christians taken by Coroticus and his soldiers, with the oil of chrism scarcely dry on their foreheads. “The day after the anointed neophytes—still wearing

their white baptismal garb and with the fragrance of the chrism on their foreheads still about them—were cut down and cruelly put to the sword by these men . . ." (*Letter to Coroticus*, 3). Coroticus was a Christian and should have known better. Patrick requests the leaders of the Christian community that they insist on Coroticus doing penance: "It is not lawful to seek favor from men such as these, nor to eat food or drink with them; nor to accept their alms until they make satisfaction to God with painful penance and the shedding of tears; and free the baptized servants of God and the handmaids of Christ—for whom he was crucified and died" (*Letter to Coroticus*, 7). It is necessary, he believes, that this enslaving chieftain do penance, but it is no less necessary in his judgment that he free the slaves who are baptized. Patrick is the earliest Christian writer formally to protest slavery.

*In his writings, the bishop Patrick's words come straight from the heart and speak of a life filled with gratitude to God and a strong desire to preach the Gospel.*

The place of Patrick's death and burial is unknown, but tradition and scholarship both maintain the location of Downpatrick, County Down, and the north of Ireland.

The following extract from the *Confession* of Saint Patrick (chapters 14-16) gives us an indication of his prayer life. It is taken from the Office of Readings in the Liturgy of the Hours for March 17: "I give unceasing thanks to my God, who kept me faithful in the day of my testing. Today I can offer him sacrifice with confidence, giving myself as a living victim to Christ, my Lord, who kept me safe through all my trial. . . . God showed me how to have faith in him forever, as one who is never to be doubted. He answered my prayer in such a way that in the last days, ignorant though I am, I might be bold enough to take up so holy and so wonderful a task, and imitate in some degree those whom the Lord had so long ago foretold as heralds of his Gospel, bearing witness to all nations. . . . How did so great and salutary a gift come to me, the gift of knowing and loving God, though at the cost of homeland and family? I came to the Irish peoples to preach the Gospel and endure the taunts of unbelievers, putting up with reproaches about my earthly pilgrimage, suffering, many persecutions, even bondage, and losing my birthright of freedom for the benefit of others. If I am worthy, I am ready also to give up my life, without hesitation and most willingly, for his name. I want to spend myself in that country, even in death, if the Lord should grant me this favor. . . . It is among that people that I want to wait for the promise made by him, who assuredly never tells a lie. . . . This is our faith: believers are to come from



the whole world.”

It is easy to hear behind these words echoes of Paul and his letters. At the same time, one has the strong impression that these words are coming straight from the heart of Patrick. The prayer begins with a strong sense of gratitude—“I give unceasing thanks to my God. . . .” He acknowledges what his mission to the Irish peoples has cost him personally—“the gift of knowing and loving God, though at the cost of homeland and family.” His life as a witness to evangelization, to living in spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ—“This is our faith: believers are to come from the whole world.” The words of the prayer come over as lacking any sense of pretense, as genuine and authentic, as prayer coming from the inner depths of Patrick.

Irish-born patristic scholar and Anglican bishop Richard P. C. Hanson writes of Patrick at prayer: “Clearly, Patrick was a great man of prayer, and his prayer was nourished on biblical imagery and biblical language. . . . There is nothing whatever artificial or forced or extravagant about it. His piety is warm, deep, living, and never insincere.”<sup>10</sup>



### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Thomas O’Loughlin, *Saint Patrick: The Man and His Works* (London: SPCK, 1999), 2, 9.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas O’Loughlin, *op. cit.*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Máire B. de Paor, Patrick, *The Pilgrim Apostle of Ireland* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998), 9.

<sup>4</sup> Alan MacQuarrie, *The Saints of Scotland: Essays in Scottish Church History AD 450-1093* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1997), 41.

<sup>5</sup> Máire B. de Paor, *op. cit.*, 37. One of the values of the O’Loughlin and de Paor books is that they include the text, translated from Latin, of Patrick’s *Confession* and his *Letter to Coroticus*.

<sup>6</sup> Máire de Paor, *op. cit.*, 39, points out that archaeological research has established that this part of Ireland was a highly developed area, both economically and socially.

<sup>7</sup> Ludwig Bieler, “Patrick, St.,” *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1st ed., vol. 10, 1099.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas O’Loughlin, *op. cit.*, 15.

<sup>9</sup> Máire de Paor, *op. cit.*, 23-24.

<sup>10</sup> Richard P. C. Hanson, *Saint Patrick, His Origins and Career* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 205.





## EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

### Lenten Saints—II: Joseph

by Owen F. Cummings

We come to the second of two Lenten witnesses who help us stay focused on Jesus by exemplifying special qualities of the Christian life.

#### March 19—Solemnity of Saint Joseph

If we know so little about the historical Patrick, we know very much less about Joseph. Patrick has written two texts about which we may be certain, but Joseph wrote nothing.

Joseph was a common name in Judaism of the first century, after the patriarch Joseph, the son of Jacob. Outside the infancy narratives of the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, there are but a handful of incidental references to Joseph. In Matthew 13:55, he is not named but is described as “the carpenter.” In Luke 3:23, Joseph is named as the “supposed” father of Jesus. In John 1:45, the same point is made as Jesus is described as the “son of Joseph.” The same description is made in John 6:42.

Matthew 13:55 describes Joseph as a *tekton*, a “woodworker” or “carpenter” (see also Mk 6:3). He probably worked hard for a living, but it does not seem that the Holy Family would have lived necessarily in grinding poverty. Sepphoris, Herod’s new capital city of Galilee, was a well-to-do city, a city that would have offered plenty of work to a skilled craftsman like Joseph, and it was just a few miles from Nazareth. We should probably imagine Joseph, perhaps accompanied by Jesus, working regularly in Sepphoris. Joseph would probably not only have taught Jesus his own trade of *tekton*, but also something of the religious traditions and texts of Judaism because, as Monsignor John P. Meier puts it, Jesus certainly had “a reading knowledge imparted either directly by Joseph or by some more learned Jew procured for the purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

The Jewish historian Geza Vermes speculates a little more on Joseph as a carpenter. He makes the point that the terms “carpenter” and “son of a carpenter” are used in the Talmud to indicate a learned man. Though

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Vermes recognizes that it is impossible to be absolutely sure that the sayings in the Talmud were already in circulation in first-century Galilee, nonetheless he concludes that such connections may be age-old. And so, he posits that a description of Joseph as a *nagger*, the Hebrew word for “carpenter,” might indicate that he was considered wise and well versed in the Torah.<sup>2</sup> If that were so, Joseph would have been in an excellent position to pass on his faith to Jesus.

“Art and popular imagination have usually pictured Joseph as an old man. But this is surely a false idea.”<sup>3</sup> This description of Joseph as an old man is widespread. One example from a recent novel by P. D. James, as she describes a painting of the Holy Family, is as follows: “Mary was seated on a low stool with the naked Christ child resting on a white cloth on her lap. Her face was a pale and perfect oval, the mouth tender under a narrow nose, the heavily lidded eyes under thinly arched brows fixed on the child with an expression of resigned wonder. From a high smooth forehead, the strands of crimped auburn hair fell over her blue mantle to the delicate hands and fingers barely touching in prayer. The child gazed up at her with both hands raised, as if foreshadowing the crucifixion. Saint Joseph, red-coated, was seated to the right in the painting, a prematurely aged, half-sleeping custodian, heavily leaning on a stick.”<sup>4</sup>

Rabbis at the time taught that a man should be married about the age of 18, and one may take it as reasonably certain that was Joseph’s age when he was engaged to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The image of Joseph as an older man comes from the mid-second century apocryphal text *The Protoevangelium of James*. In this immensely influential text, “a wildly imaginative folk narrative,” Joseph is portrayed as an older man, as a widower with children by his previous wife.<sup>5</sup> The author of this text is seeking to protect the notion of Mary’s virginity, and so not only is Joseph portrayed as up in years but also as having had children by a former marriage, thus accounting for the references in the Gospels to “the brothers of Jesus.”

### The Infancy Narratives

The only other information about Joseph comes from Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2, the infancy narratives. Without getting into complex questions of historicity, we may note with Monsignor John P. Meier the peculiarity of these narratives. “Even in these two Gospels, events in the infancy narratives are almost never referred to once chapter 3 of each Gospel is reached. Thus, within Matthew and Luke themselves, the infancy narratives stand in relative isolation; they are distinct compositions stemming from

traditions different from those found elsewhere in the four Gospels—and indeed in the rest of the New Testament.”<sup>6</sup> These observations of Meier should make us somewhat cautious in approaching the historicity of these texts. All serious scholars agree that the two narratives ought not to be conflated. Matthew and Luke have their own theological contributions to make, independently of one another. Joseph features prominently in Matthew, but only marginally in Luke.

Apart from Jesus himself, the central character in Matthew’s infancy narrative is Joseph. We learn that he is betrothed to Mary. Betrothal meant more than “engagement” in our sense, but less than complete marriage. It consisted of a formal contract that made the man and woman husband and wife. A betrothal ceremony took place at the home of the father of the bride. Mary would have remained in her parents’ home, and Joseph would have visited her from time to time until they came to live together as husband and wife. Conjugal infidelity on the part of the “betrothed” woman was regarded as adultery. The betrothal ceremony was followed after several months by the actual wedding, the ceremony by which the man received the woman into his house and consummated the marriage.

*Joseph pre-evangelized by doing the things that he had to do to look after Jesus, to stand by and support his wife and her child.*

In Matthew 1:18-25, we are told that Joseph noticed that Mary was pregnant while she was “betrothed” to him. He was a “just” man, that is, an observant and pious Jew. The Torah did not allow him to consummate marriage with a woman who had been guilty of adultery during the period of betrothal. According to Deuteronomy 22:22-23, a woman who is betrothed but sleeps with another man is to be stoned to death. It is not clear how widespread this punishment was in the time of Jesus. From the text it seems that Joseph intends to put Mary through the much less public procedure of divorce. This is in line with an injunction of the Mishnah: “If she says, ‘I am defiled,’ she forfeits her marriage contract and goes forth.”<sup>7</sup> After the revelation from God in a dream, Joseph “took Mary as wife,” that is, they went through with the second marital ceremony, the wedding. “He knew her not until she had borne a son” (Mt 1:25). The purpose of the statement is to insist on Mary’s virginity at the time of Jesus’ conception.

F. L. Filas, author of the article on Saint Joseph in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, notes that this text “says nothing one way or the other regarding the relations between Joseph and Mary after the birth of



Jesus.”<sup>8</sup> The Catholic doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary goes back to the very early church, but it is not formally and explicitly implied in this statement from the Gospel. The reference to the “brothers and sisters” of Jesus in Matthew 12:46-50; 13:55-56 is inconclusive with respect to actual siblings. It is simply a philological fact that the term “brothers and sisters” could and did refer not only to children of the same mother and father, but also to other relatives.

Joseph is not mentioned as present during the public ministry of Jesus. The supposition is that he had died by that time, almost certainly before he was 50 years of age. That premier pursuer of the historical Jesus, Monsignor John P. Meier, writes: “Granted that we do not know how old Joseph was when Jesus was born, and granted that life expectancy was much lower in the ancient world than in the United States today, there is nothing intrinsically improbable about Joseph’s death before Jesus reached the age of roughly thirty to thirty-five. . . . In contrast, Mary lived through the public ministry and on into at least the early days of the church. . . . She would have been roughly forty-eight to fifty years old at the time of his crucifixion.”<sup>9</sup>

### *Joseph’s witness was one of deed, not word.*

In the Office of Readings for March 19, the church lays before us an extract from a sermon by the Franciscan Saint Bernardine of Siena. “There is a general rule concerning all special graces granted to any human being. Whenever the divine favor chooses someone to receive a special grace, or to accept a lofty vocation, God adorns the person chosen with all the gifts of the Spirit needed to fulfill the task at hand. This general rule is especially verified in the case of Saint Joseph, the foster-father of our Lord and the husband of the Queen of our world, enthroned above the angels. . . . Holy church in its entirety is indebted to the virgin mother because through her it was judged worthy to receive Christ. But, after her, we undoubtedly owe special gratitude to Saint Joseph. In him, the Old Testament finds its fitting close. He brought the noble line of patriarchs and prophets to its promised fulfillment. What the divine goodness had offered as a promise to them, he held in his arms.”

Unlike Saint Patrick, Saint Joseph wrote nothing and said nothing that is recorded in the Gospels. If Patrick was the evangelizer of the Irish peoples by his preaching and teaching, Joseph, equipped by the Spirit, *pre-evangelized* by doing the things that he had to do to look after Jesus, to stand by and support his wife and her child. His witness was one of deed, not word. Through the choices he made, and following through

on those choices, he fulfilled the promises made to the patriarchs and the prophets, that is to say, he “filled full” in his custody of Jesus and in his nurturing of Jesus, the incarnational aspirations of the Old Testament.

## Conclusion

From all we know about Joseph, we can say that he was a true and devout Torah-observant Jew, the husband of Mary, and a skilled worker. Perhaps, we may add one further note. If Jesus, humanly speaking (and in no way denying his divinity), turned out the way he did as an immensely generous, warm-hearted, gentle, and forgiving man, what must Joseph’s parenting, his Torah-teaching, his modeling of masculinity have been like? Joseph must truly have been in Matthew’s words “a righteous man” (Mt 1:19).

This means a man who not only knew the Torah, but lived it. In the liturgical calendar, Patrick comes before Joseph, and yet, historically, it is Joseph in his care for the child Jesus who paves the way for Patrick and his commitment to Jesus Christ. Patrick comes across as a true lover of God-in-Christ, a missionary willing to spend himself for the Gospel, and one who has real self-knowledge.

Once we get behind the legendary material that has obscured these two Lenten saints, Patrick and Joseph, we may recognize in them strong witnessing companions for our own journey, and not just through Lent. The late Blessed Sacrament priest-scholar Father Eugene LaVerdiere wrote of Joseph and Mary: “In the eyes of God, this insignificant couple—as far as the world was concerned—were key players in the history of salvation. . . . Salvation takes place in the warp of human history, but only for those who are attuned to God’s ways.”<sup>10</sup>

Perhaps, we may say something similar of Patrick and Joseph!



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 276-277.

<sup>2</sup> Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 21-22.

<sup>3</sup> F. L. Filas, “Joseph, St.,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 7, 1035.

<sup>4</sup> P. D. James, *Death in Holy Orders* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), 69-70.

<sup>5</sup> John P. Meier, *op. cit.*, 324.

<sup>6</sup> John P. Meier, *op. cit.*, 209.

<sup>7</sup> Sot. 1.5.

<sup>8</sup> F. L. Filas, *op. cit.*, 1036.

<sup>9</sup> John P. Meier, *op. cit.*, 317-318.

<sup>10</sup> Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS, *The Firstborn of God* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2007), 27.



## PASTORAL LITURGY

### Fruits of the Constitution: RCIA—Part 2

by John Thomas Lane, SSS

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Over the course of this year's volume of *Emmanuel*, we are reviewing some of the "fruits" of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). In the last column, we did a short review of the *General Introduction for Christian Initiation* and the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, documents that significantly shaped the renewal of baptism and the process of initiation.

The rebirth of the catechumenate and the stages of initiation has been a tremendous gift to the church. Each episcopal conference was expected to write statutes for its members. In this column, we will examine the *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (NS) approved by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops on November 11, 1986. This document is found in the RCIA editions, usually at the back of the book; yet it should be front and center in guiding our initiation practices.

NS, 1 sets the stage of hospitality that is part and parcel of the catechumenate, but especially the beginning in welcoming inquirers. It is to be "entirely informal. Such meetings should take into account that the inquirers are not yet catechumens and that the rite of acceptance into the order of catechumens, intended for those who have been converted from unbelief and have initial faith, may not be anticipated." Summer BBQs and other informal, no-obligation gatherings are ideal situations to welcome seekers interested in the Catholic faith. "All are welcome to learn about the church," "Interested in becoming Catholic?" and "Don't be afraid to know more about the Catholic faith" are banners hung by parishes to welcome the inquirer, the one who has never been to a church before. Many parishes have inquirers who are married to Catholics. The rites assume that an inquirer has not been coming to church.

NS, 4 is hard for institutions such as schools or hospitals to hear: "The catechumens should be introduced into the Christian life of a parish or similar community from the very beginning of the catechumenate." NS does not want neophyte Catholics to "find themselves isolated from the



ordinary life of the Christian people.”

A major challenge today is the “commuting inquirer,” one who travels or is on the road a lot and does not necessarily have the base or community to remain in constant contact with over a period of time. The church has to adapt to this social reality. We are a very mobile society, and NS envisions candidates living and working around their parish.

NS, 6 reminds us that the process of formation should be “at least one year of formation, instruction, and probation. Ordinarily, this period should go from at least the Easter season one year until the next; preferably it should begin before Lent in one year and extend until Easter of the following year.” This conflicts with the “academic model” most have in mind, where September to May schedules are the norm. However, it is seen as a “best practice,” to have inquirers not rush through the process.

Additionally, “catechumens should be encouraged to seek blessings... since they are of the household of Christ” (NS, 8). Furthermore, it is important to note that once inquirers become catechumens, “they are entitled to Christian burial should they die before the completion of their initiation.” One would hope, however, that, from a pastoral perspective, a priest would do the emergency RCIA with a person in danger of death and therefore afford the catechumen the opportunity for the sacraments, especially viaticum.

Another pastoral issue is raised in NS, 10: marriages of catechumens are allowed, yet “never at the eucharistic liturgy.” Secondly, if one baptizes an adult, they are also “bound to exercise the faculty to confirm” (see NS, 13 and canon 884:2). Children of catechetical age, that is seven or older (canon 852:1), are always to “receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil together with the older catechumens” (NS, 18). We still hear of parishes where the sacraments of initiation are not celebrated at the Easter Vigil or together as one sacrament in three parts. We encourage our brother priests and pastors to implement the RCIA as understood by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

Many older Catholics, in particular, have wondered where baptism by immersion came from. NS, 17 states:

Baptism by immersion is the fuller and more expressive sign of the sacrament and, therefore, is preferred. Although it is not yet a common practice in the United States, provision should be made for its more frequent use in the baptism of adults.

There are two important pastoral notes in NS, 15 and 16. We are reminded

of the paschal fast, from Good Friday until the end of the Easter Vigil (see SC, 110) and that the rite of anointing with the oil of catechumens is to be omitted in the baptism of adults at the Easter Vigil. This takes into consideration the fact that during the catechumenate period, adults are anointed, even often. Also, it removes the confusion of a “double” anointing, preserving the uniqueness of the anointing with sacred chrism at confirmation.

The provision for a Rite of Christian Initiation of Children (RCIC) is found in NS, 18-19. It calls for a preparation period or catechumenate for those who are of the age of reason (7) to adulthood (18). Many parishes that are large enough are able to have a preteen and a teenage group of catechumens. While this is the ideal, it is not possible in most parishes, or necessary. However, an initiation team would be wise to be prepared and have this adaptation ready and available for the children who need to be initiated, perhaps a special catechist who is able to meet regularly with them.

The last part of NS reviews the importance of mystagogy (22-24), an uncatechized adult Catholic, and reception into full Catholic communion. These are worth extra review for it is important that parishes provide for these various pastoral needs and necessities. It is stressed that the “reception” of a baptized non-Catholic is to take place in a special way, with a separate instructional process. Furthermore, most are not familiar with the fact that NS and the RCIA do not see the reception into full communion taking place at the Easter Vigil

lest there be any confusion of such baptized Christians with the candidates for baptism, possible misunderstanding of, or even reflection upon the sacrament of baptism celebrated in another church or ecclesial community, or any perceived triumphalism in the liturgical welcome into the Catholic eucharistic community. (NS, 34)

Many inquirers who are baptized in another Christian tradition want to be “rebaptized,” to make it meaningful. The Roman Catholic Church wants to respect the theology and history of baptism in other Christian traditions. One aspect that could be highlighted delicately is the “sacrament of reconciliation with candidates for reception into full communion” (see NS, 36). This sacrament is to take place with candidates before they are to be received, and encouraged as part of the frequent celebration of reconciliation. Making this ritual meaningful is a necessity. Many pastors will ask, “When is a good time to receive people into full communion?” “Any Lord’s Day! When they are ready” should be the most appropriate response.

Furthermore, they are to be confirmed. NS, 35 says:

When the bishop, whose office it is to receive adult Christians into the full communion of the Catholic Church (RCIA, 481) entrusts the celebration of the rite to a presbyter, the priest receives from the law itself (canon 883:2) the faculty to confirm the candidate for reception and is obliged to use it (canon 885:2); he may not be prohibited from exercising the faculty. The confirmation of such candidates for reception should not be deferred, nor should they be admitted to the Eucharist until they are confirmed.

The sacrament of marriage is not included in NS. It would be helpful to establish clear norms for the convalidation of marriages. Some priests include this ritual as part of the Easter Vigil after the sacraments of baptism and confirmation to have the matrimonial union symbolized with the consent, the exchange of rings, and then after the Eucharistic Prayer, Holy Communion, sealing this sacramental union.

NS concludes with documentation gathering in one place the post-conciliar documents and decrees, especially those on evangelization. This highlights once again the importance of this fruit of SC and the Second Vatican Council and the significance of the RCIA process as a unique tool of formation and evangelization. The RCIA is renewing the church by highlighting the place of initiation in Christ and the call to discipleship that commands us to share the Good News. In our next column, we will review the specific rituals of the RCIA and the vital role it serves in our liturgies.

## The March and April Calendar

### **Monday, March 3—Saint Katherine Drexel**

This legendary American saint was added to the list of those canonized for the Jubilee Year 2000. What a wonderful day to highlight this woman of the Eucharist and her role in the growth and development of Catholicism in the United States!

### **Wednesday, March 5—Ash Wednesday**

Prepare your Lenten program and have a flyer ready to advertise activities, including an invitation to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation during the season of renewal. For special insights into this day and an alternate ritual, see the *Book of Blessings*, 1656ff.

**Friday, March 7—World Day of Prayer**

The inspiration for this came from Church Women United, the global ecumenical women's movement that works for peace and justice. Organizers pioneered the observance of a common day of prayer annually on the first Friday of March. Some churches hold a supper, in the spirit of the season, and take a collection to support food drives and other projects related to building up those in need around the world. See the website [worlddayofprayer.net](http://worlddayofprayer.net). The motto "Informed Prayer and Prayerful Action" underscores that prayer and action are inseparable.

**Wednesday, March 19—Solemnity of Saint Joseph**

With Pope Francis' call to highlight the role of Joseph in the work of salvation, perhaps your parish could renew the practice of the Saint Joseph's Table.

**Monday, March 24—Anniversary of the Death of Archbishop Oscar Romero, Martyr of El Salvador**

**Tuesday, March 25—Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord**

**Celebrate the Scrutinies**

These ancient rites illuminate the path of the elect leading to the sacraments of initiation at Easter and encourage the community of the baptized to pray for them.

**Holy Week—April 13-20**

The *Book of Blessings* has a special Blessing of Food for the First Meal of Easter (1701ff).

**Tuesday, April 22—Earth Day**

Founded by Wisconsin Senator Gaylord Nelson in 1970, Earth Day highlights the preservation and renewal of earth's resources and our responsibility to care for our planet in various ways. As we heard in the reading from Genesis at the Easter Vigil, God created our earth in all its diversity and grandeur and called it good. We pray that we may be good stewards. This also became an emphasis of Pope Benedict's pontificate.



## Taizé Prayer or Holy Hour for Lent

From GIA Publications (800-442-1358) and its ecumenical guide book, this prayer is meant to unite Christians in prayer and praise. The service is modeled on the meditative prayer of the ecumenical community of Taizé, France. Gathered in the presence of Christ, around a special cross, uncomplicated, repetitive songs, with few words, allow the mystery of God to become palpable through the simplicity and beauty of the music. A few words, sung repetitively, form this mantra style of prayer, expressing a faith that moves from the head to the heart and penetrates the whole body. Below includes the ritual of exposition and benediction.

Gathering Song "We Remember" or "Bless the Lord" (Taizé)

Opening Prayer *In these or similar words*

Loving God,  
we come to you this Lenten night  
to remember how you call us to a deeper relationship  
through our acts of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving.  
During this grace-filled season of repentance,  
help us to examine those areas in our life  
that call us to experience your loving embrace of grace.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Silence

Chant "Jesus, Remember Me" (repeat for a period of time)

Silence

Reading Mark: 1:14-15  
The call to repentance.

Silence

Song "There is One Lord" (Taizé)

Silence

Reading Colossians 3:1-4  
Seek what is above.

## Silence

Song "Adoramus Te, Domine" (Taizé)

Added phrases:

Jesus, may all that is you flow into me.

May your body and blood be my food and drink.

May your passion and death be my strength and life.

May the shelter I seek be the shadow of your cross.

Let me not run from the love which you offer.

Hold me safe from the forces of evil.

On each of my dyings shed your light and your love.

Keep calling to me until that day comes.

When with your saints, I may praise you forever.

Silence

Intercessions     Response: "Miserere Nobis" (Bob Hurd)  
or other Lenten song, e.g., "Lord, Have Mercy"

## The Lord's Prayer

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

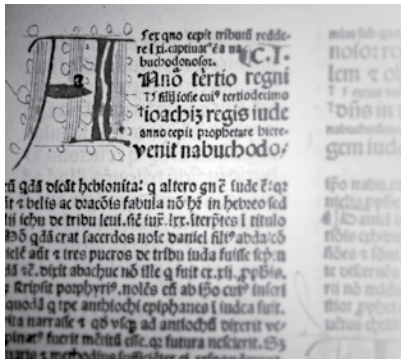
## Closing Prayer

Loving God,  
through our prayer here in this time,  
may we draw closer to you  
to renew our baptismal covenant at Easter.

Through our Lenten sacrifices,  
may we continue to grow in holiness and wisdom,  
confident that you guide us as we take up our cross daily  
to follow you  
and journey to the new and eternal Jerusalem,  
where you live and reign forever and ever. Amen.

Closing Song "Beyond the Days" (Ricky Manalo)  
or "If You Believe"





## BREAKING THE WORD

# HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time/Lent/Easter

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

## Whetting our Appetite

As I write this column, my religious community is preparing for the annual Thanksgiving holiday. Brother Thomas is busy baking pies, the turkey is getting some final preparations before it goes into the oven, and I'm getting ready to do some last minute grocery shopping. New York City, whence I write this, is experiencing a Nor'easter that will see heavy rain and temperatures near 60 at midweek quickly transitioning to cold, raw conditions for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. Travelers at the airports and on the roadways are finding lots of traffic and cancelled flights as they head out to places near and far.

Why am I telling you, dear reader, all of this? Because I think it provides us an idea of what Saint Luke offered the church in his second volume, the Acts of the Apostles. During the Easter season, the first reading for the weekday and Sunday liturgies is taken almost always from Acts. In Acts, Luke tried to preserve a "snapshot" of early Christian preaching, missionary activity, trials, and blessings. A wise priest I know once compared the readings we encounter from Acts to the box score in the sports pages of our newspapers. It gives us just an idea of what happened, not the full story; it is enough to whet our appetite.

Whetting our appetite is precisely what the liturgy does for our souls, so to speak. For while we gather around the eucharistic table of the Lord each Sunday, we know that our liturgies are just a foretaste of the heavenly banquet feast which the risen Lord has prepared for us. Saint Augustine, in his treatise *On Christian Doctrine*, instructed his readers, "We are prevented by our sins from enjoying God; and that our sins might be taken away, 'the Word was made flesh,' our Lord suffered, died, and rose again, and ascended into heaven, taking to himself as his bride the church, in which we receive remission of our sins" (Book I, Chapter I). The readings for Lent and Easter indeed remind us that we are called to enjoy our loving and merciful God, who offers us the forgiveness of our sins through the ministry of the church. May our appetite for divine mercy not only be whetted through our foretaste of heavenly delights, but may we one day truly enjoy the risen Lord in the fullness of his kingdom.

Eighth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
March 2, 2014

*Cannot Serve God and Mammon*

*Breaking the Word*

Isaiah 49:14-15

The first reading from the prophet Isaiah consists of two short verses that are packed with powerful imagery. Isaiah compares God's covenantal love and mercy for his people to a mother who could never forget her children. The analogy is used in response to the claim that God abandoned Zion, that God had forgotten his people. Isaiah reminds his audience that nothing could be farther from the truth: God does not forsake his people, who are his own beloved sons and daughters. God is faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

This pericope continues Paul's argument to the Corinthians that his ministry is in line with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, there need not be any comparison of his apostolate to that of Apollos or Cephas (see 1 Cor 3:5-23). Those who claim the title "apostle" are called to service and discipleship. This calls to mind what Pope Francis said in reference to priestly ministry during last year's Chrism Mass: shepherds must smell like their sheep. Paul and other apostolic ministers must be stewards of the Gospel—smelling like the sheep—and God himself will judge them on the basis of their stewardship, not by human standards.

Matthew 6:24-34

Today's gospel passage continues with the bulk of Jesus' sayings in Matthew's Gospel, which began with the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5:1-12). Jesus points to the kingdom of God as the goal toward which his disciples must be oriented. Worrying about superfluous human desires (e.g., anxiety about one's clothing) does not contribute to the furtherance of God's reign. Our heavenly Father knows what we need, so our focus must be on doing the work of God in building up his kingdom. In a sense, Jesus is saying that those who would be known as his disciples must be recognized by their simplicity in lifestyle, using only that which is truly needed and not living luxuriously. Nothing is to get in the way of serving God!



## *Sharing the Word*

How often do we feel that God has forgotten us, especially when life seems to be filled with more problems and frustrating moments than joyful occasions? In my own ministry as Vocation Director, I am often tempted to believe that God does not remember his church, especially as there are fewer candidates for the priesthood and religious life knocking on my office door. And yet, Isaiah in the first reading and Jesus in the Gospel for today assure us that God is forever faithful to his covenant. He will never abandon the people he claims as his own beloved daughters and sons! God cares for the church with a love beyond imagining and comparison. Therefore, any temptations to believe otherwise are just that: temptations to despair rooted in falsehood. God's love and mercy are always available to those who seek him.

Although Paul was defending his apostolic ministry to the Corinthians in the epistle's original context, he nevertheless left the church a fine teaching on what it means to be a servant-disciple of Jesus Christ. Stewardship is the key word in his teaching on ministry. A faithful steward is one who is responsible for what has been entrusted to him or her. Paul compared his apostolic ministry to that of a faithful steward of the sacred mysteries (see 1 Cor 4:1-2). Being a faithful steward of the Gospel is the task each Christian bears in his or her own proper vocation. Such fidelity mirrors the faithfulness of God, who never forgets his own, and signifies the kingdom of God.

## *Praying the Word*

Ever-faithful God,  
you call us to a life of service  
and stewardship of the mysteries of your love.  
Enable us to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ, your Son,  
who lives and reigns forever and ever.  
Amen.

First Sunday of Lent  
March 9, 2014

*Through the Obedience of Christ,  
Many Will be Made Righteous*

*Breaking the Word*

Genesis 2:7-9; 3:1-7

In this first reading, we encounter the theologically rich story of the creation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent fall in the garden of Eden. Note well how the serpent tempts humanity's first parents with something good, a lesser good than obedience to God's will. The fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden was seemingly good (see Gn 3:6), but obedience to God's command was a greater good that Adam and Eve both failed to recognize, thanks to the cunning serpent. The tricks of the Evil One have not changed since Eden: we are still tempted to choose lesser goods over the greater good which is obedience to God.

Romans 5:12-19

Paul speaks of the sad fact of original sin. Through the downfall of Adam and Eve in the garden—see today's first reading—human beings were condemned to death, but through the obedience of Jesus Christ, humanity has been restored to life and grace. In Paul's own words: "For just as through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so through the obedience of the one, the many will be made righteous" (Rom 5:19).

Matthew 4:1-11

The Gospel depicts for us the temptations Jesus faced in the desert. The scene follows upon Jesus' baptism in the Jordan by John the Baptist, and the heavenly voice who revealed Jesus to be his "beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (see Mt 3:17). It is the Spirit who led Jesus into the wilderness in order to be tempted. Just as in the first reading from today's liturgy, wherein Adam and Eve were tempted with a lesser good over the greater good of loving obedience, so, too, the devil tempts Jesus with the lesser goods of food, life, and earthly glory. Jesus remains steadfast in his loving obedience to the Father.

## *Sharing the Word*

As we embark on the forty days of Lent, the church offers for our spiritual nourishment the story of how we once lost our divine birthright through disobedience and how God restored us to his favor through the loving obedience of his Son, Jesus Christ.

The word obedience for many Westerners is associated often enough with a lack of intelligence or a childlike state of being. It is not the attitude proper to thinking adults, so our culture tells us. We encourage obedience in our pets, but not in one another. And yet, as we begin a sacred time of penance and renewal, the church presents to us the virtue of obedience as the key to salvation in Christ Jesus.

Adam and Eve, as Genesis portrays for us, were disobedient. And from that moment forward, throughout the many pages of both the Old and New Testaments, we find stories of humanity's disobedience contrasted with God's fidelity to his people. In the obedience of Jesus Christ, our relationship with God is restored. Jesus has shown us the path that leads to true glory: loving obedience to the Father.

Lent offers us a chance to renew our baptismal obedience by listening attentively to God's word and responding with charity. All of the temptations we face in life revolve around the virtue of obedience. Our readings remind us this Sunday that through a steadfast love of Christ and his church, we will one day come to enjoy the fruit of the tree of life.

## *Praying the Word*

Almighty and ever merciful God,  
as we embark on the discipline of Lent,  
guide us to be ever faithful and truly wise  
so that we may come to rejoice in the  
resurrection of Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord, forever and ever.  
Amen.

Second Sunday of Lent  
March 16, 2014

*In God We Trust*

*Breaking the Word*

Genesis 12:1-4a

The first reading is the story of Abram's call to become the father of many nations. Like the many call narratives in the Bible, the calling of Abram involves trust in God. Accordingly, the passage ends with the paradigmatic tribute to Abram's complete trust in God's promise: "Abram went as the Lord directed him" (Gn 12:4a). Abram shows simple and straightforward trust.

2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Paul instructs his young protégé Timothy to be steadfast in serving the Gospel. He assures him that holiness does not come from any human work or endeavor—even good deeds done in the name of Christ. Rather, holiness comes through the grace of God in Christ Jesus, "who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Tm 1:10).

Matthew 17:1-9

The story of Jesus' transfiguration on the high mountain is depicted in today's Gospel. Like the baptism story, a heavenly voice confirms Jesus' status as beloved Son on whom God's favor rests; as a result, Peter, James, and John are commanded to listen to him. Listening to Jesus involves trusting the message of that heavenly voice, that Jesus is God's beloved Son.

## *Sharing the Word*

God called Abram to leave his way of life and his kinfolk behind and set off on a journey to the Promised Land, where he who was childless would eventually become father to many nations. Abram so trusted in God's promise that the sacred author of the story simply tells us that he went as God had told him. He didn't question God or his motives; Abram simply did as he was told. That's a powerful example of trust!

Paul wanted the young Timothy to have a similar trust in the grace of God already at work in him, which he had received when Paul laid his hands on Timothy and handed on to him the apostolic ministry (see 2 Tm 1:6). Perhaps Timothy did not trust that God's grace was powerfully alive in his preaching and episcopal ministry, and he thought that he needed to do more. But Paul reassures him to trust that God who had called him, who gave him the example of the holiness of his grandmother and mother (see 2 Tm 1:5), was the same God who was now at work in his life.

Finally, as is liturgical custom, the story of Jesus' transfiguration is offered as the Gospel for the Second Sunday of Lent. Perhaps this is so because one of Lent's goals is our personal transfiguration: repenting of our sins and recommitting ourselves to the Gospel. The readings that precede the Gospel and the Gospel itself suggest, therefore, that trust in God's mercy is the key that leads to transfiguration and future glory in Christ. Hence, we must listen—which implies trust—to Jesus who leads us to holiness and everlasting life.

## *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
you are ever faithful and merciful.  
You call us to listen to your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.  
Help us to recognize your Spirit alive in the church  
and to respond with complete fidelity and trust.  
This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Third Sunday of Lent March 23, 2014

*While We Were Still Sinners, Christ Died for Us*

### *Breaking the Word*

Exodus 17:3-7

In its biblical context, today's first reading describing the miraculous flow of water from the rock follows upon the story of God miraculously feeding his people in the desert. The gift of manna demonstrates God's concern for his people on their journey to the Promised Land, as well as God's attentiveness to the prayers and pleas of Moses, the anointed leader of his people. Found in this story is the notion of the chosen people continuously testing God through their grumblings against Moses and God himself (see Ex 17:2-3, 7; cf. Ex 16:7-9, 12). The names Massah and Meribah in Hebrew point to such testing and strife. This incident will come to have a special place in Israel's collective memory, and will be remembered, in particular, as the cause of Moses' death at the threshold of the Promised Land on Mount Nebo (see Dt 32:48-52). In today's liturgical context, the reading finds an echo in the passage from John's Gospel of the woman at the well.

Romans 5:1-2, 5-8

In a beautifully articulated and theologically rich passage, we come to know the depths of God's love for us: "God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8). Faith in God's love is the source of our justification. A taste of Trinitarian faith is also found herein, as Paul mentions the outpouring of the Holy Spirit into our hearts as the conveyance of God's immense love. This pericope offers much for both *lectio divina* and faith formation, especially for those preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation at the Easter Vigil.

John 4:5-42

A lot of exegesis is needed to properly situate today's gospel passage, something space prevents in this forum. Suffice it to say for our purposes, the twin themes of Jesus as the source of living water (see Jn 4:10, 13) and divine worship in spirit and truth (see Jn 4:19-26) offer enough fodder for homiletic reflection. Dovetailing from the first reading, Jesus is seen as the true water that can slake the thirst of believers; he is the gift of God that we need (cf. Jn 4:10). The controversy about the proper place to offer divine worship (i.e., Jerusalem or Samaria) is summed up in the fact that worship in spirit and in truth is what the Father seeks

and this cult is not limited to a particular location. Indeed, worship in spirit and in truth flows from faith, as the end of the passage indicates in pointing to the Samaritans who came to believe in Jesus because of the woman's testimony and the words of Christ himself (see Jn 4:39-42). Pheme Perkins' commentary on this passage in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* is well worth reading for additional insights.

### *Sharing the Word*

We began Lent by recalling how through the sin of disobedience, death entered the human condition, and through the obedience of Jesus Christ, eternal life has become possible for all who believe in him. Today's readings continue to point to the salvific death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the cause for our hope, which does not disappoint (cf. Rom 5:5).

People are always searching for something new to satisfy their cravings, be it the new iPad Air, smartphone, book from a prominent author, clothing, etc. Consumerism depends on our never being fully satisfied with what we have, and so the marketplace offers us something more. The church, however, points to her beloved spouse as the answer to our cravings. In Jesus Christ alone, we find life's thirsts fully satisfied. The elect of the church preparing for baptism, confirmation, and a sharing at the eucharistic table are seeking to satisfy their hearts' desires in Christ Jesus and his church. We, the already baptized, are invited to deepen our relationship with the Lord Jesus, who died for us and opened for us the gates to eternal glory in his resurrection.

Faith is the door to future glory in Christ, as then-Pope Benedict XVI noted in his apostolic letter inaugurating the year of faith: "The 'door of faith' (Acts 14:27) is always open for us, ushering us into the life of communion with God and offering entry into his church. It is possible to cross that threshold when the word of God is proclaimed and the heart allows itself to be shaped by transforming grace. To enter through that door is to set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime" (*Porta Fidei*, 1). The task of evangelization continues in the life of every believer, as the Samaritan woman at the well in today's Gospel so wonderfully demonstrates (see Jn 4:28-30, 39).

### *Praying the Word*

Lord Jesus,  
in you alone will we find satisfaction for our deepest longings.  
By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit,  
may we come to worship the Father in spirit and in truth  
through a lively faith,  
a fervent hope,  
and acts of charity.  
For you live and reign forever and ever.  
Amen

Fourth Sunday of Lent  
March 30, 2014

*The Lord Looks into the Heart*

*Breaking the Word*

1 Samuel 16:1b, 6-7, 10-13a

This is the story of the prophet Samuel anointing Jesse's youngest son, the shepherd David, as king of Israel. It is a wonderful story when read in its entirety. Nevertheless, the editors of our lectionary did a decent enough job in condensing it so as to get to the heart of the story. A timeless piece of wisdom is found in verse 7: "Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart."

Ephesians 5:8-14

Paul exhorts the Ephesians to live honorable and virtuous lives, doing nothing in secret but being completely transparent before the Lord. In a sentence that might be overlooked due to its brevity, Paul lovingly encourages them to "try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord" (Eph 5:10). Finally, the passage ends with what appears to be a fragment of an early Christian hymn.

John 9:1-41

Following upon last Sunday's Gospel of the woman at the well, the liturgy today offers us the story of the man born blind. It fits nicely with the first reading's insight that God sees differently than human beings do (see 1 Sm 16:7). The man's neighbors and the authorities see only the outward appearance of one born blind and not the interior healing Jesus performed (cf. Jn 9:8-9, 24, 41). This passage contains a fascinating story and, like the pericope of the Samaritan woman of John 4:5-42, it deserves greater exegesis and reflection.

*Sharing the Word*

Conversion requires seeing life in a new way, from a different perspective. International travel often helps us to do just that, doesn't it? When one leaves his or her native country, he or she has to re-learn how to see and understand things from the perspective of a new culture, which



might be completely different from one's homeland. If such a conversion or change of perspective does not occur, travelers might, at the very least, experience embarrassing misunderstandings when interacting in the new culture. Upon returning back to one's native country, the newly gained perspective on life ideally shapes the way one perceives his or her home culture and situation; a different way of seeing is gained and shared.

Becoming a Christian and faithfully living out one's baptismal promises requires a thorough conversion. Samuel underwent such a conversion when he went to Jesse of Bethlehem in order to stealthily anoint one of his sons as king (cf. 1 Sm 16:2-5). Samuel was seeking a suitable candidate based on what he thought were reasonable criteria. But God had to remind him that the divine perspective is profoundly different from the way human beings perceive reality.

While there is the physical healing of the man's blindness in today's Gospel, Jesus also invited the man to conversion, to a life of discipleship (see Jn 9:35-38). Sadly, the Gospel indicates that such a conversion never occurred for the Pharisees or other authorities who interrogated the once blind man and his parents (see Jn 9:40-41).

Lent calls us to a fundamental conversion as we prepare to renew our baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil and celebrate the rites of initiation with the elect of the church. Christians see life in a manner that is altogether different from a secular worldview. Vatican II proclaimed to the world the Christian perspective on reality, namely, "that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its maker's love, fallen indeed into the bondage of sin, yet emancipated by Christ, who was crucified and rose again to break the stranglehold of evil, so that the world might be fashioned anew according to God's design and reach its fulfillment" (*Gaudium et Spes*, 2). Such is the Christian perspective on our world.

### *Praying the Word*

O God,  
you who are the maker of the cosmos  
and sustainer of every life,  
guide us under the light of Christ  
to see each other as brothers and sisters  
and to recognize your glory in all of creation.  
This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

Fifth Sunday of Lent  
April 6, 2014

*"I Have Promised, and I Will Do It,  
says the Lord."*

*Breaking the Word*

Ezekiel 37:12-14

This passage is excerpted from the famous "dry bones" prophecy (see Ez 37:1-14). In its entirety, the prophecy is filled with fantastic imagery, complete with bones rattling (verse 7), sinews binding (verse 8), and God's Spirit coming from the four winds to bring life to once dry bones (verses 9-10). The reading points to the resurrection from the dead as a source of hope for God's people.

Romans 8:8-11

Paul speaks of the Spirit who raised Christ Jesus from the dead also raising our own bodies to new life (see Rom 8:11). In the context of the epistle to the Romans, this passage is part of Paul's beautiful theology of the Holy Spirit who gives life to all, including creation which "groans with labor pains" for full glory of God to be revealed on the last day (cf. Rom 8:18-25). The resurrection of the dead will not only impact humanity, but all of God's creation.

John 11:1-45

In today's Gospel, we hear the story of the resuscitation of Lazarus from the dead. Commonly used at Masses of Christian Burial in the church's funeral rites, the reading is a wonderful story conveying the challenge for disciples to believe that Jesus Christ is "the resurrection and the life" (see Jn 11:25). Belief in Jesus Christ leads to our own resurrection and future glory. In this story, we also find an emotional Jesus weeping at the sight of Mary who is inconsolable over the death of her brother and his dear friend Lazarus (see Jn 11:33-35). If Jesus wept at the sight of Martha and Mary's intense sorrow, we know that he weeps with each of us in our time of need.

## *Sharing the Word*

Our faith in Jesus Christ and his church is something that needs to be deepened and built up on a regular basis. The story of Lazarus coming from the tomb is used at this point in our Lenten journey to inspire faith in Christ not only from the church's elect, as they earnestly prepare to approach the font of Mother Church on Holy Saturday evening, but from each of the baptized as well. Each Sunday, we recite the Creed to renew our own baptismal faith. But these words of faith, spoken from our lips, are challenged at various times in our lives. The death of a loved one, the sickness of a friend, and our own struggles can create doubt and fear.

Ezekiel prophesied about the dry bones of Israel coming to new life through the Spirit of God precisely to infuse hope in God's people in the midst of despair during the exile. Ezekiel's prophecy spoke of future hope and new promise, if only they believed in the God of their ancestors. The evangelist John tells of Jesus bringing life to the dead Lazarus not only to demonstrate Jesus' miraculous power, but as a sign of our future glory on the last day. Martha believes in Jesus, but has some doubts (see Jn 11:39-40). Jesus reassures her and Mary, along with some of the Jews who doubted that he could bring Lazarus back to life, just as he cured the man born blind (see Jn 11:37), that he is the resurrection and the life of believers.

In a reflection on the Creed, Saint Thomas Aquinas wrote that eternal life consists of communion with God, perfect praise, complete satisfaction of all our desires, delight in superabundance, and joyful communion with the saints. He said, "It is fitting that the end of all our desires, namely eternal life, coincides with the words at the end of the Creed, 'life everlasting. Amen,'" (see Office of Readings, Second Reading of Saturday of the Thirty-third Week in Ordinary Time). We can rejoice with the angelic doctor on this Fifth Sunday of Lent that through our faith in Jesus Christ, we will experience one day the joys of life everlasting.

## *Praying the Word*

God of all holiness,  
in every age  
you give hope to your people  
through the promise of life everlasting.  
Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us  
so that we might bear witness to your Son,  
Jesus Christ,  
who lives and reigns for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion April 13, 2014

*"Truly, This Was the Son of God!"*

### *Breaking the Word*

Isaiah 50:4-7

Isaiah speaks of the sufferings of the Lord's servant due to his fidelity to the Most High. Seen through the lens of Christianity, Isaiah's words reverberate throughout the passion narrative of Jesus Christ as found in the Gospel. In its original context, however, exactly who the suffering servant is remains an enigma for exegetes. It could refer to the prophet himself, or to Israel (see Is 49:3), or to another person. The church has set this canticle in conjunction with the passion narrative precisely to draw attention to the identity of the true suffering servant, Jesus Christ.

Philippians 2:6-11

Paul sings a song in praise of Jesus Christ, who condescended to become human and was obedient to the Father's will, even when that will included death by crucifixion. It is a hymn that carries with it some of Paul's finest theology concerning the incarnation, life, and death of Jesus. According to Paul, Jesus did not consider it problematic, despite his being "in the form of God" (**ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ**), to take on the form of a slave (**μορφὴν δούλου λαβών**) in human likeness (see Phil 2:6-7). And Jesus further abased himself to die a cruel death in obedience to the Father (see Phil 2:8-11) for our salvation. Saint Paul conveys a true love story in this pericope, one that the church sings in praise of her beloved spouse.

Matthew 26:14–27:66

The lengthy text that makes up today's Gospel is Matthew's passion narrative. Although he brings to the story some of his own material, Matthew nevertheless adheres to his source, the Gospel of Mark. In this regard, the late biblical scholar Raymond E. Brown noted that "the author of Matthew apparently used and modified Mark, adding a few items from popular tradition and apologetics, for example, about Judas, Pilate, Mrs. Pilate, and the guards at the tomb" ("The Passion According to Matthew,"

*Worship* 58 [98-107] here 98). It would be worth the preacher's while to explore a fine commentary on Matthew's passion narrative, such as the above quoted article by Father Brown.

### *Sharing the Word*

With this Sunday, we enter into the most solemn week in the church's liturgical cycle. Palm Sunday of the Lord's Passion has a duel nature to it, in that it both ushers us into the holy city of Jerusalem, joyfully singing shouts of "Hosanna!" and brings us to the sealed, guarded tomb where the Savior lies in the sleep of death. This duel nature—joy and sorrow—might be reminiscent of a typical priest's day in ministry where he might find himself joyfully baptizing an infant in the morning, somberly celebrating a funeral Mass and burying a decedent in the afternoon, before concluding his day with a wedding rehearsal and meetings. And yet, why should one be surprised to find the Gospel echoing life? Each day, we experience moments of joy and death/resurrection.

Father Donald Senior, CP, reminds us that the Gospels were written in the light of Easter. As such, "the Gospels, like all Christian theology, proclaim Jesus as risen Lord, as the fulfillment of God's promise, as the supreme moment of creation and history where the very life of God is revealed" (*Jesus: A Gospel Portrait*, rev. and exp. ed., Paulist Press, 1992, 118). It is through the lens of the resurrection that we celebrate this holiest of weeks. The passion and all of human reality only make sense in the light of the incarnation and the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

### *Praying the Word*

Lord Jesus,  
you loved us so much  
that in the fullness of time  
you became human like us in all things except sin.  
In obedience to the Father's will,  
you endured your passion  
and gave us new life in your resurrection.  
As we enter into this Holy Week,  
enlighten us with your grace  
so that we might worthily celebrate  
the sacred mysteries of our redemption.  
For you live and reign, forever and ever.  
Amen.

Holy Thursday  
Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper  
April 17, 2014

*"As I Have Done for You, You Should Also Do."*

*Breaking the Word*

Exodus 12:1-8, 11-14

This pericope is the story of the Passover meal of the ancient Hebrews prior to their escape from slavery in Egypt. The two verses (9-10) that the lectionary drops in today's liturgy simply dictate how the people were to cook the meal and leave nothing to waste. An unblemished lamb was to be sacrificed, roasted, and eaten along with unleavened bread, and the lamb's blood was to be sprinkled on the doorposts of the Hebrews' homes. The Feast of Unleavened Bread becomes a memorial to be kept by Israel in order to commemorate the Passover and its liberation from Egypt (see Ex 12:14-20).

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Paul recalls the tradition of the institution of the Eucharist. His rendering of the institution narrative closely resembles that which is found in the Gospel of Luke (see 22:19-20). He adds the teaching, not found in the Gospels, that whenever the community of disciples gathers to eat and drink the sacrament of Christ's body and blood, his death is proclaimed until his glorious return (see 1 Cor 11:26).

John 13:1-15

Unique to the Gospel of John is the tradition of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples, in place of the institution of the Eucharist as found in the Synoptic and Pauline traditions. Perhaps John wished to illustrate for his audience what the implications of the Eucharist are rather than simply recall the tradition of its institution. The act of foot-washing was normally done by household slaves, hence Peter's objection to Jesus washing his feet (see Jn 13:8). Jesus points to his symbolic gesture of foot-washing as a paradigmatic act of loving service, a complete gift of self that is required of all of his disciples (see Jn 13:12-15). John has interpreted "Do this in memory of me" to be actualized as "Love one another" (Jn 15:12, 17); (cf. Anthony J. Marshall, SSS, "The Eucharist as Sacrament of Social Justice: John 15:12-17," *Emmanuel* 114/4 [2008] 292-304).

## Sharing the Word

As we enter into the Sacred Triduum with the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper, it is helpful to recall the nature of a memorial in Judaism. The first reading from Exodus describes both Israel's memory of the Passover as well as the institution of its memorial to be celebrated from one generation to the next. Saint Paul narrates the apostolic tradition of the eucharistic institution at the Last Supper. Both of these are memorials. In the biblical world, and in our own Christian theology, memorials not only commemorate past events, but they invite us into the mystery being celebrated. In other words, the Passover celebration for Jews, and the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass, along with the liturgical celebrations of the Triduum, are not history lessons, but they bring about for us, "re-present," the historical reality that is being commemorated.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, making reference to the Council of Trent, sums up the nature of the Eucharist as memorial. While it is lengthy, it is nevertheless worth quoting in its entirety: "The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (i.e., makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit: [Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper 'on the night when he was betrayed,' [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse, the church, a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit" (1366).

May we live the grace of these three days, fully aware that we are simultaneously recalling sacred history and entering into the mystery of the Lord's passion, death, and glorious resurrection.

## Praying the Word

Almighty and ever living God,  
 you once freed the ancient Hebrews  
 from the chains of slavery  
 to the bond of love,  
 and you formed them into your chosen people, Israel.  
 May the Eucharist we celebrate  
 free us from our own iniquities  
 and thus enable us to live in freedom  
 as your beloved daughters and sons.  
 Through Christ our Lord.  
 Amen.

Friday of the Passion of the Lord  
Good Friday  
April 18, 2014

*Jesus Became the Source of Eternal Salvation  
for All Who Obey Him."*

*Breaking the Word*

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

As was the case on Palm Sunday, the lectionary proposes for our reflection today another canticle of the suffering servant of the Lord from Deutero-Isaiah. It is a moving pericope, filled with imagery vividly describing an altruistic servant who, on behalf of the people, "makes himself an offering for sin" (Is 53:10). In the setting of the liturgy, it is impossible for Christians to not see in these words of Isaiah the person of Jesus of Nazareth, who having taken upon himself our sins, suffered on the cross for our eternal salvation.

Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews addresses a community that has endured great adversity and suffering and is in need of encouragement in the faith (see Heb 2:1; 3:12; 4:14; 11:1-3; 12:1-29). It is a marvelous piece of Christian exhortation, with homiletic overtones, albeit presented within the framework of a letter. Today's passage is very comforting, describing Jesus as a compassionate high priest who is able to sympathize with our plight (cf. Heb 4:14-15). In the context of Good Friday, the description of priestly sacrifice lends itself to John's passion where Jesus is revealed as willingly offering himself on the cross.

John 18:1-19:42

In the passion narrative of John's Gospel, Jesus is fully aware of the course of the events as they unfold, from the moment of the Last Supper (see 13:1-3) to his betrayal in the garden (see 18:4), to his discourse with the high priest and his trial before Pilate. Jesus is in charge. His death was truly a sacrifice: his life was not taken from him, like that of a passive victim, but rather he willingly offered his life on the cross. This detail of John's passion (i.e., Jesus' knowledge of his fate and his willingness to



suffer and die on the cross) should not be overlooked in our prayer or our preaching.

### *Sharing the Word*

I had the privilege of studying the Sacred Scriptures in the Holy Land during a semester while in the seminary. One of the most moving moments for me was when our instructor took us on a “biblical way of the cross,” which meant that we would be walking in the footsteps of Jesus from the Upper Room, to the garden, to the Praetorium, and finally to Calvary. And the one thing that struck me while standing in Gethsemane was the view Jesus had of Jerusalem. There is no doubt that Jesus would have seen Judas and the soldiers coming for him, carrying their “burning torches and weapons” (Jn 18:3). Our professor pointed out that the garden’s location lends itself to easy escape through the Kidron Valley, and Jesus could have easily fled there under cover of darkness and thereby avoid the passion. But he didn’t. He stayed and willingly endured betrayal, calumny and mockery, scourging, carrying the very implement of his demise, and, finally, an agonizing death. Why? One word: love! “No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15:13). What an awesome gift to be considered the friends of Jesus!

### *Praying the Word*

Righteous Father,  
out of love for us,  
your Son, Jesus Christ,  
willingly chose to endure his passion  
so as to break the chains of sin and evil  
that kept us from you and one another,  
and he transferred us into the kingdom.  
May we spend this day  
in the light of Christ’s passion  
and in the hope of glorious resurrection.  
This we ask through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

The Resurrection of the Lord:  
Easter Sunday  
April 20, 2014

*Christ is Risen, Alleluia!  
He is Truly Risen, Alleluia!*

*Breaking the Word*

Acts 10:34a, 37-43

The words of Peter to Cornelius and the Gentiles at Caesarea form the context of today's first reading. Cornelius, at the bidding of an angel (see Acts 10:3ff) asked Peter to come to his house so that they might hear the proclamation of the Good News (see Acts 10:33). In our Easter liturgy, we hear the *kerygma*, or apostolic preaching: that Jesus Christ who was "hanged on a tree" has been raised by God on the third day (Acts 10:39b-40).

1 Corinthians 5:6b-8

This short passage connects well with the readings from Holy Thursday, where the story of the Passover was recounted. Here Paul declares, "Christ, our paschal Lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7).

John 20:1-9

Today's Gospel recounts the story of Mary Magdalene being the first to see the empty tomb, and Simon Peter and the beloved disciple verifying her testimony. None of the Gospels describe how the resurrection occurred; they simply report the fact that the tomb was empty. Matthew's account of the passion is the only one to note that guards were placed at the tomb's entrance in order to prevent the disciples from removing his body and claiming he had risen (see Mt 27:62-66). Christ is risen!

## *Sharing the Word*

There is something peculiar about our Christian faith. We believe that not only did God send his Son to be born of the Virgin Mary, a man like us in all things except sin, but that he also willingly gave his life for our salvation and—this is the clincher!—that he rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion. It is too fantastic a story to be made up by the apostles and the early church. And it is Jesus' resurrection that probably prevents many from accepting the faith (e.g., see Acts 17:32-33). It is so incredible that none of the evangelists dares to describe how the resurrection occurred. Matthew offers some external signs, but no description (see Mt 28:1-8).

The point for us is that our faith is based on the confession of Mary Magdalene, the apostles Simon Peter and Paul, Cornelius who believed Peter's words, the church of Corinth that preserved Paul's epistles, and countless others who have borne witness to Christ with their lives through the centuries until our own day. It is up to us now, therefore, to continue to tell the Good News of salvation, that Christ died, has risen, and will come again as judge of the living and the dead.

## *Praying the Word*

Our hearts rejoice,  
Lord Jesus Christ,  
for you conquered sin and death  
by triumphantly rising from the dead,  
and you opened for us  
the gates to life eternal.  
May we spend this day  
offering you grateful praise  
for you are Lord, for ever and ever.  
Amen.

Second Sunday of Easter  
Sunday of Divine Mercy  
April 27, 2014

*Peace Be with You!*

*Breaking the Word*

Acts 2:42-47

Luke portrays the early community of Christians as remaining faithful to the teaching of the apostles, the common life, prayers, and the breaking of the bread (i.e., Eucharist). In Acts, this snapshot of the early church follows the story of Pentecost and Peter's first proclamation of Easter faith. It is the first community of converts which we are glimpsing herein. Throughout the paschal season, we will get similar snapshots of the early church and the apostolic community of both Peter and Paul.

1 Peter 1:3-9

In his commentary in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* on this epistle, William J. Dalton, SJ, notes that the addressees of the letter (i.e., 1:1—"exiles"; 2:11—"aliens and exiles") probably indicates that the Christians addressed therein were under great duress and not able to freely exercise their faith (903-904). Today's selection from First Peter follows upon the traditional greetings and speaks of God's great and abundant mercy for his people, who are suffering "like gold tested in fire" (see 1 Pt 1:6-7). The final verse (9) speaks of the goal of our faith in Christ, which is eternal salvation.

John 20:19-31

The Gospel for the Second Sunday of Easter is situated in the evening of the first Easter Sunday. The risen Christ appears to his disciples who are huddled in fear in the upper room. He breathes the Holy Spirit upon them and commissions them to be agents of mercy and forgiveness. It is reminiscent of Genesis 1:1-2 where the breath or Spirit of God hovers over the chaos and creation is brought forth. A new creation has now dawned because of the resurrection. It is the age of mercy and grace. Unfortunately, Thomas is missing, and he doubts the others' reports of having seeing the Lord. Thomas is reconciled with a merciful Christ who shows him his wounds, the signs of divine mercy.

## *Sharing the Word*

Today is called Divine Mercy Sunday. It is also the day that finds the church canonizing two pontiffs—Saint John XXIII and Saint John Paul II—who proclaimed the merciful love of God, each in his own pastoral style.

Pope Francis has regularly called the church to rediscover the tender mercy of God and to proclaim this mercy in a fresh and convincing manner. In his homily for this Sunday last year, as he assumed the chair of the Bishop of Rome at the Lateran Basilica, Pope Francis said: “Today we are celebrating the Second Sunday of Easter, also known as ‘Divine Mercy Sunday.’ What a beautiful truth of faith this is for our lives: the mercy of God! God’s love for us is so great, so deep; it is an unfailing love, one which always takes us by the hand and supports us, lifts us up and leads us on.”

The readings and orations draw the church’s attention to the tender love and mercy of our God. He is waiting to caress the cheek of each of us, especially in our encounters with divine mercy in the sacrament of penance and through our acts of charity for one another.

## *Praying the Word*

Father of mercies,  
through the death and resurrection of your Son  
you reconciled the world to yourself,  
and you sent the Holy Spirit among us for the forgiveness of sins.  
Through the church’s ministry,  
and by living holy lives,  
may we experience your tender love and mercy each day.  
This we ask through the risen Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

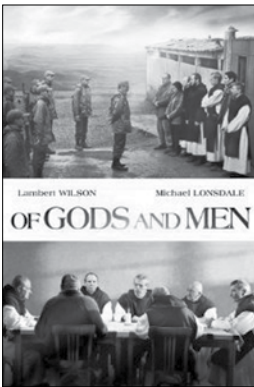




## THE EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •  
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### Film Review



#### OF GODS AND MEN

Xavier Beauvois,  
2010, France

by John Christman,  
SSS

What does it mean for us to love God and our neighbor? How far are we willing to go? How far is God asking us to go? These are some of the questions urgently pressing upon the hearts of a group of Cistercian monks living in Algeria when the threat of violence seizes their town. And Xavier Beauvois' sublime film, *Of Gods and Men*, which received the Grand Prix at the 2010 Cannes Film festival, examines this question with patient and unsentimental precision.

Before Islamic fundamentalists brutally kill a group of Croatians working nearby, daily life for these Cistercians seems somewhat commonplace. One monk runs a medical clinic in the town. A few others tend to the routine of farming and bee-keeping. Their days are divided between work and prayer. In fact, the daily ritual of prayer and Mass beautifully punctuates this film illuminating their thoughts and choices. As violence erupts and fear hangs over the town, it is their communal prayer and their solidarity with the town's people that compels them to stay.

In this regard, the table becomes an important visual leitmotif in the film. Whether their eucharistic table, their dinner table, or the table where they sit to discuss their tenuous future in the region, tables become an important symbol in the film. The table is a symbol of nourishment. It is a place where divergent voices are heard. It is a place where fears and convictions are expressed. It is also a symbol of communion and of life shared in common. This is attested to most effectively in a staggeringly profound sequence of their last meal together, set to Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* and shared with a final glass of wine. The monks' eyes and facial expressions convey multitudes. The camera catches the discordant array of thoughts and emotions in that moment without a word being spoken. A communal life lived and shared around the table, a communal life being pulled apart from the outside. A communal life nevertheless dedicated to witnessing Christian discipleship. And, despite all of this, one monk courageously expresses their choice in these selfless words, "Let God set the table here. For everyone. Friends and enemies."

## Art Review

In 2005, the Cleveland Museum of Art broke ground commencing their eight-year project to renovate and expand the museum. Today the newly renovated Cleveland Museum of Art stands as a wondrous achievement not only of museum design but also of curatorial thoughtfulness. The gallery space has been handsomely expanded and an atmospheric atrium welcomes the viewer with a vast expanse of light and warmth. In these re-envisioned spaces, visitors will discover some truly extraordinary works of art. While some art museums inundate the viewer with a large quantity of art, which at a closer inspection tends to be more impressive in name rather than in appearance, the Cleveland Museum of Art has invested more in the quality of the artwork being displayed, and the difference is noticeable. A spectacular Gerhard Richter abstract painting commands one gallery. Famous paintings by George Bellows and Fredrick Edwin Church compete for attention in the American Art galleries. A significant drawing by Michelangelo catches the eye amidst numerous artworks that span the globe, from differing cultures and time periods.

Besides these masterworks there are many small gems to be found as well. One such gem is the magnificent *Christ* painted by the American artist Gari Melchers (1860-1932). Melchers was a contemporary of John Singer Sargent and an accomplished portrait artist. His classical training and eye for detail is particularly evident with this thoughtful painting of Christ. In this image, it is Jesus' humanity that is foregrounded. His sunken eyes, wrinkled brow, and veiny hands work together to confront us with the materiality of his existence. The somber palette and expressive brushwork in the painting's background add further weight to this seemingly Lenten image. Were it not for the modestly painted halo humbly framing Jesus' face, one would perhaps consider the title *Christ* a misnomer. And yet, perhaps that is the point. Perhaps it is through the lens of this all too human Jesus that we grasp the profundity of the crucifixion, indeed the incarnation and paschal mystery as well. That Christ truly took on our humanity seems to be the subject of this painting. When seen in this light, Jesus' downcast gaze and ponderous gesture give the sense that he is in the midst of coming to terms with the sacrifice that he will make his own. It is perhaps a startling realization. And yet given his centrality in the composition, Melchers also portrays a certain strength and conviction in Jesus. We may never know the mysterious depths of Jesus' inner life, especially as he stood on the precipice of giving his life for humanity, but paintings like Melchers help keep that mystery alive and compelling.



Christ, c. 1905.  
Gari Melchers  
(American, 1860-  
1932). Oil on  
canvas, 72.0 x 59.3  
cm. Cleveland  
Museum of  
Art, Bequest of  
Mrs. Henry A.  
Everett for the  
Dorothy Burnham  
Everett Memorial  
Collection 1938.39  
Cleveland Museum of  
Art©

by John Christman,  
SSS

Poetry

**Easter at the Nursing Home**

When bread  
is this good  
a morsel

will suffice  
and when wine  
is this good

a sip is enough  
for the wraiths  
and specters

coming toward  
the altar now  
on crutches

walkers  
in wheel chairs  
celebrating

the last Easter  
some of them  
will know

as they await  
a resurrection  
of their own.

Donal Mahoney



## Book Review

Known for his ability in guiding priests, liturgists, catechists, and the faithful to a deeper love for liturgy and its rites, Father Paul Turner, a presbyter of the Diocese of Kansas City-Saint Joseph, has again provided another outstanding resource, this time for Holy Week.

Turner takes the rubrics for Holy Week in the *Roman Missal* and gives a history of the reforms from the early missals and/or sacramentaries, through the revisions of 1951, the first edition of the *Roman Missal* (1970), and the current 2011 edition

He starts with Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord and goes through each part of the liturgy. There are many options in the *Missal*. He gives the basis for the current rubric, explaining where it came from, whether there is a difference between pre-Vatican II and post-Vatican II, and why the language or style changed. He also gives reference to the history of the prayers, antiphons, and scriptural texts, and how they came to fruition in the third edition. While the notes include an excellent bibliography and index, Turner stays close to a few resources, such as the *Circular Letter for Lent* (1988). Each day is treated with great care.

Turner adheres to his “no nonsense approach” of clearly presenting the *Roman Missal*, and he captures its noble simplicity quite well.

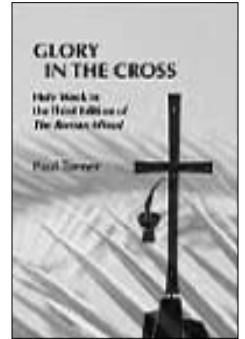
It is always surprising what is actually put forth in liturgies when one reads and studies the rubrics. Turner is quick to note and elaborate on these. In reviewing the long tradition of celebration, from Egeria’s diaries to the concerns of church leaders in revising the rites of Holy Week in the 1950s and after the Second Vatican Council, he makes the paschal world of death and resurrection come alive.

Turner says in the Afterward: “The rituals themselves provide evidence of the central story of every human life. . . . Along the way, each person faces the cross, and each one receives the promise of glory” (168).

Before preparing for Holy Week, buy, read, and share this book with your liturgy team. You will enjoy this treasure that graciously unpacks the sacred mysteries of these liturgies of Holy Week.



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



*GLORY IN THE CROSS: Holy Week in the Third Edition of the Roman Missal.* Paul Turner. The Liturgical Press (A Pueblo Book), Collegeville, MN, 2011.



## *EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS*

Joe McCormack

### Eucharistic Moments

You know the feeling. Family and friends are sitting at the kitchen or dining room table. Conversations are flying like hummingbirds. Something is going on down at the other end, another conversation over here, and something serious over there. You are quiet for just a moment to take it all in—the joy, the laughter, the love.

Those family conversations around the table have inspired me the most in my life to know what is good. Coming together with our joys and pains and anxieties and our frustrations at the table is a Eucharistic Moment. Our days can be filled with these moments while we stand in line, while we have a cup of coffee after Mass, or while we are at work. These moments are when we are in touch with others and see them as human beings with the pains and joys they carry.

A man who took a cup of coffee from me when I once helped out at a shelter, blew across the top of the cup to cool it down before taking a sip. Then he looked at me and said, “This is a good cup of coffee.” He took delight in receiving a simple cup of coffee and must have had a better life at one time to draw from a past experience to know that this was good.

We draw from our past experiences to know whether something is good or not. And just like being at a table with family and friends, we know this is a good experience because we are together. And we might say, “It is good for us to be here” to have this Eucharistic Moment.

When I started the Associates of the Blessed Sacrament program, it didn’t take me long to see that my home table experiences were not unlike those that take place at our altar, where we gather with our hopes and joys and burdens to share in the body and blood of Christ. In the food, we are offered, we are nourished, and then we nourish others.

In a hospital environment, the best is offered in the giving and receiving, but first must come the invitation, like a colorful scarf outside a Bedouin tent announcing to strangers, “Come in.” We must communicate that we are bringing the Good News. We associate ourselves with the Eucharistic Moment of bringing the Good News and offering nourishment.

That is the invitation. Those who come to table know that the good is here, the hospitality is here, Christ is here.



Joe McCormack  
Associate of the Blessed Sacrament  
Highland Heights, Ohio

# Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament



## *Our Mission is Clear*

Blessed Sacrament religious share a common mission: to allow the mystery of the Eucharist to take hold of their lives so completely that they will live this mystery fully and proclaim its meaning prophetically through many diverse apostolates.

By prayer in the presence of the Eucharist and an active apostolic life, we strive to make Christ in the Eucharist better known and loved.

Our eucharistic evangelizing includes celebrating the sacraments, writing, teaching, preaching, counseling, working with the poor and marginalized and promoting justice in over thirty countries around the world. We publish Emmanuel, an award-winning magazine of Eucharistic spirituality, and other liturgical and devotional materials related to the eucharist. We promote a program of Eucharistic evangelization called Life in the Eucharist (LITE) through our Center for Eucharistic Evangelizing.

We are active in the ecumenical movement and focus on having the Eucharist be a sacrament of unity.

We bring Communion to the sick and shut-ins, especially in hospital ministry. We offer hospitality and minister to priests and religious. In all that we do, Christ in the Eucharist is our inspiration and the center of our personal and communal life.





"The essential thing is  
to deepen our trust in God,  
feed upon his truth,  
dedicate ourselves to his glory  
as our sovereign love,  
love him in everything,  
everywhere, and above everything!

Saint Peter Julian Eymard

*Eymard*  
*Sps. J. E.*