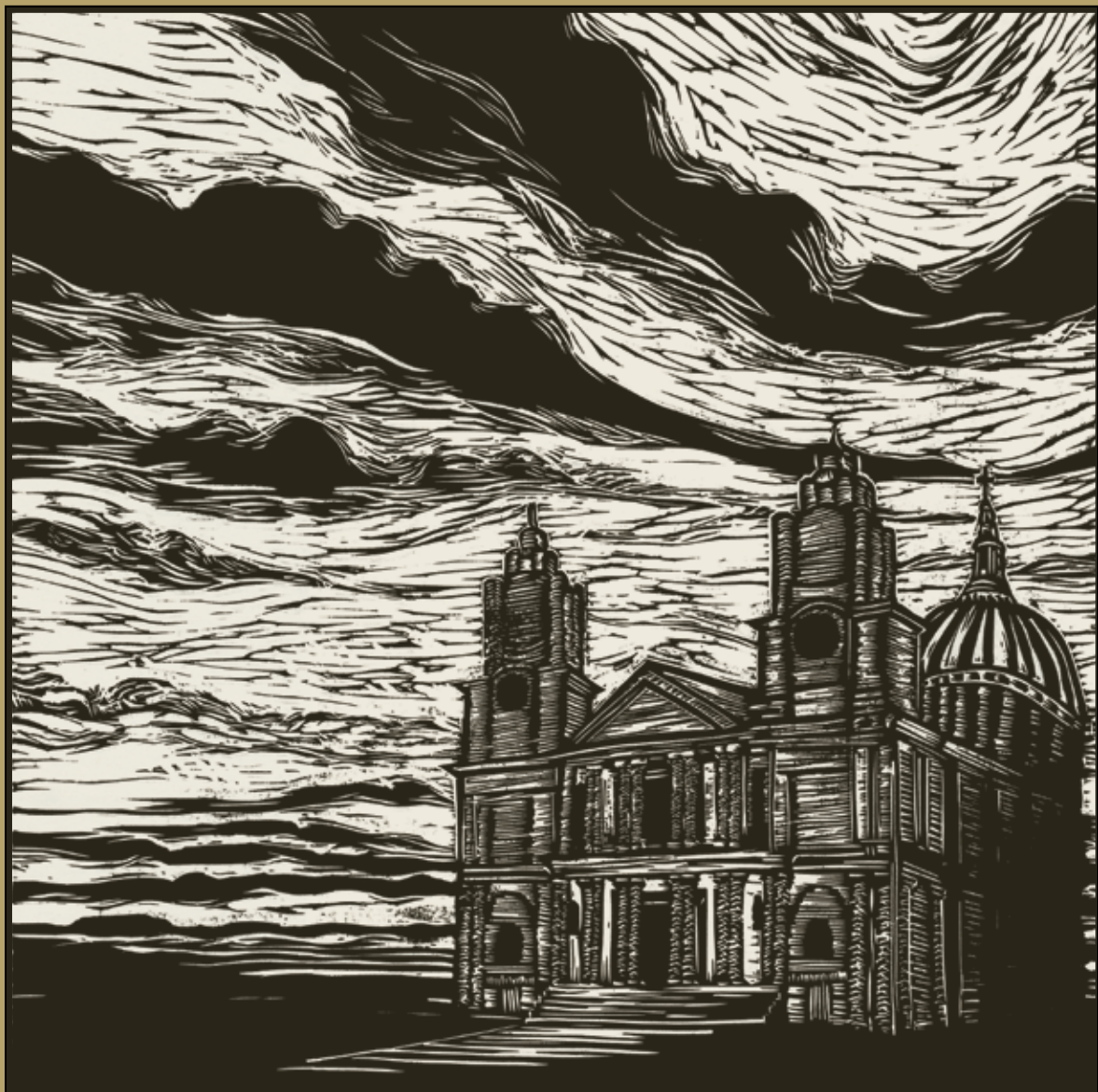


Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

September/October 2015



The Eucharistic Vision of Vatican II:
Unitatis Redintegratio

Website and Digital Edition

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

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

EMMANUEL MAGAZINE (ISSN 0013-6719) is published bimonthly with 6 issues a year, by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. Phone (440) 449-2103. E-mail: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com. Periodicals postage paid at Cleveland, Ohio and at additional mailing offices. SUBSCRIPTIONS (print subscription includes access to digital edition): individual (U.S.) \$35.00 one year/ \$65.00 two years; Canadian and foreign \$40.00 one year/ \$75.00 two years, U.S. currency; single issues \$8.00 plus postage. EDITOR: 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland OH 44143. POSTMASTER: send address change to Emmanuel Magazine, 5384 Wilson Mills Road, Cleveland, Ohio 44143-3092. ©2015

©2015 BY THE CONGREGATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT

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



EDITOR
ART DIRECTOR
LAYOUT
CIRCULATION MANAGER
BOOK REVIEW EDITOR
PHOTOGRAPHY

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

BOARD

Lisa Marie Belz, OSU
Thomas Dragga
James Menkaus
Gilbert Ostdiek, OFM

COVER

John Christman, SSS

emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com

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



Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 121 Number 5



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Healing in the Ministry of Jesus

by Peter J. Riga

276

EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Eucharistic Communion and Christian
Unity: The Decree on Ecumenism

by Ernest Falardeau, SSS

280

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange
on the Eucharist

by Dennis Billy, CSsR

289

EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Thea Bowman — Soulful Mystic

by Victor M. Parachin

298

EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art, Music, Film, Poetry, and Books

330

COLUMNS

From the Editor

274

Pastoral Liturgy

305

Breaking the Word

313

Eucharistic Witness

340



FROM THE EDITOR

In an article written for Catholic News Service ten years ago on October 12, 2005, marking the 40th anniversary of the close of Vatican II, Jerry Filteau interviewed four leading churchmen who were present at Vatican II as *periti*. The *periti* were approximately 450 priests from around the world, including 50 from the United States, who assisted the bishops as theologians and scholars. He asked the four about their lasting impressions of the council:

“Cardinal William H. Keeler of Baltimore says the Second Vatican Council transformed his understanding of what it means to break open the word of God in preaching.

“Retired Bishop Raymond W. Lessard of Savannah, Georgia, says it was the council’s ecumenical dimension, even in the preparatory phase, that he found most striking.

“For retired Bishop John S. Cummins of Oakland, California, the council’s accent on Scripture challenged him to preach better and ‘changed the way we pray.’

“Monsignor Robert Trisco, a noted church historian, says the 1962-65 council ‘was such a long and comprehensive experience that it’s hard to sum it up. It was the part of my life that has been the most unforgettable.’”

I remember reading another article where Cardinal Keeler expressed the belief that the rediscovery of the role of the laity in the life and mission of the church was one of the council’s principal accomplishments. This is borne out in the Filteau article as well: “Cardinal Keeler said part of the unfinished agenda is ‘really absorbing the main message’ of the council’s constitution on the church. ‘It’s not yet fully absorbed by the people. . . . It’s a constant task to try and invite people to take a more active role in the church.’”

The breadth of the council's work was impressive. Vatican II produced 16 documents. In our yearlong series on the major conciliar documents, we have highlighted six. This issue examines *Unitatis Redintegratio*, the Decree on Ecumenism.


Having grown up at a time when suspicion and name-calling characterized relations among the Christian churches, I find it wondrous to live in a moment when efforts are being made to build understanding and cooperation among the churches and to search for common ground rather than emphasize differences and past hurts.

The challenges of the day are too great for the response of believing Christians to be anything less than strong and unified. Ecumenism is lived out today in interfaith relationships and homes, in ongoing dialogues at every level of congregational life, in prayer services and service projects to meet basic human needs, especially of the poor. We seek the unity prayed for by Christ as he sat at table with his followers on the night before he died. It is his will.

In This Issue

Our September/October issue typically focuses on the church's mission and ministries. Here we cut a broad swath rather than a measured one.

A good place to begin is by reading Ernest Falardeau's overview of the Decree on Ecumenism. Ernest has devoted his life to ecumenism. Ask him why, and he will tell you that it is rooted in his understanding of his vocation as a Blessed Sacrament religious and priest. Our *Rule of Life* states: "Our celebration of the Eucharist, sign of the covenant between God and the human race, remains, in a sense, incomplete as long as we who are baptized are divided by hate or separated from one another. The celebration leads us to promote unity in all our activities" (38).

Peter J. Riga offers a short reflection on healing in Jesus' ministry. Healing others is something all of us can do, whatever our particular calling in the church. Victor M. Parachin introduces us to the late Franciscan Sister Thea Bowman, a witness to inclusion and reconciliation among the races in the Catholic Church and our country. And Dennis Billy, CSSR, continues his series on theologians and the Eucharist. 

Anthony Schueller, SSS
Editor



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Healing in the Ministry of Jesus

by Peter J. Riga

The ministry of Jesus was multi-dimensional and included the healing of many who came seeking to be restored in body, mind, or spirit. Why did he heal, why not all? What has healing to say about his saving mission, and how can we as a church continue to love and to heal as Jesus did?

Peter J. Riga is an attorney and author who has written previously for *Emmanuel*. He lives in Houston, Texas.

THE HEALINGS PERFORMED BY JESUS DURING HIS MINISTRY REVEAL HIS IDENTITY AS a Savior capable of delivering humanity from every evil. He addresses the secrets in the recesses of the minds and hearts of the scribes and Pharisees who challenge his authority by telling them: "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins, he said to the man who was paralyzed, 'I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home'" (Lk 5:22-24).

During the three years of his public life, Jesus did many healings: the blind, the deaf, mutes, those with fevers, paralytics, etc. He even raised the dead to life: Lazarus, the son of the widow of Naim, and the daughter of the synagogue official Jairus. Together, the evangelists record some 30 miracles in detail and relate that there were many more.

Luke recounts in detail the healing of a paralytic mentioned above: "Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home" (5:24). Luke, Matthew, and Mark situate this episode in a grouping of miracles just before Jesus presents himself as the healer (doctor) of the soul but also of the body. Invited to a banquet with publicans and sinners, Jesus responds to those around him who are scandalized by seeing him eat and associate with sinners: "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners" (Lk 31-32).

Healing as a Sign of the Kingdom

By healing the man, Jesus lets him stand (like Jesus himself raised from the tomb). He renders the paralytic — one who was not only physically impaired but because of his infirmity also unable to enter into normal relations with others — reintegrated into the community of his family and friends. There he finds autonomy and dignity. The paralytic can once again walk and take charge of his own existence.

“Rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.” The man is invited to take up his bed of sickness and suffering and leave. By this healing and others, Jesus manifests that he has come to bring life in its fullness: not just physical healing but the healing of every evil committed or endured. Jesus’ healings reveal him as Savior and as the one who inaugurates the reign of God. They attest to the fact that his word is true, that it possesses power, and that it represents the definitive victory of God over all manifestations of evil.

Healing in Israel

The healing ministry of Jesus is not isolated or alone in the history of religion. The Old Testament relates many miracles, like that of the prophet Elijah who raised up the only son of the widow of Zeraphath (1 Kgs 17:17-24) and that of his successor Elisha who healed the leprosy of Naaman the Syrian, a powerful military commander (2 Kgs 5:1-19).

In the time of Jesus, there even existed “celebrity cures.” The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus reports how Eliazar, a Jewish exorcist, operated: “He placed on the nose of the possessed a ring in which was hidden the root from Solomon. He pulled through the nose of the possessed and pulled out the bad spirit from the possessed. The man fell down; and Eliazar commanded the spirit not to return to him by pronouncing the name of Solomon and an incantation composed by him” (*Jewish Antiquities*, VIII).

The Talmud, the Jewish commentary on the five books of the Torah, includes a series of miracles done by Rabbi Hanina Ben Dossa.

The Meaning of Miracles

In the face of such a procession of miracles, the question is not so much *who* is capable of miracles but, rather, *in the name of whom* one acts to heal and what is the meaning of the miracle? This is what is radically new in the miracles of Jesus.



Often, before healing, Jesus evokes (calls forth and mobilizes) the faith of those who come to him seeking a miracle or a cure. In the account of the paralyzed man who is healed, Jesus asks nothing of the man; he simply announces that his sins are forgiven. To the Jewish authorities who witnessed the event, such an affirmation was blasphemous because only God can forgive sin (Lk 5:21). But to disclose that healing power resides in him, Jesus orders the paralytic to get up and walk, thus proving his words.

It also shows the place of healings in the ministry of Jesus. Miracles are not ends in themselves. Rather, they are signs that the reign of God has arrived. Jesus' healing ministry anticipates the restoration of the human person, God's supreme creation, wounded by sin which has destroyed the harmony of the universe and is responsible for evil, sickness, and death.

By healing, Jesus manifests that he has come to bring life in its fullness and in all its dimensions.

Jesus' healings signify something even more profound for which Jesus came among us: to put us in a living relationship with God and with each other. Healing is the fruit of faith. The New Testament states that Jesus could not do many healings at Nazareth because of their lack of faith. Faith invites the possibility of divine compassion. This is why in the majority of healings Jesus performs he solicits the faith of the sick person or of others around the individual, like the friends who carried the paralytic to Jesus and carefully lowered him before the Lord through an opening in the roof to be healed.


It would be a misunderstanding, however, to say that those who remain sick or who suffer are lacking in faith. Jesus did not want to be considered a simple healer. His work was one of salvation, and salvation is greater than healing. One can be saved even when he or she suffers; in fact, it is precisely through the manner in which one endures suffering or infirmity that many have achieved great holiness of life.

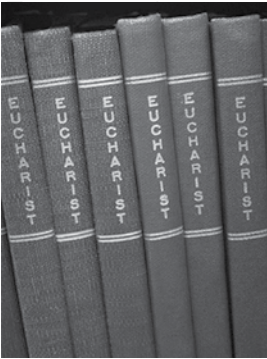
The recital of miracles or healings in Jesus' ministry attests, finally, that in healing there is always a place for mystery. Not all are healed; not

every prayer of supplication results in a cure or a remedy.

Healing is a gift sometimes bestowed through human mediation, through healthcare facilities, and through technology. It comes at times through the thoughtful words and gestures of friends and family members. Mystery is at work in the process of healing.

This does not mean that we must renounce medicine and its discoveries and advances. But human beings always need more than scientifically correct care. They have need of genuine humanity on the part of caregivers and ministers. In so many of Jesus' miracles, what touched those who came to him to be healed was his tenderness. He responded to them with compassion and approachability, taking them aside, focusing all of his attention on them, and listening with all his whole heart. His presence and gentleness invited faith and trust in God, the healer of his people's brokenness, the restorer of health, and the author of life.

The words of Exodus 15:26 are wonderfully fulfilled in the ministry of Jesus: "I, the Lord, am your healer." 



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Eucharistic Communion and Christian Unity: The Decree on Ecumenism

by Ernest Falardeau, SSS

Vatican II's Decree on Ecumenism led the Catholic Church to a new search for unity among the followers of Christ. Working for understanding and reconciliation among the churches is profoundly eucharistic, inspired by the prayer of the Lord Jesus as he sat at table with his disciples and prayed that they might be one in him.

Blessed Sacrament Father Ernest Falardeau is the former director of the Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the Archdiocese of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and a lifelong ecumenist. He presently resides at Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City.

WHEN POPE JOHN XXIII CALLED THE SECOND VATICAN ECUMENICAL COUNCIL, he expressed his hope that it would be a truly ecumenical council.¹ He lost no time in contacting the World Council of Churches through the Secretariat for Christian Unity, which he created with Cardinal Augustine Bea, SJ,² as its president, for names of possible observers to be invited to the council. They would not be voting members or speakers at the council, but would be auditors and would be able to meet with the participants in the council for their remarks about the issues being discussed.³

The pope's desire for a truly ecumenical council was repeated in his opening address to the assembled council, though he stressed that the goal of the council was not to condemn errors or to establish new teaching. He said the teaching of the church continues to be the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the verbal articulation of the teaching and the understanding of that articulation can always improve.⁴

Early in the debate of the council fathers about the agenda and schemata, it became clear that the council was not going to rubber stamp a prepared agenda and then go home. There was work to be done.

The First Vatican Ecumenical Council had treated the matter of faith in response to the positions of so-called rationalists in the wake of the Enlightenment and also defined the doctrine of the primacy of jurisdiction and the infallibility of the Holy Father when

he speaks “*ex cathedra*,” i.e., as the spokesperson for the bishops and the entire church.

There was a need now to continue the study on the church (*De Ecclesia*) and the magisterium, especially the nature and role of the bishops in the church at-large and in ecumenical councils.⁵ There were also other topics to be taken up, such as the study of Scripture, the place of liturgy in the life of the church, etc.

Highlights of the Decree on Christian Unity — Overview⁶

The Decree on Ecumenism has three chapters. The first is entitled “Catholic Principles on Ecumenism.” The very title indicates that there is only one ecumenical movement, just as there is one church of Christ. The task of the church is to integrate all Christians and all ecclesiastical communities following the impulse of the Holy Spirit, whose grace and inspiration brought about a great desire for the unity for which Christ prayed on the night before he died.

This first chapter deals with the unity of the Catholic Church itself and the origin of the divisions which took place in the course of time. Some of these divisions occurred in the early history of the church.

The second chapter deals with the practice of ecumenism. It stresses the demand for continual reformation in the church itself (6) and the continual interior conversion of each Catholic (7). The soul of ecumenism is spiritual ecumenism, which requires personal conversion (8) and a loving understanding of each other’s churches (9), ecumenical formation in theological formation, and pastoral attitudes in future priests and pastors (10). Mutual esteem (11) and cooperation (12) will flow from these attitudes and efforts.

Chapter three gives specific considerations for prudent ecumenical action based on the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Christian churches of the East and in the West with the churches of the Reformation, with a special place for the Anglican Communion due to its episcopal structure and proximity in history and culture to the church of Rome (UR, 13).

Analysis⁷

A first important point made by the decree is that the ecumenical movement, i.e., the desire for the unity of all Christians, is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is something new and something deserving



a response by the Catholic Church. Until now, the Catholic Church's position on the ecumenical movement was negative. Priests and theologians were not allowed to attend ecumenical meetings, and the way to unity was for other churches to "return to Rome."

A more positive response was desired by Catholics and Protestants alike. The existence of Orthodox churches, for example, which had been founded by different apostles and had carried on for almost two millennia, needed to be acknowledged. The churches of the Reformation could no longer be viewed simply as groups of individual Christians who lived outside the church of Christ.

Here are some of the outstanding decisions of the Second Vatican Council.

The key to Christian unity is recognizing the church as a communion (*koinonia*).⁸ This communion of Christian churches East and West is fullest in the Catholic Church. This is the historic continuation of the church founded by Jesus Christ on the apostles with Peter as their leader. The ministry of Peter continues in the bishop of Rome (the pope), and the ministry of the apostles continues through the ministry of the bishops ordained in apostolic succession.

The key to Christian unity is recognizing the church as a communion (koinonia).

The other Christian churches are not mere independent groups. They are churches and ecclesial communities which are in different degrees of communion with the Catholic Church. The Orthodox churches, because they continue to maintain the hierarchical structure of the ancient church and apostolic succession, are said to be in "almost full communion" with the church of Rome. They lack the Petrine ministry of the bishop of Rome.⁹

The churches of the West which have a similar hierarchical structure are also said to be in almost full communion and are so treated in the documents of Vatican II as well as in the later revised Code of Canon Law (1983). In the West, the churches of the Reformation are said to be "in real but imperfect communion." The communion is established by many elements of the church of Christ which they share with the Catholic Church. These are not mere "vestiges/*vestigia*" of the church of

Christ. They are elements such as belief in Jesus Christ, valid sacraments (especially baptism), the Scriptures, faith, hope, and charity, pursuit of social justice, spirituality, prayer, and many other characteristics of the church of Christ (UR, 14-17, 19-24). Indeed, these characteristics and gifts show their real communion with the church of Christ.

The church of Christ *subsists* in the Catholic Church (LG, 8). There are not two or more churches of Christ, there is one; but other Christian churches do not develop the grace and spirituality of their members in spite of their churches/denominations, but because of them.

Limitations/Deficiencies

One might ask what were the limitations/deficiencies of the Decree on Ecumenism in the council and how do they continue to challenge the church today? The first limitation/deficiency is the gradualism that is built into the documents of Vatican II. As Pope John XXIII stated, the articulation of church teaching can always be improved. In addition, Vatican II understands the saying, "Rome wasn't built in a day." It takes time to implement the kind of renewal that was undertaken by Vatican II.

The task of the church is to integrate all Christians and all ecclesiastical communities following the impulse of the Holy Spirit, thus realizing the unity for which Christ prayed at the Last Supper.

For example, the document on the liturgy is designed for quick implementation so that people realize that something real is happening in the church.¹⁰ This does not mean that its language should last forever. Indeed, in less than 50 years, there already were calls to change the texts. In the Decree on Ecumenism, there is also a beginning. Guidelines would eventually have to be made to say how the church would move forward with its overall plan to reintegrate the churches of Christendom.

Another important limitation/deficiency is the baggage of history that all the Christian churches carry.¹¹ This includes inaccuracies about the facts, stereotypes of the people involved, distortions of teachings and differing positions, etc. Vatican II was much better prepared for a historical approach than in the past. History, archeology, and exchange in the academic world had clarified the context of history.



There was still much to be done to investigate these matters further. Wars, injuries, and injustices resulted from the rule that the religion of the ruler determined the established church of the land. Instead of freedom of conscience, this rule imposed the faith of the ruler on all the people.

Finally, it took the post-conciliar bilateral and multilateral dialogues to make clear that teachings of many of the churches were complementary, not irreconcilable. There were gifts to be shared.¹²

The Eucharist and Christian Unity

The special Synod of Bishops in 1985, 20 years after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, stated that the theology of communion (*koinonia*) is the key to the understanding of the council.¹³ The model for the theology of communion is the Holy Trinity, a communion of Father, Son, and Spirit in God. Our communion with God in Christ is part of that communion through adoption and grace. The church is a communion, sharing in the communion with God in Christ through baptism. The Eucharist deepens our communion with God and Christ.

The Orthodox-Roman Catholic Dialogue published its first report in 1982, *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Trinity*.¹⁴ The understanding of the Christian churches of the East is rich in this theology of communion and is one of the gifts it continues to share with the churches of the West. As the bishop of Pergamon, John Zizoulas, explains so well in his many works, the Eucharist is the sacrament by which the church is enabled to become what it is.¹⁵ Augustine, in his famous Sermon 272, makes the same point.¹⁶

Another important insight of the Decree on Ecumenism is its stress on spiritual ecumenism (UR, 8).¹⁷ For some, this may seem like a cop-out: "When we aren't making much progress toward visible unity of the churches, we can stress spirituality." However, ecumenism is part of Christian spirituality. It is sharing the mission of Christ to preach the Gospel/good news of the dawning of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ as the center-point of human history. This is essential to a basic understanding of what the mission of the church is, and how to achieve it.

Thomas Aquinas states (*Summa Theologiae* III, q. 73, resp.) that the *res*/goal of the Eucharist is the mystical body of Christ. The Eucharist is not

something that the individual receives merely to deepen his or her spirituality. The Eucharist deepens communion with God in Christ in the individual, but it is also the effective sacrament of spiritual growth in the church. The Eucharist makes the church, and the church makes the Eucharist.

At the level of pastoral concerns and the impact of the Eucharist on the social justice (life and work) issues of the church, the Eucharist is a challenge to the churches to live out what happens when the Eucharist is celebrated, received, and adored.¹⁸

The Sacrament of Unity

To be eucharistic is to be ecumenical. This is the challenge of the Eucharist to the churches. Paul made the point very clearly in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians. We must recognize the body of Christ in the Eucharist. And the body of Christ is what we are and what we become. The problem with the Christians in Corinth was their failure to realize that their factions and divisions were a countersign to the Eucharist, the sacrament of unity. Jesus was bringing Christians together; they were tearing them apart.

The Eucharist deepens our communion with God and Christ and one another.

Jesus instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper. He also prayed that the church might be one so that the world might believe in God's love and in the mission of Jesus to save the world from sin and death. By his dying, death was destroyed, sin was forgiven and overcome. The reality of this sacrament, the *res* as Saint Thomas Aquinas calls it, is the mystical body of Christ, the church. "So that the world may believe" is the reason Jesus prayed for the unity of all Christians. And the power and the grace to demonstrate that unity come from the sacrament of unity which is the Eucharist.


Jesus unites us in love with himself and with one another. Saint Bernard is often pictured as receiving the love of Jesus who bends down from the cross in a loving embrace. This is what happens at the Eucharist: celebration, communion, and adoration. We become what we receive. We become what we are: the body of Christ.



Conclusion

The documents of the Second Vatican Council are not to be taken singly. They form together the teaching of the Catholic Church in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The issues faced, debated, and resolved are part of the entire corpus of the magisterium of the church. While not wanting to focus on specific errors to be corrected or new doctrine to be defined, the council discussed issues that are at the very core of the church's nature, mission, teaching, and life.

Vatican II is a council of both reform and renewal. It is also a council intended to open new avenues for reflection and further exploration and light on the church's pilgrim journey to the kingdom of heaven. *De Ecumenismo* is closely linked to *De Ecclesia*; the Decree on Religious Freedom is a necessary part of the declaration of what the church is and what relations it has to other ecclesial bodies.

These precisions and clarifications open the road to dialogue and future developments that will pave the way to full communion of all Christians in the body of Christ which is the church. 

Notes

¹ John XXIII, Pope. *Address to Cardinals at Saint Paul Outside the Walls in Rome, January 25, 1959. Convocation of the Second Vatican Council, December 8, 1961.*

² Stjepan Schmidt, SJ. *Augustin Bea: The Cardinal of Unity.* Transl. from the Italian by Leslie Wearne. (New York: New City Press, 1992).

³ Schmidt. Op. Cit., 340-362.

⁴ John XXIII, Pope. *Opening Address to the Vatican II, October 11, 1962.*

⁵ John W. O'Malley, SJ. *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010). Margaret O'Gara. *Triumph in Defeat. Infallibility, Vatican I, and the French Minority Bishops.* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988).

⁶ Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity. *The Decree on Ecumenism of the Second Vatican Council. A new translation by the Secretariat for PCU with commentary by Thomas F. Stransky, CSP (Study-Cub Edition, (Glen Rock, NJ: Paulist Press, 1965).*

⁷ Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity, Op. Cit., 17-43.

⁸ *The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops.* 2nd ed., December 7, 1985. (New York, NY: The New York Times, 1985).

⁹ Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity. *Directory for the Applications of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism.* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1993/1998), 18.

¹⁰ John O'Malley, SJ. *What Happened at Vatican II?* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010).

- ¹¹ Cf. The Catholic/Mennonite World Conference Dialogue. *Called Together to be Peacemakers*. Report of the conversation from 1999-2003. Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Vatican.va) spends considerable time in its section on the importance of objective evaluation of historical facts of the Reformation debates and the "baggage" that has accumulated in the various churches in their view of each other.
- ¹² Margaret O'Gara. *The Ecumenical Gift Exchange*. (Collegeville: Michael Glazier/Liturgical Press, 1998).
- ¹³ *The Final Report of the 1985 Extraordinary Synod of Bishops*. 2nd ed., December 7, 1985. (New York, NY: The New York Times, 1985).
- ¹⁴ Catholic-Byzantine Orthodox International Dialogue. *The Mystery of the Church and the Eucharist in the Light of the Mystery of the Trinity* (Munich, July 6, 1982).
- ¹⁵ John Zizioulas. *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries*, trans. Elizabeth Theokritoff. (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001).
- ¹⁶ Augustine of Hippo, Saint. *Sermo 272*.
- ¹⁷ Cf. Walter Cardinal Kasper. *A Handbook of Spiritual Ecumenism* (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2006/2008).
- ¹⁸ Ernest Falardeau, SSS. "Bread for the Journey: The Challenge of the Eucharist to the Churches" in *Unity in Mission: Theological Reflections on the Pilgrimage of Mission*. Ed. by Mitzi J. Budde and Don Thorsen. (New York/Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, 2013) (Faith and Order Commission Theological Series, National Council of Churches).

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Emmanuel Subscriber Service</h2>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change your address • inquire about the status or payment of your subscription 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inquire about gift subscriptions • inquire about missing issues
NEW SUBSCRIPTION ORDER FORM	
U.S. Rates 2 yr. - \$65.00 1 yr. - \$35.00 <hr/> Canadian and Foreign Rates (U.S. currency) 2 yr. - \$75.00 1 yr. - \$40.00	
Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ - _____	
TO CHANGE YOUR ADDRESS	
Send us an address label from a recent issue together with your new address, or fill in the information below. Please give us 6 to 8 weeks advance notice.	
Old Address	New Address
Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____	Name _____ Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Excerpts from *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism)

“The Lord of Ages wisely and patiently follows out the plan of grace on our behalf, sinners that we are. In recent times more than ever before, he has been rousing divided Christians to remorse over their divisions and to a longing for unity. Everywhere large numbers have felt the impulse of this grace, and among our separated brethren also there increases from day to day the movement, fostered by the grace of the Holy Spirit, for the restoration of unity among all Christians” (1).

“Almost everyone regards the body in which he [or she] has heard the Gospel as his church and indeed, God’s church. All however, though in different ways, long for the one visible church of God, a church truly universal and sent forth into the world that the world may be converted to the Gospel and so be saved, to the glory of God” (1).

“Before offering himself up as a spotless victim upon the altar, Christ prayed to his Father for all who believe in him: ‘that they all may be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us, so that the world may believe that thou has sent me.’ In his church, he instituted the wonderful sacrament of the Eucharist by which the unity of his church is both signified and made a reality” (2).

“The church . . . is God’s only flock; it is like a standard lifted high for the nations to see it: for it serves all mankind through the Gospel of peace as it makes its pilgrim way in hope toward the goal of the homeland above” (2).

“. . . The separated churches and communities as such, though we believe them to be deficient in some respects, have been by no means deprived of significance and importance in the mystery of salvation. For the Spirit of Christ has not refrained from using them as means of salvation which derive their efficacy from the very fullness of grace and truth entrusted to the church” (3).

“Christ summons the church to continual reformation as she sojourns here on earth. The church is always in need of this, in so far as she is an institution of people here on earth” (5).

“. . . [A] change of heart and holiness of life, along with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement, and merits the name ‘spiritual ecumenism’” (8).

“. . . Human powers and capacities cannot achieve this holy objective. . . . The council rests all its hope on the prayer of Christ for the church, on our Father’s love for us, and on the power of the Holy Spirit” (24).



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance on the Eucharist

by Dennis Billy, CSSR

The Dominican Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance was a voice of orthodoxy in an age when Catholic thought came under challenge. He brought a strict Thomistic approach to theological discourse and believed that mysticism was the call of every believer. The Eucharist was central to his spiritual outlook and to his teaching.

REGINALD MARIE GARRIGOU-LAGRANGE, OP, (1877-1964) WAS A PROFESSOR of ascetical and mystical theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas (the Angelicum) in Rome and one of the foremost Catholic theologians of the twentieth century.

He was born in southwest France and grew up in a strong Catholic environment. A conversion experience sparked by reading the French philosopher Ernest Hello led him to a deeper embrace of the Catholic faith and eventually the decision to abandon his medical studies at the University of Bordeaux and join the Order of Preachers. After his religious formation and theological studies, he taught for a time at Le Saulchoir in France before moving to the Angelicum, where he taught from 1909-1960. In 1917, the Angelicum established a special chair of ascetical and mystical theology for him, the first of its kind in the world.

A leading figure in what has come to be called “strict observance Thomism,” he wrote against modernism and the Nouvelle Théologie movement, worked for the Holy Office, helped shape Pius XII’s *Humani Generis* (1950), and served on the preparatory commission for the definition of the assumption of Mary. A prolific author and renowned teacher who educated generations of priests and religious from all over the world, he was a master at finding the ramifications of Neo-Thomistic thought for the spiritual journey of the faithful. The author of many books and numerous articles, he is probably best remembered for his masterful *The Three Ages of the Interior Life* (1938). His teaching on the Eucharist has a central place in his spiritual outlook and is intimately bound up with his understanding of these three ages.¹

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



Garrigou-Lagrange's Spiritual Outlook

Garrigou-Lagrange believed that every Christian was called to the mystical life. In his mind, infused contemplation, long considered the dividing line between ascetical and mystical prayer, belonged not to a select few, but to all members of the faithful. Such contemplation, in his mind, was the normal outcome of the daily Christian life. He believed that everyone was called to holiness and that such a life normally ended in a mystical, face-to-face encounter with God.²

In this respect, he opposed those who drew a sharp distinction between the ascetical and mystical lives and who acknowledged two separate paths to union with God by making the latter accessible only to a select spiritual elite. This sharp distinction between the ascetical and mystical developed relatively late in the history of spirituality and was largely due to a growing suspicion of mystical experience because of the latent effects of Quietism. This spiritual doctrine was a false, heretical mysticism popular in the Baroque spirituality of the late-seventeenth century that endorsed an utter passivity before God and even went so far as denying that a person should even will his or her own salvation.³

Garrigou-Lagrange countered this underlying mistrust of mysticism by synthesizing the speculative theology of Thomas Aquinas with the experiential-oriented writings of John of the Cross to show that the mystical life was simply living in the Spirit and allowing his gifts to manifest themselves and bear fruit.⁴ Since the Spirit and his gifts are given to all Christians at baptism and strengthened when they are confirmed, the mystical life, for him, was an expected outcome of authentic Christian living.

Garrigou-Lagrange's teaching retrieved an earlier understanding of the spiritual life, one that resonated deeply with the tradition. In many respects, it corresponds to the Second Vatican Council's teaching on the universal call to holiness in chapter five of *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church.⁵

For Garrigou-Lagrange, holiness in the Christian life is intimately bound up with the threefold journey of purgation, illumination, and union. The "three ways," as they are commonly called, represent a broad pattern of the Christian's journey to God. They are sometimes presented as separate and distinct stages of the spiritual journey,

and sometimes as an upwardly spiraling and repetitive movement of purgation (which focuses on purging oneself from sin and vice), illumination (which involves a deepening of one's awareness of God's presence in one's life), and union (which speaks of the culmination of a person's journey to God in a life of intimate communion with him).⁶

Garrigou-Lagrance's contribution to the theology of the three ways involves his systematic and comprehensive rendering of this journey, the way he integrates it with the best insights of Thomas and John of the Cross, and his opening up of mystical experience to all believers within its broad, general framework. The Eucharist plays a central role in each of these stages.⁷

Garrigou-Lagrance's Teaching on the Eucharist

Garrigou-Lagrance believed that participation in the sacrifice of the Mass is our greatest means to holiness, since from this sacrament of the altar flow all the graces we need to foster our relationship with God. These graces help us in our journey and, in the course of our lives, carry us through the ascetical (i.e., purgative) and mystical (i.e., illuminative and mystical) stages of the spiritual life. For this reason, he maintains that we should value daily participation in the Mass, have a deep awareness of its effect on our interior dispositions, and make every effort to unite ourselves to Christ's sacrificial offering in the Eucharist.⁸

Garrigou-Lagrance reiterated the church's teaching on the Mass as an unbloody manifestation of the bloody sacrifice of Calvary. The only difference between them, in his mind, is their manner of expression: ". . . whereas on the cross there was a bloody immolation, there is in the Mass, in virtue of the double consecration, a sacramental immolation through the separation, not physical but sacramental, of the body and blood of Christ."⁹ For him, the soul of the Mass is the very same interior oblation of the heart of Christ that happened at Calvary. When we participate at Mass, we unite ourselves to this internal self-offering as members of his mystical body, the church.¹⁰

For Garrigou-Lagrance, the quality of the faithful's participation in the Mass varies depending on where they are in their spiritual journey. Those in the purgative state seek to insure that they approach the sacrament in the state of grace. They try to root out evil from their lives by seeking forgiveness for their sins and making sure that they



prepare themselves properly for it. They work hard to be attentive during Mass and pray that Holy Communion will strengthen them in their struggle to root out all habits of sin from their lives.¹¹

Those in the illuminative state go beyond these initial steps by immersing themselves in Scripture and opening their hearts to whatever words God may be speaking to them in the silence of their hearts. Communion, for them, is an invitation to bask in the illuminating light of Christ's saving grace and to live with a deeper awareness of God's presence in their lives.¹²

Those in the unitive state move beyond this illuminating light to rest in joyful, intimate communion with him. They experience the transforming power of God's unconditional love for them and so deep an intimacy with him that the two seem as one. In each of these instances, the effect of Holy Communion depends on where they presently stand in their relationship with God. The grace of the sacrament will not be effective in their lives if they are not properly disposed to receive it. For this reason, they must take special care to remove any obstacles that might stand in the way of God's grace.¹³

Garrigou-Lagrange's teaching reminds us that God does not force himself into our lives and that his grace will not be effective and bear fruit if we are not willing to cooperate with it. God meets us where we are and leads us toward holiness according to our capacity to receive his grace. In most cases, this happens in small incremental steps by way of the three ways. Each successive stage, moreover, incorporates into itself all that went before it. Progress often occurs by revisiting earlier experiences and deepening one's awareness of the action of God's grace.¹⁴

Observations

Although this presentation of Garrigou-Lagrange's teaching on the Eucharist does not even scratch the surface of his profound spiritual doctrine, it does provide the main contours of his doctrine and summarizes succinctly its relevance for our journey of faith. The following observations seek to develop his teaching in more detail and highlight its relevance for today's believers.

1. To begin with, Garrigou-Lagrange's teaching on the Eucharist is rooted in the church's spiritual and theological tradition,

especially the teachings of the Council of Trent and the writings of Thomas Aquinas and John of the Cross. With Trent, he affirms the doctrines of the sacrificial nature of the Mass, transubstantiation, the real presence, and its significance as an eschatological sign of the heavenly banquet — to name but a few. With Thomas Aquinas and John of the Cross, he emphasizes the transformative power of the sacrament and its capacity to root out the roots of sin from the life of the believer. He also is able to synthesize the speculative, often abstract insights of Aquinas with John of the Cross' emphasis on experience to present a teaching on the Eucharist that is theologically sound, while at the same time spiritually attractive to the sensitivities of his day. In this respect, he stands as one of the most prominent orthodox Catholic spiritual writers of his day, whose impact is still strong even a half century after his death.¹⁵

Garrigou-Lagrange championed the idea that the mystical life was not for a select few, but was the normal outgrowth of the Christian life.

2. For Garrigou-Lagrange, participation in the sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest means to holiness and the prayer par excellence of the church. All other prayer — private, communal, and liturgical — flows from it and ultimately goes back to it. In his mind, there can be no opposition between private devotions and the celebration of the Eucharist. The Mass lies at very heart of the church's life and worship and any attempt to replace it with private devotions or para-liturgical practices must be seriously called into question. By their very nature, such practices seek to cultivate a relationship of the faithful with Christ and deepen their awareness of his presence in their lives. Although they may lead the faithful to Christ, however, the Eucharist is an action of Christ himself and lies at the very heart of the church's identity. Something has gone seriously awry when such practices, although good in themselves, displace the Eucharist in the life of the faithful and become the focal point of their life and worship. It would be like mistaking a pond for an ocean or replacing a fountain with a cup of water.¹⁶

3. At the same time, Garrigou-Lagrange emphasizes the importance of having the proper dispositions for participating at Mass and receiving Communion. Like all the sacraments,



the Eucharist works from the work performed (*ex opere operato*), but depends on the interior dispositions of those who receiving them (*ex opere operantis*). Serious sin will block the graces of the sacrament to work effectively in a person's heart; lesser sins will inhibit the person from experiencing the full effects of the sacramental grace in his or her life. Certain attitudes, in themselves not necessarily sinful, can dampen the effects of the sacrament in a person's life and, if care is not taken, actually bring about negative effects. Garrigou-Lagrange stresses the importance of good preparation before receiving Holy Communion (e. g., confession in the case of serious sin, fasting for the designated hours, prayer), attentiveness at Mass (e.g., following the actions of the priest, listening to the readings and sermon), and giving thanks to God afterwards (e.g., remaining in prayer afterward, resolving to act more lovingly throughout the day). Such actions dispose the soul properly to receive the sacrament and to allow its graces to work in a timely and efficacious manner within a person's heart.¹⁷

4. Garrigou-Lagrange's teaching on the Eucharist is intimately bound up with the spiritual journey of the faithful. The purpose of this sacrament is to bring the redemptive effects of Christ's paschal mystery to the believing community as they continue their journey to their heavenly homeland. The Mass immerses those who participate in it into the mystery of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, an event, existing both in and out of time, that carries the faithful to the foot of the cross, the empty tomb, and beyond. This sacramental immolation of Christ's body and blood releases the soul from the power of the evil one and reestablishes the relationship between the human and the divine. Without it, the faithful have no hope whatsoever of finding their way to God. With it, they have the assurance of faith that they will find their way to God and that he will welcome them home and invite them to the heavenly banquet.¹⁸

5. In emphasizing the central role played by the Eucharist in the spiritual journey of the faithful, Garrigou-Lagrange demonstrates how Christ accompanies the faithful at every stage of their development. Those in the purgative stage recognize that, when properly disposed, they receive grace when they reverently assist at Mass, even when they are unable to receive Holy Communion. Christ's healing, salvific grace flows from the sacrifice itself and touches all who attend with an open heart. He underscores the

important role of participation at Mass as members of Christ's body. As an action of Christ, the sacrificial offering of Christ involves not only the head, but also all of the members of the faithful. Although receiving Holy Communion represents the summit of the faithful's participation at Mass, he is quick to point out the many other ways in which the faithful can receive the spiritual fruits of Christ's sacrificial offering (e.g., reverent participation, attentive listening, spiritual communion). Christ, in other words, is always there to meet people where they are and accompany them along the way of conversion.¹⁹

The Eucharist is the ordinary means to holiness established by Christ for his followers and the most reliable way to foster intimacy with Christ and his Spirit.

6. Those in the illuminative way approach the Eucharist with a close intimacy with the Lord in both mind and heart. They approach it with a deep yearning for an even deeper intimacy and are drawn to the sacrament with a deeper consciousness of God's presence in their lives. According to Garrigou-Lagrange, the Eucharist enlightens the hearts and minds of those at this stage of the spiritual journey. It acts as a lantern or illuminating light which gives them a deeper knowledge of themselves, fills them with sanctifying grace, and enables them to respond more readily to the promptings of the Holy Spirit in their lives. At this stage of their journey, their prayer has become mystical, because the Spirit has gently moved from the background to the foreground of action in their lives. Holy Communion, for them, deepens their knowledge of themselves, others, and God. The Spirit's action in their lives has become palpable and they are filled with gratitude for the deeper level of conscious with which they have been blessed.²⁰

7. Those in the unitive way can hardly distinguish the difference between themselves and God. So close is their intimacy with the divine that they feel as though they have been absorbed into the divine and the boundaries between themselves and God seem, at least from their perspective, to have become temporarily blurred. Garrigou-Lagrange points out that the Eucharist affirms their experience of union with Christ, as well as the other persons of the




Trinity. Holy Communion signifies not only receiving the body and blood of Christ, but also entering into the intimacy of the Trinity itself. In this respect, the Eucharist is the sacrament of union with the divine. It represents not only the primary means of holiness for the faithful, but also the primary means through which they share in the intimate life of the Trinity. The Eucharist, in this respect, is the vehicle through which they attain the heights of intimacy with the God. It invites them to become like little children and, by means of their lives lived in the Spirit, to encourage others to do the same.²¹

Conclusion

Reginald Garrigou-Lagrance was a world-renowned theologian, teacher, and spiritual writer who introduced several generations of Catholic seminarians, priests, and religious to the intricacies of the spiritual life. He attracted students from all over the world to study under him and profit from his wisdom and profound learning concerning the spiritual life. His influence, moreover, extended not only throughout the world, but also to the highest levels of authority within the church. To name one prominent example: when studying at the Angelicum, Karol Wojtyla, the future Pope John Paul II, wrote his doctoral thesis under his supervision on the topic of faith in Saint John of the Cross.

Garrigou-Lagrance is remembered for his theological orthodoxy, prolific and comprehensive body of writings, and capacity to synthesize the abstract principles of Neo-Thomism with the experiential emphasis found in the writings of Saint John of the Cross. He championed the idea that the mystical life was not for a select few, but was the normal outgrowth of the Christian life. He identified mysticism with intimacy with Christ leading to life in the Spirit and the expression of his manifold gifts and fruits. Mysticism, he believed, began in this life and ended in the next with the face-to-face encounter with God known as the beatific vision. He considered experiences such as ecstasy, interior visions and allocutions, and the stigmata as extraordinary graces given by God to someone for the good of the church.

The Eucharist, for Garrigou-Lagrance, is the ordinary means to holiness established by Christ for his followers and the most reliable way to foster intimacy with Christ and his Spirit. It immerses those participating in it in Christ's paschal mystery and gives hope to those approaching it with faith and the right dispositions of one day seeing God face-to-

face. For him, this intimate encounter takes place either in this life or in the world to come and involves a complete transformation of the believer so that a deep union might take place with the divine. In such a state, the person desires nothing but to do the will of God and rest in his presence. He or she is totally transfigured by sanctifying grace. Like Mary, the Mother of God, the believer experiences the Gospel on a deep level of awareness. He or she proclaims the greatness of the Lord, glorifies him with praise and thanksgiving, and rejoices in the greatness of all that he has accomplished.²² 

Notes

¹ This biographical information comes from Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, trans. Sister M. Timothea Doyle, 2 vols. (London: Catholic Way Publishing, 2013), 1: 552-53; Thomas Crean, "A Saint in Heaven," <http://www.christendom-awake.org/pages/thomas-crean/saint-in-heaven.htm> (accessed June 8, 2014). For a complete bibliography of Garrigou-Lagrange's writings, see http://www.u.arizona.edu/~aversa/scholastic/garrigou-lagrange_bibliography.pdf (accessed June 8, 2014).

² Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 1:51; 2:750.

³ *Ibid.*, 1:26-37; 2:337-348, 732-58.

⁴ See, for example, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation in Thomas Aquinas and John of the Cross* (1923; reprint, Rockville, IL: Tan Books, 2010).

⁵ Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 1:553.

⁶ See Thomas D. McGonigle, "Three Ways" in *The New Dictionary of Catholic Spirituality*, ed. Michael Downey (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 963-65.

⁷ See Garrigou-Lagrange, *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, 1:269-93, 476-500; 2:289-307.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:476-84; 2:289-99.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:477.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 1:478-79.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1:479-84.

¹² *Ibid.*, 2:289-99.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2:578-79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1:38-39, 551; 2:763.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1:476-500; 2:289-307.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:512-38.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:476-84; 2:289-99.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:476-84.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2:289-99.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 2:505-12.

²² *Ibid.*, 1:147-58; 2:308-15, 559-67.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Thea Bowman — Soulful Mystic

by Victor M. Parachin

The year 2015 marks the 25th anniversary of the passing of Sister Thea Bowman. Thea lived a full life, fought evil and prejudice, and embraced each moment as a gift from God. When the cry for justice and basic fairness for all echoes again in our nation's cities and streets, what would this woman of faith ask us to do?

Victor Parachin is a minister, journalist, and author of a dozen books on practical Christian spirituality.

IN 1954, A YOUNG WOMAN ENTERED THE FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF PERPETUAL Adoration (FSPA) in La Crosse, Wisconsin. At that time, the evening meal custom was to dine in silence while listening to a spiritual reading. That night, the person reading was an African American woman. Because blacks and whites were generally separated and segregated then in the United States, the novice found herself thinking: "How interesting, the nuns have black people doing their reading."

That initial impression is related by Charlene Smith, FSPA, who later discovered that her Franciscan community did not have black servants and that the reader that evening was another Franciscan sister, Thea Bowman. As diverse as the Catholic Church is worldwide, in the 1950s in the United States, it was still rare to find African Americans as part of religious communities.

Early Life

Bertha Bowman was born December 29, 1937, in Yazoo City, Mississippi. She was the only child of Theon Edward, a physician, and Mary Esther Bowman, a teacher. Bertha's grandfather was a slave. Bertha's calling to religious life may have had its roots in her father's example. Dr. Bowman had the potential to enjoy a successful practice as a physician in New York, but an aunt suggested his skills could be better used serving the African American community in Mississippi, because blacks were denied medical care in the segregated South.

Soon after her birth, the family moved to Canton, Mississippi, a small

community of 8,000, half of whom were African American. The town was rigidly segregated. Whites had their streets and residential sections as did blacks. Except for shopping in stores owned and operated by whites, Bertha had no social contact with white people saying, "There was never a single white that I really knew." Because both of her parents were educated, they wanted the same for their daughter, but in the Southern states African American children received a very limited education, often ending at the fifth or sixth grade.

Though the family was Methodist, the best option for Bertha to receive an education was at a Catholic school, Holy Child Jesus, in Canton. While her parents had some reservations about Catholicism, they nevertheless enrolled Bertha at Holy Child Jesus in the sixth grade.

The school, administered by the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, was specifically established for African American children. This fact made an indelible impression upon young Bertha. Whereas Southern whites dismissed blacks as inferior and immoral, the white Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration welcomed, embraced, and loved her. "I was drawn to examine and accept the Catholic faith because of the day-to-day lived witness of Catholic Christians who first loved me, then shared with me their story, their values, their beliefs . . . then invited me to share with them in community prayer and mission," she said. "As a child I did not recognize evangelization at work in my life. I did recognize love, service, community, prayer, and faith."

In the welcoming and loving environment created by the sisters, Bertha thrived intellectually and spiritually. She excelled in her studies, joined the school choir, and was given a vision of a world larger than the cotton fields of Mississippi.

It was not long before Bertha announced to her parents her desire to become a Catholic and to enter religious life. Initial resistance gave way to acceptance. In 1947, she was baptized along with another little boy. A few years later, at age 15 in 1953, Bertha left Mississippi to join the Franciscan Sisters at their motherhouse in La Crosse, becoming the only African American member in the convent. There, at Saint Rose Convent, she was given the name Thea, which means "of God," to honor her father. From then on, Bertha was Sister Thea, who brought along her African American culture. One sister recalls: "It was a joy to sit beside her because her singing was so beautiful; she sang from her spirit."



Religious Career and Prophetic Witness

Because of her inquisitive, grasping mind and love of children, her superiors felt the best use of her talents lie in becoming a teacher. Progressing successfully through the formative years required for religious life, Thea took final vows in 1963. In addition, she studied and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Viterbo College, La Crosse. She taught fifth and sixth grade in that city for two years and then was delighted to be assigned as a teacher at Holy Child Jesus in Canton.

Thea returned home to teach at the same elementary school which was so formative in her life. While there, her superiors encouraged her to continue graduate studies. In 1968, they sent her to The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, where she earned a doctorate in English. That period of her life coincided with the civil rights movement, the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the transformation of the nation regarding race.

Upon graduation, Thea returned to La Crosse, where, from 1972-1978, she taught African American literature and chaired the English department at Viterbo College. While there, she founded and directed the Hallelujah Singers, who became well known and popular for their singing of African American spirituals. There was considerable interest in and demand for Thea to share her African American heritage, particularly the music, so the Hallelujah Singers received invitations to perform throughout the United States.

In 1978, her order transferred Thea home to Canton, where she could care for her aging parents. She was appointed the director of the Office of intercultural Affairs for the Diocese of Jackson, Mississippi, a position which gave her a platform to critique lingering racial prejudice while promoting cultural awareness and sensitivity. She was also a founding faculty member of the Institute for Black Catholic Studies (1980) at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans.

With her years of experience and training, combined with a prophetic vision, she began to impact American Catholicism by providing an intellectual, spiritual, historical, and cultural foundation for developing and legitimizing a distinct worship form for black Catholics. She explained: "When we understand our history and culture, then we

can develop the ritual, the music, and the devotional expression that satisfy us in the church.”

In 1987, Thea was instrumental in the publication of a seminal new African American Catholic hymnal, *Lead Me, Guide Me: The African American Catholic Hymnal*. Bishop James P. Lyke, OFM, an auxiliary bishop of Cleveland who would later become the archbishop of Atlanta, Georgia, coordinated the hymnal project, saying it was born of the needs and aspirations of black Catholics. Thea was actively involved in helping select songs to be included.

Little by little, Thea gained both respect and a national reputation among Catholic leaders, urging and persuading them to offer religious services that reflected different cultural styles of music and worship. She also modeled the diversity herself, wearing African-style gowns and her long hair in traditional braids. Through it all, Thea challenged the Catholic Church to adapt itself culturally to various expressions in order to retain vitality and growth.

Thea Bowman converted to Catholicism at the age of nine. She brought her African American experience and spirituality to the church as a gift.

When she was invited to address the United States Catholic bishops in June 1989, Thea began her address by singing the Black spiritual “Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child,” then gently challenged the bishops to help her and other marginalized people find their rightful place in the church.

She said to them: “What does it mean to be black and Catholic? It means that I come to my church fully functioning. That doesn’t frighten you, does it? I come to my church fully functioning. I bring myself, my black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I hope to become, I bring my whole history, my traditions, my experiences, my culture, my African American song and dance and gesture and movement and teaching and preaching and healing and responsibility as gifts to the church.”

The bishops were visibly moved by Thea, applauding her warmly. When she finished, they stood linking arms and singing as Thea led them in the spiritual “We Shall Overcome.” As the meeting ended, the bishops presented Thea with a dozen roses which she proudly held in



the air proclaiming, "I accept these roses in memory of all the women who have nurtured you into the episcopacy." The bishops applauded her once again. Later, one commented: "At a time of much division in the church, Sister Thea possesses the charismatic gifts to heal, to bring joy to the church. She has no time for useless, destructive arguments. She's too busy celebrating life."

Rooted in Her African American Identity

Throughout her life, Thea affirmed and built on her African American spiritual roots, one of which was Scripture. Thea said: "God was so alive in my world. I was reared around a lot of old people. They knew Scripture. I knew people who could not read or write, but they could quote you a scripture with the chapter and verse. They would use a scripture when they were tired and a scripture when they were frustrated, a scripture to challenge us . . . a scripture to threaten you, a scripture to reward you or to praise you or to teach you: I grew up in that kind of world."

Of course, African American songs were instrumental in her spiritual formation as well. She shared her insights on the spiritual "Joshua Fit De Battle of Jericho," saying: "There were no weapons, no M-16s, no bombs. There was no need for violence. The battle was in God's hands. God commanded Joshua and the people . . . to encircle Jericho with music, ritual, and celebration. God commanded the people to shout — one Lord, one faith, one united people — and the wall came tumbling down. The power of God and the power of a united, believing people prevailed."

Ultimately, it was the joy and love of the Franciscan sisters which impacted her soul, prompting her to become a Catholic and joining their order. In turn, she came to love the liturgy and spirituality of Catholicism. Yet, it was her encounter with white religious sisters which opened the window of her soul. Through their lives, she saw Christians who "preached" love, not hatred, unity not division.

Years later, in a television interview in Wisconsin, Thea spoke glowingly of the "Catholic Christians" who came to be with her people: "Catholic Christians came into my community and they helped us with education, they helped us with health care, they helped us to find our self-respect and to realize our capabilities when the world had told us for so long that we were nothing and would amount to nothing.

And I wanted to be part of that effort. That's radical Christianity, that's radical Catholicism." Throughout her entire life, she never forgot the kindness of her Franciscan sisters and that she was one of them. "I am a Franciscan," she declared. "I want to be an instrument of peace. I want to be an instrument of hope. I want to be an instrument of faith and joy."

"I am a Franciscan. I want to be an instrument of peace . . . an instrument of hope . . . an instrument of faith and joy."

In 1984, Thea was diagnosed with cancer and began a six-year struggle. Despite the debilitating effects of treatment, illness, and confinement to a wheelchair, Thea continued to be the main African American spokesperson for the Catholic Church to heighten its intercultural and interracial awareness. During those years, her prayer was simple but profound: "Lord, let me live until I die. If that prayer is answered, how long really doesn't matter."

At the young age of 51, Thea, the granddaughter of a slave who became a Catholic sister, died in Canton on March 30, 1990. Tributes came from all over the country. In New York City, Cardinal John O'Connor devoted his column in the archdiocesan newspaper to Thea, writing: "Friedrich Nietzsche said, 'The world no longer believes because believers no longer sing.' He didn't know Sister Thea Bowman, dark nightingale. I am grateful that I did."

On April 4, Thea was buried next to her parents in Elmwood Cemetery in Memphis, Tennessee. The words she requested to be engraved on her white tombstone were these: "She tried."

Wisdom from Thea Bowman

"The key to wisdom is knowing all the right questions."

"Remember who you are and whose you are."

"What does it mean to be black and Catholic? It means that I come to my church fully functioning. . . . I bring myself, my black self, all that I am, all that I have, all that I'm worth, all I hope to become. I bring my whole history, my traditions, my experiences, my culture, my African



American song and dance and gesture and movement and teaching and preaching and healing and responsibility as a gift to the church.”

“Black sacred song is soulful song.”

“I think the difference between me and some people is that I’m content to do my little bit. Sometimes people think that they have to do big things in order to make change, but if each one would light a candle we’d have a tremendous light.”

“Sharing life and faith and love is all our business, but in a special way and by a special calling, giving life, sustaining life, and sharing life have always been life for women.”

“God’s glory is revealed because we love one another across the barriers and boundaries of race, culture, and class.”

“You have to love the Lord God with your whole mind, your whole soul, your whole heart. You don’t bring no feeble worship before the Lord!” (quoting an elderly black woman named Blind Singing Lizzie).

“The work of the ordained minister, of the professional minister, is to enable the people of God to do the work of the church, to feed us sacramentally, to enable us, and to preach and to teach.”

“Unless we personally and immediately are touched by suffering, it is easy to read Scripture and to walk away without contacting the redemptive suffering that makes us holy.”

“Certainly there is no happiness within this circle of flesh, nor is it in the optics of these eyes to behold felicity; the first day of our Jubilee is death.”





PASTORAL LITURGY

Celebrating the Sacraments— Part 5: Marriage

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

We continue, during this 50th anniversary of the completion of the Second Vatican Council, reviewing the sacraments, examining how the renewal of these sacraments has been a fruit of the vision of the council. Here we review “best practices” for the sacrament of matrimony.

SINCE 1990, A SECOND EDITION OF THE RITE OR “ORDER” OF CELEBRATING MATRIMONY has been in the works, both in the United States at the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops and the International Commission on English in the Liturgy, and in Rome at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Vox Clara Committee, and the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

It was announced a year ago that the final revisions would be completed and the new edition published, even occasioning the scheduling of workshops by the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions on changes in the ritual. However, the release of the rite continues to be delayed (as of the writing of this column in late May 2015).

With the third edition of the *Roman Missal*, we are able to make some comments and reminders for “best practices” in the sacrament of matrimony, even as we struggle with the pastoral reality that celebration of the sacrament among couples has declined significantly.

As we review the current introduction of the Rite of Marriage (RoM) — we have been promised an extended introduction with additional theology and pastoral applications in the second edition that is yet to come! — we remember the importance of the sacrament in the life of the church, the rich biblical imagery of Christ and his bride, and the challenge to Christian couples to mirror the merging of human and divine love (RoM, 1-3).

Throughout the year, but especially on World Marriage Day in February,

Father John Thomas J. Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church, in Highland Heights, Ohio, and a liturgical consultant and presenter. He is available for workshops and presentations on the liturgy.

it might be helpful for clergy to preach on the sacrament. Bulletins and websites can be useful tools in welcoming couples to consider celebrating their marriages as ecclesial events. Couples sometimes feel unworthy, disconnected from, or unwelcome in the church, especially cohabitating couples. They have heard the “shoulds” and the “should nots” and have opted out of the sacramental life of the church.

We have done a good job in presenting the ideals of the Catholic Christian life, but perhaps not enough on mercy and accepting people where they are at, something Pope Francis encourages. With many couples in “mixed marriages” (i.e., different religious traditions or different Christian denominations), it may be helpful to catechize in ways that emphasize the value of having the church be part of this moment and reminding couples that they don’t both have to be Catholic to receive the grace of the sacrament.

One “sticky” point with couples, especially brides, is RoM, 19-20, where the procession is envisioned in a certain way. Many clergy and pastoral ministers have found a way of merging “Hollywood hopes” and a liturgical procession as at a regular Sunday Mass. This is a good topic to discuss at deanery or regional gatherings. In general, couples are to have their parents in the procession in a meaningful way.

In the ritual, there is a Gloria in the Introductory Rites. Most are not aware of this, due to the delay in printing the second edition of RoM. However, the *Roman Missal* (RM) states that in Ritual Masses for the Celebration of Marriage (Part V of the RM), “The Penitential Act is omitted, for in the first edition it was allowed. The Gloria in Excelsis (Glory to God in the highest) is said.” In implementing this, due to the presence of many non-churchgoers at weddings, printing a Gloria with a simple refrain and even having a short rehearsal of music before the start of the ceremony could facilitate singing and more active participation.

There will be added readings, we are told, in the second edition of the RoM. However, if a couple requests a particularly meaningful reading — such as Ecclesiastes 25 (“There is a time and a season . . .”) or John 13 (Jesus washing the feet of his disciples) — it would be appropriate and pastorally sensitive since the couple holds it as significant to them. The Easter Octave is the one time when specific readings for the liturgical season are mandated.

In certain cultures and countries, couples are increasingly choosing a convalidation or blessing of a civil marriage during Sunday Mass. This is an important request, one which highlights the place of the dominical Eucharist in the life of the couple and their desire to celebrate with their parish community. The Table of Liturgical Days underscores that the ritual Mass for the celebration of marriage is secondary to certain solemnities, including Sundays.

During the Rite of Marriage, RoM, 23 states, "All stand, including the bride and bridegroom," although this rubric is not followed in many places. Inasmuch as the couple is both the sign of the sacrament and "mutually confer upon each other the sacrament of matrimony by expressing their consent before the church" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1623), having the couple stand in front of the altar and face the congregation, with the clergy positioned at the front pew and looking toward the altar, is sound pastoral practice.

Another sensitive issue is the custom of having the wedding party flank the couple on both sides of the sanctuary and down the stairs. However, we are all witnesses, and the ordained minister, the official witness of the church, states so by the prayers of the ritual. The spouses are joined to each other in Christ, and what better way of demonstrating this by positioning the couple next to the altar, sitting and standing for the celebration near the altar, the symbol of Christ.

As the ritual states, the couple has been "consecrated" in baptism. Placing the paschal candle in the sanctuary and lighting it can be an effective reminder of the connection between the baptismal covenant and the marriage covenant. Additionally, holy water could be used to bless the couple after the vows as well as the rings that are exchanged. These sacramental symbols are not mentioned in the ritual, but help to make the connection between these sacraments. Furthermore, while not in the ritual, the kiss could be used at the end of the ring ceremony to "seal" the ritual and the sacrament. Why wait until the Kiss of Peace?

Another pastorally sensitive idea is to invite the couples' godparents to be part of the ritual as lectors, ministers of Communion, or gift-bearers, when appropriate. In some cultures, especially Hispanic, the godparents play a key role in helping with the extra symbols that are employed (the lasso, coins, and rosary/cord).

The third edition of the *Roman Missal* includes prefaces and Nuptial

Blessings in theologically rich texts, including the mention of the groom in the prayer. It is still a curiosity that the Nuptial Blessing takes place after the Our Father and with the prayer “Deliver us” omitted. The couple may either stand or remain at their place and kneel. RM, 3 states that the prayer “Lord Jesus Christ” is omitted and the Sign of Peace follows immediately. This is a change from the first edition of the Rite of Marriage and an update in the *Roman Missal*.

A cultural adaptation not mentioned in either the RoM or the RM is a visit to the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary or the Holy Family, accompanied by the singing of the “Ave Maria” or another Marian hymn as the couple prays for Mary’s intercession.

Again, I mention that at a time when marriages are generally celebrated in a secular manner, we in the church need to be sensitive, open, and welcoming. Our first responsibility is to “strengthen and nourish the faith of those about to be married, for the sacrament of matrimony presupposes and demands faith” (RoM, 7). It also presupposes that we will be faithful in celebrating the ritual well, allowing its gestures and words to speak to the theology and ecclesiology of the love of God.

The Calendar for September and October

Beginning of the School Year

Bless your teachers, catechists, and students at the beginning of the school year. See the *Book of Blessings* (BB), Chapter 5 (Blessing of Students and Teachers) or Chapter 4 (Blessing of Those Appointed as Catechists.)

Blessing of New Ministers

New officers and ministries get underway at the beginning of the school year and the parish’s life. Consider BB, Chapter 60 (Blessing of Those Who Exercise Pastoral Service), Chapter 64 (Blessing of a Parish Council), Chapter 65 (Blessing of Officers of Parish Societies), or Chapter 66 (Welcoming of New Parishioners).

Monday, September 7 — Labor Day (USA)

See the Lectionary, Volume 4 for the special readings offered for the Blessing of Human Labor, the *Roman Missal* for the Masses and Prayers for Various Needs and Occasions, part two, 26 (For the Sanctification of Human Labor), *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers: Second*

Edition, 176, for a special prayer in this book that may be used in the bulletin for your parishioners to pray at home or use in the Universal Prayers of the Mass.

Sunday, September 13 — National Grandparents Day

Acknowledge grandparents on this day of gratitude (BB, Chapter 1, Part 12).

Liturgical Conference

The National Meeting of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions will be held October 7-9 in Dallas, Texas. The focus of the meeting is *The Church at Prayer: Faith Received, Fostered, and Formed*. Visit fdlc.org for details and to register.

Monday, October 12 — Thanksgiving (Canada)

Pope Saints

We celebrate the two newly canonized popes: Saint John XXIII (Sunday, October 11) and Saint John Paul II (Thursday, October 22). Include them in the Universal Prayers and the Eucharistic Prayer.

Remembering the Dead

At the end of October, prepare your *Book of the Dead* and other remembrances for the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls) on Monday, November 2. Have candles, cards, and other items available for this time of remembering those who have died in the past year.

**Taizé Holy Hour to Pray for Youth
and Their Vocation in the Church**

As we begin another school year, we have an opportunity to pray for our young people.

Opening Song “The Kingdom of God” (Taizé)

Opening Prayer

Gracious God,
you call us to serve you in our brothers and sisters

and faithfully do your will.

We come before you to pray with your Son,
to pray for youth, their needs, their future,
their vocation to serve the church
as faithful disciples of Christ
and build up the kingdom of God.

Help us be mindful of those in need;
especially for those youth
needing your loving care and support.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Silent Meditation 5 minutes

Lighting of Candles

We come forward now to light a candle
to remember an intention, a person, a young person,
someone or something that needs extra prayer
and attention in our lives.

We offer our intentions to the Lord, who is light itself
and who nourishes us with his living bread and saving cup.
Let us sing and pray together.

*Candles are lit and placed in a basin or box filled with sand on or near
the altar and the monstrance.*

Song "Jesus Christ, Inner Light" (Suzanne Toolan, RSM)

Silent Meditation 5 minutes

Reading Jeremiah 1: 4-19
(Weekday Lectionary, Year II, 397,
Sixteenth Wednesday)

Silent Meditation 5 minutes

Song "Do Not Be Afraid" (Suzanne Toolan, RSM)

Silent Meditation 5 minutes

Reading Luke 9: 46-48
(Weekday Lectionary, Year II, 455,
Twenty-sixth Monday)

Silent Meditation 5 minutes

Song “We Live Not for Ourselves” (Huub Oosterhuis)

Intercessions “In the Lord I’ll Be Ever Thankful” (Taizé)

We turn to our God, confident that our needs are heard.

1. For students who have graduated and are seeking meaningful employment, we pray.
2. For those discerning their future and a call to serve God, we pray.
3. For those who are seeking foster care and those healing from abuse, we pray.
4. For the safety of all this school year, we pray.
5. For young people to hear the call to serve the church in a vocation as a sister, brother, monk, deacon, priest, or religious priest, especially in the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament, we pray.
6. For the sick and those who care for them, we pray.
7. For those in need of healing, we pray.
8. For peace and an end to all wars, especially wars which cause families to be displaced, we pray.

For what else shall we pray?

Spontaneous petitions from the assembly if possible.

And now we pray the prayer our Savior taught us.

The Lord’s Prayer

Benediction “Jesus Christ, Yesterday, Today, and Forever”
(Suzanne Toolan, RSM)

Closing Prayer:

God of hope and promise,
enliven our hearts with your love and care
that we might make the presence of the risen Christ
known in all we do.

May we allow Christ to mold us into his image,
building your kingdom and care.
Help us to be your true disciples,
especially helping young people
to grow in faith and understanding.

May we continue to work for gospel justice
and serve you in all we say and do.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

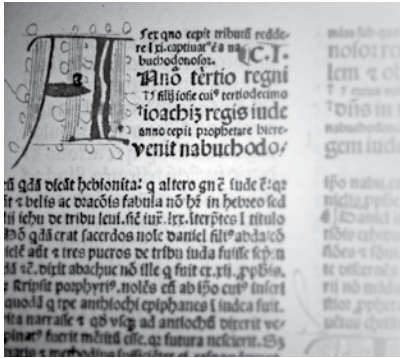
All: Amen.

Closing Song "If You Believe and I Believe"



In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

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



BREAKING THE WORD

HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

What a Mighty God We Serve

MY STEPFATHER IS A PASSIONATE DUCK HUNTER, AND SEPTEMBER AND OCTOBER are probably his favorite months of the year. That's because duck hunting season starts at this time of year and I know that he and his fellow hunters will be out ready for the hunt. It seems that winter, spring, and summer are simply preludes to this annual fall ritual of traversing the marshes at first light, calling the ducks to the hunter's realm, and hopefully bringing home a harvest of teal, mallards, etc. Yes, football season begins too, but hunting is a seasonal ritual my dad and his fellow hunters anticipate and enjoy each year. Fall brings us close to the world of creation around us: in brilliant hues and subtle tones, crisp mornings and evenings, and the migration of birds and animals to warmer climes. It can be a spiritual moment for all of us, an opportunity to thank our Creator for the beauty of creation and to enjoy it responsibly

Our Sunday readings these months help us to appreciate God's majesty and glory this side of eternity and whose presence we hope to enjoy and worship forever. They teach us to participate in the work of the Creator, who not only established this world and all it contains as good, but who also recreated it through the sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit daily renews the face of the earth. Just as waterfowl hunters eagerly anticipate opening day of the season, so we eagerly anticipate the fullness of God's kingdom each time we gather around the eucharistic table of our Lord.

"What a mighty God we serve. / Angels bow before him. / Heaven and earth adore him. / What a mighty God we serve!" (Hezekiah Walker).

Blessed Sacrament
Father Anthony J. Marshall earned a Master of Divinity and a Master of Arts in theology from Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. He is an associate member of both the Catholic Biblical Association and the Canon Law Society of America. Father Anthony presently serves the U.S. Province of his congregation as Vocation Director.

Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time September 6, 2015

Jesus Heals and Restores

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 35:4-7a

The prophet Isaiah speaks of a great moment of joy for God's people as they encounter God's saving power in their midst. In a time of suffering, God will deliver his people from their afflictions.

James 2:1-5

The author of the letter exhorts the members of the community to be impartial in their dealings with each other. In the church, where the blessings of God are bestowed to be shared with others, the rich are to care for the poor and are not be afforded special honors or privileges because of their wealth.

Mark 7:31-37

In the Decapolis region, a center of Greek and Roman culture beyond the Jordan River, Jesus heals an individual who is unable to hear or speak properly. The crowd brings the deaf and speech-impaired man to Jesus, asking Jesus to heal him. The miraculous healing leads to wonderment among the people, along with Jesus' demand for silence about the miracle. "But the more he ordered them not to [tell anyone], the more they proclaimed it" (7:36).

Sharing the Word

Our readings point out at least three areas in our life that need Jesus' healing touch. The first is healing from fear, the second is idolatry, and the third is spiritual deafness.

We need Jesus to heal us of all fear. This is the message of the first reading where Isaiah encourages us: "Be strong, fear not! Here is your God, he comes with vindication; with divine recompense, he comes to save you" (Is 35:4). Fear keeps us from God and from loving

one another. Christ asked us to love each other just as he loves us (see Jn 15:12), but we can't do that if we ourselves are fearful of God's love for us. Fear prevents us from worshiping God and from encountering Christ in the sacraments. It cripples us spiritually and undermines our trust in God. And so, fear is the first thing we need to be healed of.

The second thing that we need to be healed of is idolatry. We tend to think of idolatry as simply worshiping false gods. But what are those false gods? The second reading points to an idolatry from which that our society needs liberation: the worship of wealth and the sins of greed and self-indulgence. How often our culture and we who are under its influence worship at the altar of the dollar, honoring the rich and the well-placed while neglecting the poor, immigrants, and simple workers. Greed and self-indulgence are forms of idolatry. Only faith in Christ can heal us of idolatry.

The third thing that needs Jesus' healing touch is spiritual deafness. If we examine our world and ourselves today, we can see many who close their ears to the Good News of Jesus Christ. Our neighbors don't want to hear about God in the public square. They don't want us to act publicly as Christians, to live and to profess our Catholic convictions outside the walls of our churches on Sunday. This is what I mean by spiritual deafness. Our world is in need of Jesus' healing touch. *Ephphatha — Be opened!*

Praying the Word

Lord Jesus,
in you we find the fullness of joy and peace.
May your healing touch be upon all
who so desperately need it.
Open the ears of our hearts
to receive your saving word.
You live and reign forever and ever.
Amen.

Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 13, 2015

Faithful Servant

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 50:5-9a

Third among the suffering servant songs of Isaiah, today's reading places on the lips of the faithful servant of God a tale of steadfast fidelity despite the pummeling dealt him by the people. The servant puts his complete trust in God, his help amid the tribulations of the world. Through the centuries, Christians have seen the figure of Jesus Christ in the person of the suffering servant.

James 2:14-18

Continuing from last Sunday's *lectio*, the passage offers a robust debate about the value of faith alone versus a faith which is expressed in concrete acts of charity. For the author of James, salvation is *not achieved through works, but faith is demonstrated through good deeds* done in the name of God (see verse 18).

Mark 8:27-35

Mark relates the episode in the ministry of Jesus where Peter confesses his faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus predicts his own passion, to which Peter responds negatively. As a result, Jesus is forced to censure Peter for his erroneous thinking. This leads Jesus to invite all would-be disciples to self-denial for his sake and that of the Gospel.

Sharing the Word

In the newspaper or online classified section, one can find a variety of job listings for just about anything imaginable. Nearly every one of these ads lists the qualifications and expectations the prospective employer has of applicants who apply for a particular job. Some list experience or particular education requirements; others contain certain skills that applicants must possess in order to be

considered for employment. Today's Scriptures are akin to a classified ad for would-be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Each of us has a vocation, a calling, flowing from our baptism. All of us are called to be Jesus' disciples and friends. This is our common vocation. And Jesus tells us what he expects of us as his disciples: "Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Mk 8:34). As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are invited to follow his way of life, his teachings, and to love one another just as he himself loves us. The way of the cross is not just a devotional prayer particular to Lent. In point of fact, the way of the cross is the Christian way of life: a life of service, self-denial, love, and mercy, as James points out in the second reading.

In the first reading, the suffering servant is held up as a model for discipleship, as one who is faithful to his commitment to God and who trusts in God's never-failing mercy. Despite the persecutions and tribulations he faces because of his faith in God, the suffering servant remains unwavering in his commitment.

Except in certain places in the world today, Christians do not face suffering and possible death for belief in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but we do encounter difficulties in practicing our faith. The "public square" is becoming increasingly hostile to religious belief and expressions of faith that run contrary to current public opinion. The temptation we all must confront is whether we submit to the prevailing winds of our culture and compromise our faith and morals, or remain loyal to Jesus Christ and his church. As the second-century Christian author Tertullian put it, the blood of the martyrs is the seed of new Christians.

Praying the Word

God,
you call women and men to your service.
In holiness, you equip your people
with gifts of wisdom and faith
to build up your kingdom.
May your Holy Spirit inspire us
in all that we say and do,
and may those who face difficulty
for the sake of the Gospel be found steadfast.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 20, 2015

It's All about Love

Breaking the Word

Wisdom 2:12, 17-20

The just one's detractors reject his words and his challenges to their authority. Christian tradition has seen the person of Jesus Christ as imaged in this pericope.

James 3:16—4:3

The passage describes what causes division in the community. To counter divisiveness, the author points to divine wisdom. Those who seek and possess this wisdom bear the fruit of peace in their lives.

Mark 9:30-37

Following on last Sunday's passion prediction, the lectionary presents us with a second prediction to open this passage (verses 30-32). The rest of the text describes an argument which erupts among the disciples of Jesus as to who is the greatest, to which Jesus responds by saying that the greatest is the servant of all. The passage underscores the lack of comprehension on the part of the disciples.

Sharing the Word

Recently I was boarding a flight home when I witnessed a simple example of Christian love. Ahead of me was a family of three: mom, dad, and their daughter. Their seats were not together: the mother and daughter were able to sit together, but the father's seat was a few rows back. Another passenger who looked like he could have been a businessman or someone important, dressed in a fine pinstripe suit, wearing French cuffs, and texting busily on his smartphone, noticed the family's dilemma and offered to switch his seat with the father so that he could sit with his wife and daughter.

It seems to me that this man's example might be a good

example of what today's readings are all about. Our faith in Jesus Christ is to be manifested not only in our words but also in our actions. I have no idea if the passenger who gave up his seat was a Christian or not, but I can tell you that his small, loving gesture leads me to believe he was.

There's a hymn, I think from the 1960s, entitled "They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love." And what is Christian love? Very simply, love is the gift of self. That's what the man did for the family on the plane. He gave up his seat in order to make the family happy by being together for the flight. Simple, isn't it?

Our actions do speak louder than our words. What we say and do in church on Sunday is to be reflected outside in our work, school, family, and community. I think this is what the author of James is writing about in our second reading. The sins and evils he describes come not from a people of integrity — a people whose faith in Jesus Christ match their actions. Rather, wars, violence, jealousy, hatred, etc., come from a lack of love and practical faith.

Jesus never promised that being a Christian would be easy. *In the end, it's all about love. It's all about giving of ourselves.* We gather Sunday after Sunday to offer praise and thanks to God for the gift of mercy shown us in Christ and for the salvation which is ours in Christ. The Eucharist is the memorial of Christ's gift of himself on the altar of the cross for our salvation. His supreme act of love was offered for our eternal happiness and redemption. Through such faith, we are promised an eternity of happiness. In the words of the aforementioned hymn, yes, they'll know we are Christians by our love!

Praying the Word

Almighty God,
each day you invite us to show our love for you
by the way we love and care for one another.
Shower upon us the grace we need
to be a people of integrity, mercy,
and zeal for your kingdom.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 27, 2015

Consecrated in the Truth

Breaking the Word

Numbers 11:25-29

God takes a portion of the spirit he bestowed on Moses and shares it with the seventy elders selected to assist Moses in leading the people. Eldad and Medad, who are absent from the gathering, receive the spirit and began to prophesy, causing Joshua to protest. Moses does not acquiesce to Joshua's complaint.

James 5:1-6

The opening verses of the fifth chapter of the epistle serve as a condemnation of those who place their trust in wealth rather than in God. It is not necessarily that the affluent have accumulated wealth that the author finds deserving of condemnation, but rather the means by which it was acquired and their lack of charity.

Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Mark presents a story of an exorcism. This time, however, the exorcist is not of Jesus' inner-circle of disciples, which becomes a point of jealousy for them. Jesus advises his disciples to not be worried about the exorcist. He then proceeds to teach them about the dangers one faces in temptation, and how it would be better to remove the source of temptation — to nip it in the bud, so to speak — rather than succumb to it and sin.

Sharing the Word

One of the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit is how our universal church can gather a diverse people from virtually every part of the planet into one body in Christ. The Spirit creates unity through legitimate diversity. In the words of Pope Francis, "Diversity must always be reconciled by the help of the Holy Spirit; he alone can raise

up diversity, plurality, and multiplicity, while at the same time bringing about unity" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 131).

I mention this wondrous mystery and gift of the Holy Spirit because our readings cause me to reflect on how we increasingly find ourselves in a sort of tribal mentality, protecting our own precious turf rather than inviting conversation and collaboration or even acknowledging goodness and truth in another's point of view. Objectivity, reason, and civility are quickly discarded in public discourse in favor of political talking points and charges of bigotry, liberalism, conservatism, etc., upon those with differing opinions.

Our society is composed of persons from varying cultures and backgrounds. So, how do we Christians dialogue with one another, finding unity amid great diversity? Cardinal Donald Wuerl, the archbishop of Washington, offers sound contemporary wisdom on the value of legitimate diversity and respecting our dialogue partners: "We need to look at how we engage in discourse and how we live out our commitment to be a people of profound respect for the truth and our right to express our thoughts, opinions, positions — always in love. We who follow Christ must not only speak the truth, but must do so in love (Eph 4:15). It is not enough that we know or believe something to be true. We must express that truth in charity with respect for others so that the bonds between us can be strengthened in building up the body of Christ" (*Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship: Civil Dialogue*, 2). While there is indeed a great diversity in our world, the Holy Spirit guides us into communion with God and one another. Jesus' advice in today's Gospel is ever timely: "There is no one who performs a mighty deed in my name who can at the same time speak ill of me. For whoever is not against us is for us" (verses 39-40).

Praying the Word

God of mercy,
you have harmoniously created our universe
with a great plurality and beauty.
Lavish upon us the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit
that we may become signs of unity
in a world wounded by sin and division.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time October 4, 2015

The Vocation to Marriage and Family Life

Breaking the Word

Genesis 2:18-24

This pericope, taken from the second story of creation in the book of Genesis, details the creation of woman from the side of man. In search of a suitable partner for the man, God creates all sorts of animals that the man names — thereby indicating his dominion over them. Since no creature is worthy to be his companion, woman is formed from the man's side.

Hebrews 2:9-11

We move from the Letter of James to the Letter to the Hebrews. This brief passage serves to illustrate that for our sakes, Jesus humbled himself from his exalted state to that of a fellow human being so that he “might taste death for everyone” (verse 9). Jesus is brother to all in the human family.

Mark 10:2-16 (or 10:2-12)

The Pharisees ask Jesus a question about the Mosaic practice of divorce in order to test him. Jesus instructs them that divorce was not part of God's original design in creation, and he alludes to the creation story from Genesis found in today's first reading. Since Mark's Gospel was composed for a Gentile audience, the possibility for the woman to divorce her husband is included; whereas Matthew omits this possibility (see Mt 5:31-32) in addressing an audience more familiar with Jewish beliefs and practices.

Sharing the Word

In the Vatican today, Pope Francis has gathered a number of bishops from around the world for the XIV Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. The theme of their gathering is “The Vocation

and Mission of the Family in the Church and in the Contemporary World." It is fitting that today's readings focus our attention on the beauty of marriage between a man and a woman and the dignity of family life.

Family and marriage receive a lot of attention these days, especially as our Western culture moves toward redefining marriage and what constitutes a family. In our readings, we see that the Creator established marriage as a lifelong union between a man and a woman. The testimony of Sacred Scripture and tradition sees children as a blessing from God and the fruit of matrimony.

We Christians often find ourselves at odds with the wider culture in which we live and work. *We are called to bear witness to the compassion of God and to speak and live the truth in love* (see Eph 4:15), not condemning or berating others who have different views and opinions than our own. Today's Gospel is paradigmatic. We need the Holy Spirit to encourage us to follow Jesus' example. Gently and with mercy, we bear witness to the truth written in our hearts.

In the words of Pope Francis to families during his trip to the Philippines, "Our world needs good and strong families . . . to protect the beauty and truth of the family in God's plan and to be a support and example for other families. Every threat to the family is a threat to society itself. . . . Be living examples of love, forgiveness, and care. Be sanctuaries of respect for life, proclaiming the sacredness of every human life from conception to natural death. What a gift this would be to society, if every Christian family lived fully its noble vocation!"

Praying the Word

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
in you we contemplate the splendor of true love,
to you we turn with trust.
Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.
Make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family
and its beauty in God's plan.
Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.
Amen.

Adapted from Pope Francis' Prayer for the Synod on the Family

Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 11, 2015

Finding God in One's Life

Breaking the Word

Wisdom 7:7-11

In response to God's invitation to ask for any blessing, Solomon asks only for wisdom to lead and govern the nation. God bestows prudence and the spirit of wisdom upon him and showers him with countless riches. Solomon prefers wisdom "to scepter and throne" (verse 8).

Hebrews 4:12-13

This brief passage describes the efficacy of God's word. The tone is cautionary: God's word "is sharper than any two-edged sword . . ." (verse 12).

Mark 10:17-30

A rich man asks Jesus about how he can attain eternal life. Unfortunately, this would-be disciple leaves, apparently too attached to his wealth and unable to give it up in order to follow him. Jesus then tells his disciples the challenges they will encounter as they strive to enter the kingdom. It seems impossible. Jesus acknowledges the disciples' apprehension and reminds them that nothing is impossible for God.

Sharing the Word

The rich man seemingly had everything, didn't he? Wealth, prosperity, and success were his in abundance. I would image that his peers considered him to be a nice, well-mannered man. He wasn't a thief, he didn't commit adultery, nor did he defraud anybody; he honored his father and his mother (see Mk 10:19). In other words, he was a decent guy, somebody you wouldn't be ashamed to invite home for dinner. Moreover, he had been that way since his youth.

And yet, the rich man knew in his heart that something — someone! — was missing. That's why he asked Jesus, "Good teacher,

what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Mk 10:17). Note that in his conversation with Jesus, the rich man never mentioned *a relationship with God*, even when given the opportunity to do so. Apparently, God was missing from his life. And when Jesus tried pointing this out to him by inviting the rich man to follow him, he wouldn't do it. The Gospel tells us that he went away sad. Lacking a relationship with God, he was not free to leave all and follow Jesus.

The eternal life that he sought implies a relationship or deep friendship with God. One cannot expect to inherit eternal life if he or she does not know and love God. I recently read that about 20% of Americans don't practice any religion whatsoever. This statistic tells me that God is absent from our families, our nation, and from our everyday life and decisions. And whenever God is pushed out of our lives, we can be sure that the devil isn't too far behind, waiting to jump in the void. Just look at what's replacing God's presence: the drive for wealth, prosperity, and material goods over and above relationships, human and divine.

And that's why we come to the Eucharist. The Eucharist is about *establishing and deepening a relationship with God in Christ*. Jesus reveals the Father to us and invites us to come to God through him. Each Sunday, we receive the pledge of eternal life, Jesus Christ himself, who has promised us that whoever hears God's word and acts on it, whoever eats his body and drinks his blood has eternal life. When we encounter the risen Christ in the sacraments and prayer, when we offer all that have and are to God, and when we keep our focus on heavenly treasures, then our life here and now will be a blessing for ourselves and for our neighbors, and will benefit us for eternal life.

Praying the Word

God our Father,
you never cease to amaze us with your mercy.
Help us to recognize your presence among us
and to glorify you
in all our thoughts, words, and actions.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 18, 2015

Not to be Served, but to Serve

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 53:10-11

In Isaiah's day, animals were slaughtered and offered to God in expiation for sin. The prophet speaks of the suffering servant of the Lord who gives his life as a sin offering. Christians see this as prefiguring the perfect offering of Christ on the cross.

Hebrews 4:14-16

The author of the epistle describes the compassion of Jesus the high priest, who is like us in all things except sin. As a result, we need not approach Jesus with fear, but with complete trust.

Mark 10:35-45

Filled with ambition, James and John seek from Jesus the places of honor in the kingdom. He answers their request by first asking them whether or not they can accept the responsibility such an honor brings. "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Sharing the Word

Not too long ago, an older Hispanic woman who saw that I was a priest took my hands and kissed them. She told me that my hands were sacred, set apart to do God's work and to mediate God's blessings. At my own embarrassment with her pious gesture, I tried telling her that all of us are equally gifted and called through baptism to do the work of God, not just priests. But she wouldn't hear any of it.

This woman's gesture of love for Christ and the priesthood is a good reminder for me and for all of us that our common vocation as disciples is one of service and building up the kingdom of God. In the Gospel for today, James and John had other ideas: they wanted Jesus

to assure them the places of honor in the kingdom, but they quickly learned what it meant to drink from the same cup as Jesus did.

Mark 10:45 is the key to understanding Marcan Christology: "For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many." This is why none of the human beings in Mark's Gospel correctly identify him as the Son of God until Good Friday. On the cross, once Jesus has given the complete gift of himself, a Roman centurion exclaims, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (Mk 15:39).

Jesus does not squelch the ambition of James and John; he refocuses it, away from self-seeking to selfless service. This is the radical commitment demanded of those who aspire to the kingdom and to leadership in it.

In her unique way, the older woman taught me the important lesson that our readings convey. The priesthood, consecrated life, marriage, and single vocation in the church are not about status or privilege or prideful ambition, but about selfless service of God's people for God's purposes. All of us who are baptized are called to bless and be blessed (cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1669), and thereby build up the kingdom of God.

Praying the Word

Blessed are you, O Most High,
and how blessed we are in you.
May your abundant graces
be poured out upon us once more
so that we may imitate
the sacrificial love of Jesus, your eternal Son,
and build up your kingdom of love and mercy.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 25, 2015

Encountering the Risen Christ

Breaking the Word

Jeremiah 31:7-9

Jeremiah encourages the exiles to have hope, for their resurrection to the Promised Land is at hand. He describes God as a father to Israel and as one who leads his children on level roads.

Hebrews 5:1-6

Our continuous reading of Hebrews brings us this Sunday to the description of the ministry of the Jewish high priest and that of Jesus the eternal high priest.

Mark 10:46-62

Today's Gospel tells the story of blind Bartimaeus who begs Jesus for mercy and for sight. Jesus summons Bartimaeus, and the disciples fetch him saying, "Take courage, get up, he is calling you" (verse 49). Jesus recognizes Bartimaeus' faith and sends him on his way healed of his blindness.

Sharing the Word

When Bartimaeus was crying out for Jesus, I suspect that he just hoped Jesus would cure him of his blindness. He wasn't expecting anything more than that. Jesus not only healed Bartimaeus of his blindness, he also recognized in him the gift of faith. "Go your way; your faith has saved you" (Mk 10:52). Bartimaeus did not go on his way; rather he followed Christ and became a disciple. Bartimaeus was forever changed by his encounter with Jesus Christ. God answers our prayers, but not necessarily in the way we expect.

The people of ancient Israel had this same experience. The first reading describes the excitement the people felt as they heard the good news of their return home from exile. Jeremiah was the

bearer of this good news. For years, while the chosen people were in exile in Babylon, they prayed to God for mercy — much like the blind Bartimaeus did in today's Gospel. They begged God to free them and restore their fortunes in the Promised Land. They were probably not expecting that God would answer their prayers in such a joyful and triumphant fashion as he did.

Each one of us has received the gift of faith, just like Bartimaeus in the Gospel. This faith in our loving God is a gift which we first received at baptism. It is strengthened and nurtured at the altar at every Mass. Faith means that we have a relationship with the Holy Trinity in the family of the Catholic Church.

Like Bartimaeus and like the ancient Israelites in today's readings, we are called to receive the gift of faith and to allow it to transform us in unexpected ways. Just as the bread and wine are changed into the sacrament of Christ body and blood, we are changed when we receive this great sacrament in faith, in hope, and in love.

God's grace forever changes the lives of those who encounter his Son. Bartimaeus is proof of this, as his encounter with Christ forever changed his life. Like Bartimaeus, may we be open and filled with courage for the unexpected grace and action of Christ in our lives, and respond with joyful thanks at the altar this Sunday.

Praying the Word

Lord Jesus,
help us to have the courage
to respond to your call with eager joy and faith,
for you live and reign forever and ever.
Amen.





EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Film Review



WHIPLASH
Damien Chazelle
USA
2013

John Christman,
SSS

I don't like horror movies. I think reality itself has enough horrors to suffice. So, as a rule of thumb, I don't seek out additional horrors in film. And while Damien Chazelle's nail-biting tour-de-force *Whiplash* would not technically fall within the horror genre, it is by far one of the most frightening films I've seen in recent years.

The film centers upon a young, talented, and aspiring jazz drummer named Andrew, played with surging ambition by Miles Teller. His dream is to become a jazz great the likes of Buddy Rich or Max Roach. In New York's most prestigious jazz school, the top professor, Fletcher, hears him practicing one night and offers him a spot in the principal band. What starts as the culmination of a lifelong dream quickly descends into a blood-boiling nightmare as Fletcher, with single-minded oppressive determination, seeks to stamp out anything but perfection from his band and especially his new drummer.

J.K. Simmons, who won an academy award for this performance, plays the part of Fletcher with terrifying precision. There are moments, as in the classic horror film, when you want to cover your eyes as you anticipate the horrors that will befall the unsuspecting novice drummer. As the music and tension build, Miles is increasingly berated, abused, and sent to the very brink of sanity by the relentlessly uncompromising Fletcher. It is difficult to watch.

But the reason the film is more than just a horror film is that the drama playing out between Miles and Fletcher is not about a fiendish and cruel professor torturing a student. Fletcher's character is painted with greater nuance. As a teacher, his ambition borders on the diabolic, but in his interactions outside the classroom he can be gentle and even kindhearted.

The root of his cruelty is actually philosophical. It can be summarized

in a perennial question asked by artists and critics: Which is more important, art or life? For Fletcher, the answer is clear: art transcends ordinary human experience and great art becomes timeless. It lasts and benefits the world far beyond the transitory nature of any one human being. For Fletcher, art is more important than a person.

The church, while being one of the world's greatest promoters and supporters of the arts, sides instead with the value of life. The dignity of the human person should never be compromised even for the promise of an artistic masterpiece. The drama that unfolds in *Whiplash* is whether or not Miles will embrace Fletcher's philosophy or forge his own. And that story is captivatingly portrayed, even though you may want to close your eyes.

Music Review

You gotta love it when the tuba takes center stage! When that big bass sound comes rumbling through that horn and you can feel it reverberating in your chest, hold on for some fun!

Preservation Hall Jazz Band swaggers onto the music scene with *That's It!*, its first studio album of completely original music in its 60-year history, and the first thing that hits you along with the upbeat clack of the drums is that big ol' tuba. The bravado horn section then breaks in with the addition of a fanciful triple-tonguing trumpeter. It's pure exuberance and the perfect way to start an album or a day for that matter.

Preservation Hall Jazz Band travels the world promoting and prolonging the tradition of New Orleans style jazz. *That's It!* sees them not only at the height of their craft, but also enlivening that tradition by applying their deep understanding of the style to new material. All the characteristic elements are there, the sweet clarinet solos, the whine and blast of the trumpet, sultry sounds and festive tunes. It's New Orleans jazz alright!

And while, for some jazz fans, the instrumental numbers might steal the show, there's also plenty of catchy songs with genre appropriate lyrics. Playful tunes like "Rattlin' Bones" evoke the supernatural so present in New Orleans culture, while "August Nights" conjures memories of lost love and Gin. But for religiously-minded listeners, it's the spiritual depth of "Dear Lord (Give Me the Strength)" that wins the day. It presents a tale of sin, regret, and redemption that breaks into the jubilant invocation,



Preservation Hall
Jazz Band
THAT'S IT!
Legacy, 2013

John Christman,
SSS

“By and by, by and by, dear Lord, give me the strength to carry on!”
And while the whole band repeats that refrain, the singer energetically improvises prayers over the top. The weight of the experience being described is lifted by the joy of the music and performance.

With *That's It!* Preservation Hall Jazz Band reminds us that traditions have to grow or they become stagnant. If a tradition isn't infused with the life and vitality that shaped it in the first place, then it simply becomes a shadow of its former self. And that's a good lesson, one that Preservation Hall Jazz Band conveys with panache.

Poetry

Lord, Let Me Dare to Let Go – A Meditation

Let me sit beside the brook
with you, Elijah,
to explore your mind and heart
and discover the secret of
your unshakable faith.

I want to know how
you simply took God at his word,
trusted totally,
and actually believed that
he would feed you at Cherith Brook! (1 Kgs 17:1-7)

You trusted God against
tremendous odds, you know.
Where did you get your courage?
What made you so confident?
Weren't you afraid?

Even now, little uncertainties make
me feel powerless
and out of control.
I get anxious and worried.
And scared.
Why can't I trust like you did?

What made it possible for you, Elijah,
to believe God's seemingly
outrageous claims?
You simply believed that
God is God, and that

God can do exactly what
God says he will.

I think I'm beginning to understand.
You threw yourself totally
upon the absolute faithfulness of God.
Your faith, your trust,
came from God,
not from your intelligence, or
anything to do within yourself.

The source of your faith
— and mine —
is God!
Only God.

And in my weakness,
I have at my disposal
the total power of
the same God.

It is the Spirit of God within me
that gives me strength
and brings hope and meaning
into my life.

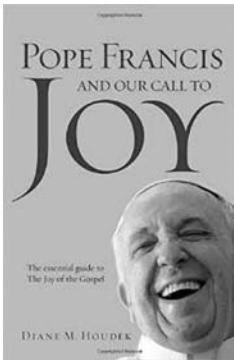
God really sent you to school, Elijah.
A school of faith, where,
for over two years, you
had to depend on him
for food and drink.
Your situation demanded total dependency,
and you passed the test:
God always met your needs.

Thank you, God,
for enrolling me
in your school of faith.
Let me dare to let go:
To acknowledge my complete dependence on you,
to totally trust that you will meet
all my needs.

(And to remember
that my needs
aren't necessarily my "wants.")
Then, like Elijah, I, too,
shall be rewarded by
your faithfulness.

Jeanette Martino Land

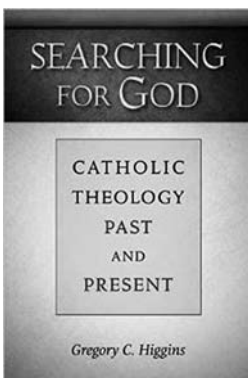
Book Review



POPE FRANCIS AND OUR CALL TO JOY

Diane M. Houdek.
Cincinnati, OH:
Franciscan Media,
2014

75 pp., \$9.99



SEARCHING FOR GOD: CATHOLIC THEOLOGY PAST AND PRESENT

Gregory C. Higgins.
New York, New York:
Paulist Press,
2014

250 pp., \$24.95

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

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

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

Donna Marie Bradesca, OSU
Cleveland, Ohio

In this ambitious book, Gregory Higgins, a teacher at Christian Brothers Academy in Lincroft, New Jersey, presents aids in the reader's search for God by reviewing works of modern Catholic theologians who build on the insights of previous thinkers.

Higgins brings together 20 theologians while covering a wide variety of topics. He treats Thomas Aquinas and Elizabeth Johnson on language about God, Hugh of Saint Victor and Sandra Schneiders on the Bible, Erasmus and Eleonore Stump on petitionary prayer, Bernard of Clairvaux and M. Shawn Copeland on theological anthropology, Alfred Loisy and John Meier on historical Christology, Cyril of Alexandria and Gerald O'Collins on dogmatic Christology, Ambrose and Louis-Marie Chauvet on sacraments, Fritz Tillmann and Servais Pinckaers on morality, Jean Daniélou who is contrasted with Raimon Panikkar on world religions, and finally Johann S. Drey and Hans Urs von Balthasar on eschatology.

Each theologian receives about ten pages. Higgins precedes each theological summary with an interesting short biographical note. He concludes each chapter with suggestions about what those theologians might offer to one who “searches for God.”

While one normally sees pairings of theologians that illustrate contrasts, this book shows how later developments build on earlier thinkers. Nevertheless, Higgins does not ignore the contrasts with earlier days. For example, while he emphasizes how the thought of Servais Pinckaers develops the groundwork laid by Fritz Tillmann in moral theology, he clearly shows how it also departs from the old manualist tradition. In a similar way, the author reaches back to Saint Ambrose to illustrate the positive notes that reverberate in Louis-Marie Chauvet’s liturgical theology. The author succeeds admirably in those chapters.

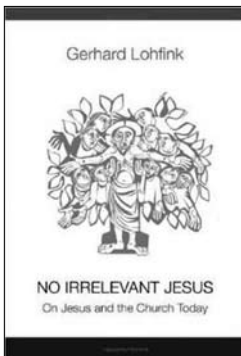
At other times, Higgins seems to lose his way. For example, in the chapter on the Bible, he begins a discussion of Sandra Schneiders’ views on inspiration, but develops those views in terms of hermeneutical methods. Inspiration does not properly describe a method of either writing or reading a text. It describes the level of authority the church gives to a text. It accounts for a book’s presence in the canon. Further, when Higgins treats the historical approach to Christ, he reviews the work of John Meier in terms that seem to separate historical fact from interpretation. His text might be read as if Meier presents the facts (the “historical approach”) while O’Collins presents the interpretation (the “dogmatic approach”). The author might have made the case with greater clarity that biblical historians also attempt to discern not only the early historical facts, but also the early interpretations that accompanied those facts.

While Higgins gives the reader welcome entry points into aspects of the thought of many theologians, his overall project of using each discussion to tell the reader something about the nature of God at times becomes obscured. Perhaps a concluding chapter bringing together the various insights into a coherent whole would have advanced his objective. For example, in chapter one Higgins refers to Elizabeth Johnson’s insight that it is possible to speak accurately of God (20). Yet in chapter nine Raimon Panikkar tells us that there is no accurate interpretation of God in this world. “Panikkar highlights the irreconcilable nature of human beliefs while at the same time not arguing that these differences will, or even should, be resolved” (190, 194). Indeed, he “. . . rejects any universal theory or universal standards by which all religions are to be measured”

(191). In the end, we are reduced to listening to other world religions to help us navigate the waters of faith while remaining in harmony with other religions (195). How do Johnson's and Panikkar's insights go together to tell us something helpful in our search for God? The author is silent on the issue.

On the whole, Higgins has produced a useful book for those who want a fast introduction to some of the leading modern theologians by way of one aspect of their theology. Each chapter concludes with a set of discussion questions and a bibliography for further reading. The book can serve as a text for adult education, but only with the guidance of a trained theologian.

Gerald J. Bednar, PhD
Saint Mary Seminary
Wickliffe, Ohio



**NO IRRELEVANT
JESUS: ON
JESUS AND THE
CHURCH**
Gerhard Lohfink.
Collegeville,
Minnesota: The
Liturgical Press,
2014
342 pp., \$34.95

The title of this book is very interesting and thought-provoking. The book, in fact, poses a huge challenge, especially in the context of post-modernity which makes Christ irrelevant in today's setting. Many are the people today who want to tell us that Jesus is irrelevant. Some remind us that he lived so long ago, that times were different back then, and that it's all boring ancient history that makes no difference in our lives today. Others tell us that Jesus is like the fun-police; he's got all these rules that make life boring and he just wants us to miss out on everything that is fun. Yet others have become really clever in their attempts to label Jesus as irrelevant. Their attempts can sometimes sound amusing, and they very subtly tell us that Jesus is nothing more than a joke.

In this book, Gerhard Lohfink, who is also the author of the acclaimed *Jesus of Nazareth*, refutes post-modernity and its challenges, offering a resounding "yes" to the relevance of Jesus today. The book contains 25 comprehensive chapters or essays, each of which has the potential to stand on its own but is also connected to the others in a thematic fashion.

Right at the beginning, in his first chapter, the author rejects the idea of reducing Christianity to a message. Lohfink points to current situations of compromise where Jesus is tamed and rendered

irrelevant, shrunken, distorted, twisted into shape, planed smooth, disempowered, and accommodated to our secret desires. In subsequent essays, he offers solutions to overcome such tendencies of compromise.

Lohfink concentrates on various ministries of Jesus — feeding, healing, loving, and his subsequent dying on the cross — to show how they are not just “past” events for us to recall and then forget, but things that happen again and again in the history of the church, in the people who are hungry, sick, hurt and disappointed. Lohfink visualizes a world that would be “unrecognizable” if the selfless and self-surrendering *agape* of Jesus were truly lived within the Christian communities.

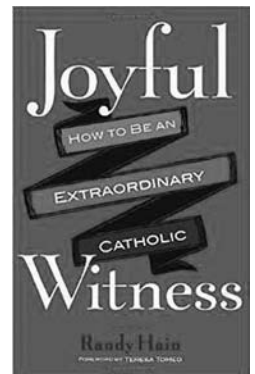
The author thus rightly argues that the location where Christ’s ministry of love and service comes fully alive is the church, the body, for which Christ surrendered his total life. Thus, his attempt to make Christ relevant for today is to make the church what it is and what it should become. Toward this end, one can easily sense the perfect harmony in his book of Christology and ecclesiology in a contextual theology.

One can, however, lament with the author, demanding a transformation of the structures and institutions of the church in order to present Christ as the Lord of the living, fully alive in our world today. This is difficult, if not impossible, unless “repentance and renewal” take place in each one of us. Let this remain a constant challenge, then, for all of us in our personal repentance and renewal.

Justin Chawkan, SSS
Lecturer of Dogmatic and Moral Theology
Superior, Blessed Sacrament Community
Colombo, Sri Lanka

“We must not be afraid of being Christian and living as Christians”
(Pope Francis, Regina Coeli, April 7, 2013).

Author Randy Hain bases his work on the words of Popes Francis, Benedict, and John Paul II. He writes short biographies of modern-day saints — women and men living to do God’s will and to spread God’s message to the world. He quotes from number 890 of the *Catechism of*



JOYFUL WITNESS:
HOW TO BE AN
EXTRAORDINARY
CATHOLIC.
Randy Hain.
Cincinnati, Ohio:
Franciscan Media,
2014
160 pp., \$15.99

the Catholic Church and from *Lumen Gentium*, 31, and adds: "By reason of their special vocation, it belongs to the laity to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will . . ." (Saint John Paul II).

For those of us who read or had the *Lives of the Saints* read to us, the stories of these "joyful witnesses" for Christ are less dramatic. Hain focuses on everyday Catholics who do ordinary things in an extraordinary way, "regular Catholic heroes" (133). Twenty-first century readers can relate to the stories of the modern-day Catholics. Each one Hain includes in his book has given "joyful witness" to extend God's work. The challenges each of these witnesses faces can bring the individual closer to God or be used to sever the relationship between the person and God, just as daily challenges can do in anyone's life.

Hain concludes his book with "Four Simple Steps to Joy": I surrender to Christ every day. I release my burdens to Jesus in daily prayer. I am thankful for my blessings. I start with the end in mind. Then to emphasize the theme, Hain ends with the words of New York Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan from an article in the *Daily News* on April 15, 2009: "Being Catholic is not a heavy burden, snuffing the joy out of life; rather, our faith in Jesus and his church gives meaning, purpose, and joy to life" (144).

Susan Mary Rathbun, OSU
Ursuline Institute of Learning
Pepper Pike, Ohio



Coming in Emmanuel in 2016

Pope Francis' *Holy Year of Mercy*

Be merciful as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:36

Emmanuel will promote its mission to “see all of reality in the light of the Eucharist,” featuring in 2016 special articles and liturgical practices about the Holy Year of Mercy. Those interested in church ministry, eucharistic theology, and eucharistic spirituality will find *Emmanuel* to be an excellent resource for prayer, reflection, and ministry.

Special Offer for Gift Subscriptions

**** 7 issues for the price of 6 ****

Each gift subscription will begin with the November/December 2015 issue and run throughout 2016

- 2 Year Print Subscription* \$65.00
- 1 Year Print Subscription* \$35.00
- 1 Year Digital Subscription \$20.00

* Print subscription includes access to the digital edition.

Emmanuel Publishing
5384 Wilson Mills Road
Cleveland, OH 44143

Phone: (440) 449-2103
Email: emmanuel@blessedsacrament.com
Website: emmanuelpublishing.org





EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

Father Michael A. Boccaccio


SO, WHAT ABOUT JESUS?

How sad I feel when Jesus' wanting to feed someone is disallowed. I wonder how HE must feel when his invitation to share his table is cast aside. The hurtful disappointment! He, the caring, compassionate Christ, is told, "No, I don't want to share in your meal."

Presently, the cultural milieu of many in the United States, seemingly, is a "ME" attitude. One hears frequently, "I have my rights." This stance implies a sense of being unaccountable to anyone for anything. "Nothing is ever my fault" is declared oftentimes — in my opinion — especially in civil court. A sense of entitlement has diminished severely an awareness of the common good. The "ME" pattern is what only matters, with little respect to the rights of others, particularly those of Jesus.

Jesus wants to feed everyone during the eucharistic celebration, for which he has a right. His invitation, unfortunately, is declined by those maintaining that participating in communal worship is unimportant. The "I can go into nature and encounter God" has become a mantra for those exclaiming "NO" to Jesus. Pastorally speaking, I counterbalance such statements, inquiring: "But can you receive the Eucharist as you walk the beach, climb the mountain, etc.?" I further my challenge: "In other words, you are telling Jesus I wish to ignore your right to feed me?" I have yet to receive a logical response.

When I preside at Mass, the tenderness of the consecration words "Take, Eat, Take, Drink" bring me to the Upper Room to be with Jesus. He is about to be crucified, but his is not a "ME" vainglory, but rather an altruistic "YOU" concern. The Scriptures portray that most apostles and disciples, thereafter, were hiding, denying, and disappearing. It is beyond my ability to fathom the human AGONY Jesus experienced during this time. "I want to feed you; you want to avoid me," I imagine him uttering.

Similarly, I sense him feeling the same when someone prefers to walk in nature rather than engage in the eucharistic meal. Said action is a definite statement, "Jesus, I don't need you to feed me; yes, you have the right to invite me, but I prefer my right to refuse." How I wish the "MEs," in conscience, would recognize their statement: "Jesus, I refuse you." How unhappy Jesus must be by this rejection. It upsets me even to think about it. I conclude as I began by rephrasing the title question: So, then, when will I put "ME" aside and think more about Jesus? 

Father Michael A. Boccaccio is a priest of the Diocese of Bridgeport. He was ordained on May 15, 1971. He pastors Saint Philip Church in Norwalk, Connecticut. On September 27, 2015, he and nine Saint Philip parishioners will become Associates of the Blessed Sacrament.



**TODAY,
IN MANY PARTS OF THE
WORLD, UNDER THE
INSPIRING GRACE OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT, MANY EFFORTS
ARE BEING MADE IN PRAYER,
WORD AND ACTION TO ATTAIN
THAT FULLNESS OF UNITY
WHICH JESUS CHRIST
DESIRES, THE SACRED
COUNCIL EXHORTS ALL THE
CATHOLIC FAITHFUL TO
RECOGNIZE THE SIGNS OF THE
TIMES AND TO TAKE AN
ACTIVE AND INTELLIGENT
PART IN THE WORK OF
ECUMENISM.**

