

# Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality

July/August 2016



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# Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 122 Number 4



## EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

With Whom Does Jesus Stand,  
With Whom Do We Stand?

by Peter Schineller, SJ

216

Integrating Social Teaching With  
Evangelization - Part I

by Robert J. Nogosek, CSC

224

## EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Eucharist and Mercy

by Owen F. Cummings

231

## EUCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Cesar Chavez — Heroic Spirituality

by Victor M. Parachin

240

For the Universal Prayers in the  
Jubilee Year of Mercy

by Mary Grace Melcher, OCD

248

## EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art, Music, Film, Poetry, and Books

276

## COLUMNS

From the Editor

214

Pastoral Liturgy

252

Breaking the Word

257

Eucharistic Witness

284



## FROM THE EDITOR

Glenn Beck, the conservative radio host, television personality, political commentator, and author, once famously advised his listeners: “Look for the words ‘social justice’ or ‘economic justice’ on your church website. If you find it, run as fast as you can!” Given the diversity of the political landscape these days, it is safe to say that a good number of American Catholics either heard Beck mouth these words themselves or subscribe to his views about social justice and economic justice. These are topics which inevitably hit home, especially in a presidential election cycle.

Behind the catchphrases “social justice” and “economic justice” is a long tradition of modern Catholic social teaching dating back to *Rerum Novarum*, Pope Leo XIII’s 1891 encyclical on capital and labor. Brandon Vogt, a 2008 convert to Catholicism and the author of *Saints and Social Justice: A Guide to Changing the World*, published in 2014, approaches the subject through a unique lens, examining the lives of saints who practiced the corporal and spiritual works of mercy heroically.

In an interview with blogger Elizabeth Scalia, Vogt comments: “The fact that these terms are politicized shouldn’t worry us, either. Catholic social teaching is political. It deals extensively with governments, social relationships, and structures of power. Yet while political, it’s not partisan. It transcends any party, ideology, or political grid. That’s why it’s *Catholic* social teaching and not Republican/Democrat social teaching.”

In his November 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis writes of the social dimension of the Gospel: “I would now like to share my concerns about the social dimension of evangelization, precisely because if this dimension is not properly brought out, there is a constant risk of distorting the authentic and integral meaning of the mission of evangelization” (176).

“An authentic faith, which is never comfortable or completely personal, always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it. We love this magnificent planet on which God has put us, and we love the human family which dwells here, with all its tragedies and struggles, its hopes and aspirations, its strengths and weaknesses. The earth is our common home and all of us are brothers and sisters.

“All Christians, their pastors included, are called to show concern for the building of a better world. This is essential, for the church’s social thought is primarily positive: it offers proposals, it works for change, and in this sense it constantly points to the hope born of the loving heart of Jesus” (183).

The Gospel and the personal encounter with Christ, the Holy Father reminds us, alone are life-giving and saving. The deeds of justice and holiness and compassion we undertake on behalf of others flow from the loving heart of Jesus and the merciful hand of the Father through our hearts and hands.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, the Apostle of the Eucharist whose feast is August 2, was equally at home in the sanctuary, celebrating and preaching the mystery of God’s love in the Eucharist, and in the streets of Paris, catechizing the young and rekindling the faith of his fellow Catholics in nineteenth-century France. He and so many others teach us to love God deeply and to do justice perseveringly.

### **In This Issue**

The summer issue of *Emmanuel* focuses on the relationship between the Eucharist and justice, something we have done now for many years.

I suggest you begin with Jesuit Peter Schineller’s take on those with whom Jesus spent time and to whom he ministered. The Gospel of Luke is our point of entry into the world of Jesus’ preaching and ministry. Owen Cummings, deacon and academic dean at Oregon’s Mount Angel Seminary, shares a very powerful reflection on the meaning of mercy. And Victor Parachin writes of the determination of the late Cesar Chavez to ensure better working conditions and pay for the thousands of field laborers who harvest the fruits and vegetables and crops we enjoy so abundantly, in season and out of season. These, and so much more, await you!



Anthony Schueller, SSS  
Editor



## *EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING*

# With Whom Does Jesus Stand, With Whom Do We Stand?

by Peter Schineller, SJ

*Jesus was known by the company he kept, those with whom he spent time and those who were the focus of his ministry.*

Father Peter Schineller, a native of New York City, has taught theology in Chicago, Illinois, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and served in administrative and teaching posts at the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Abuja, Nigeria, and Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya. He is currently assigned to The Jesuit Center in Amman, Jordan.

**W**E COME TO KNOW A PERSON BY WHAT HE OR SHE DOES AND SAYS. WE ALSO know a person by the friends, companions, and associates and those with and for whom he or she stands.

This is very much true of Jesus Christ. We have his words and actions in the Gospels, and we also have those companions and persons he chose to be near and associate with. As we will see, it is a remarkable group, and not the normal group that a great leader would choose. But Jesus was no ordinary great leader. He was also a great teacher, teaching us not only by his words but also by his example.

To examine who Jesus associated with — who he stood with and for — we could turn to any of the four Gospels. But here we will turn to and focus on the Gospel of Luke, which has been called the Gospel of the poor and for the poor. As we will see, there is good reason for that. As portrayed by the evangelist Luke, Jesus is giving a direction to his followers and disciples. He is also setting or giving a direction through them to the church, namely, that it is to be a church of and for the poor.

Pope John XXIII, in 1962, wished that the Second Vatican Council should be concerned with making the church recognizable as the church of all people, but especially a church of the poor. One of the key documents of the council, *Gaudium at Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, echoes this view with its oft-cited opening words: “The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men and women of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ” (1). Pope Francis has continually

moved in this direction, too, in his words and concrete actions, showing a special care and concern for the handicapped, for children, for the sick, and for the homeless.

## **Gospel of Luke —The Friends of Jesus**

From the very beginning of his life in his immediate family, Jesus is associated with the simple folk, rather than the powerful and wealthy. Mary, his mother, is a very young woman from the small town of Nazareth, and Joseph, her spouse, is a common laborer, a carpenter or craftsman. Mary, in her Magnificat, speaks of how God favors and lifts up the poor, the lowly.

In Luke's account of the birth (2: 6-8), Jesus is born in a stable, because there was no place for them in the inn. He is visited not by wise men from the East but by shepherds from the nearby fields. When Jesus is presented in the temple, his family offers the gifts of the poor (2:24). There they encounter not the leaders of the temple, but Simeon, a righteous and devout man, and Anna, a prophetess of great age.

Except for the story of the finding of Jesus in the temple, we hear nothing more until his public ministry begins. And that is where we will now focus as we try to show the extraordinary people with whom Jesus associates himself.

## **Inaugural Address**

We begin with his so-called "inaugural address" in his home town of Nazareth. We will then show how throughout his public ministry Jesus kept true to what he has promised and committed himself to in his inaugural speech.

We read in Luke 4: 16-21: "When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.'"

Throughout his public life and ministry, Jesus was true to his words. He was drawn, attracted, to the poor and oppressed, the blind and the weak, those at the margins of society.



### Friends of Jesus — Shown in His Actions

In his first miracle, Jesus drives an unclean demon out of a man (Lk 4:33-35). “And in the synagogue there was a man who had the spirit of an unclean demon; and he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Ah! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God!’ But Jesus rebuked him.”

Immediately after that, he reaches out to the sick, in this case Peter’s mother-in-law who is ill with high fever. He cures her (4:38). But this first day of ministry is not over. He continues his association with the sick and needy as we read: “Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any that were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak because they knew that he was the Christ” (4:40-41).

To carry on his work, Jesus gathers followers. The first disciples he chose were not the well-educated or the upper-class, but ordinary, hardworking fishermen (5:2). Almost in passing, Luke then recounts how Jesus stretched out his hand and touched and cured a man “covered with leprosy” (5:13). In the same chapter, he heals the paralytic who is brought to him through the roof. Jesus not only heals; he forgives sins (5:17-26).

In addition to the simple fishermen, Jesus calls a more powerful and influential person, Levi, a tax collector, to discipleship. Because of his profession, he was not liked and was an outsider, someone most Jews would never associate closely with (5:27-29). Indeed, the religious leaders, the Pharisees and their scribes, complained that Jesus was not only associating with, but “eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners” (5:30). Consistent with his words and actions, Jesus justifies this, explaining that he came precisely “to call not the righteous but sinners” (5:32). There follows the story of the man with a withered right hand (6:6), a miracle performed on the Sabbath, where mercy wins out over a narrow legalism. As Jesus continues his mission, the crowds grow in size. In particular, those in need of healing and troubled with unclean spirits were trying to touch him, “for power came out of him and healed all of them” (6:17-19).

In the following chapter, Jesus reaches out and shows compassion



to the widow of Nain whose only son had died (7:11-17). In summary fashion, Luke comments: "In that hour, he cured many of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many that were blind he bestowed sight" (7:21-22). Later, Jesus is contrasted with John the Baptist and accused of associating with and being friends of tax collectors and sinners, an accusation he does not deny (7:34). The chapter concludes with another story of Jesus associating with a woman who was a sinner (7:37). He acknowledges this, lets her anoint his head and feet, and then forgives her sins, sending her forth in peace (7:44-50).

*What emerges from the Gospels is a truly remarkable life and death, providing us with unforgettable images and vignettes of the people that Jesus spent time with and to whom he ministered.*

In chapter eight, Luke portrays Jesus moving about both in the company of the twelve apostles and a group of women: "... also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means" (8:2-3). Not only were they women — often maltreated and discriminated against in Jewish society — but some had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities.

One of the more graphic scenes in Luke's Gospel is Jesus' encounter with the Gerasene demoniac. The man is deeply troubled; he is naked and dwelt among the tombs. Both are symbolic of his desperate state. Jesus does not shy away from contact with him; instead, he speaks to the man and then drives out the possessing demons ("Legion") into a nearby herd of swine (8:26-39). Jesus sends the man away healed and lucid, telling him to "declare how much God has done for you."

Two more incidents in the chapter show the concern of Jesus for those in difficulty. First is the woman with a flow of blood who takes the initiative and touches Jesus. Not only does he allow her to touch him, but her risk-taking results in a cure (8:43-44). Then Jesus shows compassion for Jairus, whose young daughter has died. In spite of the laughter and disbelief of the crowd, Jesus reaches out, and "taking her by the hand he called, saying, "Child, arise.' Her spirit returned, and she got up at once; and he directed that something should be given her to eat" (8:54-55).



In chapter nine, Jesus meets a man whose only son shrieks, convulses, and foams at the mouth. Jesus asks that the boy be brought to him; he rebukes the spirit and heals the boy (9:37-43). Then an argument about who is the greatest (9:46-48) leads to Jesus taking a child, putting him at his side, and explaining that to receive a child is to receive Jesus himself and the one who sent him. In the culture of the day, children were normally relegated to the sidelines. Here, they are made the center. They are presented as important and worthy of love, respect, and protection.

Following this, Jesus enters a Samaritan village, an action which surprises and shocks his disciples (9:51-56). He spends time with people who would normally be shunned by Jews. After a peaceful visit to the house of Martha and Mary, Jesus is again back among his more usual companions, those in need. "Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb; when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke, and the people marveled" (11:14).

In chapter thirteen, Jesus meets and heals a "woman who had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your infirmity'" (13:10-13).

*Throughout his ministry, Jesus was drawn, attracted, to the poor and the oppressed, the blind and the weak, those at the margins of society.*

While dining in the home of someone, Jesus is interrupted by the presence of a man before him who had dropsy. Luke says that Jesus "took him and healed him" (14:3). Jesus continues on the way to Jerusalem and is "met by ten lepers, who stood at a distance, lifted up their voices, and said, 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' When he saw them, he said to them, 'Go and show yourselves to the priests.'" As they go, they are cured (17:11-19).

We saw before how Jesus reached out to children. This happens again in 18:15-17: "Now they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, 'Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.'"

The journey to Jerusalem continues, and is interrupted near Jericho by a blind man sitting by the roadside begging. When he calls out for Jesus, he is rebuked, but he cries out even more and “Jesus stopped” and restored his sight. In the city of Jericho, Jesus catches sight of Zacchaeus who has climbed a tree to see him (19:1-10). Rather than pass by the rich tax collector, Jesus looks up, reaches out, and invites himself to the house of Zacchaeus, “a known sinner,” where he brings about conversion and salvation.

We come now to his entrance into Jerusalem. He enters not in splendor as a king on a royal mount, but more simply on a colt (19:30). Then in the temple treasury, he sees and singles out a poor widow, commending her for generosity in contributing much more than the rich (21:1-4).

Jesus continues to be linked with the ordinary and with outsiders, even as he is led to his execution on Calvary. Simon of Cyrene, coming in from the country, helps carry the cross (23:26). Among the multitude which follows Jesus on the way are certain women who weep and lament. He acknowledges the presence of these “daughters of Jerusalem.” Tellingly, he is crucified between two criminals (23:32).

As risen Lord, it is not to the powerful, the leading men, or even to the apostles that he first shows himself, but to the women of compassion and faith who make their way in devotion to his tomb (24:10).

Putting the pieces of the narrative together, what emerges is a truly remarkable life and death, providing us with unforgettable images and vignettes of the people that Jesus spent time with and to whom he ministered.

### **The Teaching of Jesus Confirms His Actions**

We have already referred to his inaugural address. Further examples from his teaching confirm Jesus’ practice of associating with outsiders, the weak, and the needy. In the Gospel of Luke, his teaching and preaching are interspersed with his actions. Here, we present a few of these moments which reveal that Jesus practiced what he preached, namely, God’s special love and care for the poor and the outsider.

In the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:20-26), Jesus begins with four beatitudes. The first three are “blessed are you poor,” “blessed are you who are hungry now,” and “blessed are you who weep now” (20-



21). These surely represent the types of persons that Jesus stood for and with. His teaching emphasizes that love must be selfless (6:35), expecting nothing in return.

In the following chapter, Jesus is asked by the disciples of John the Baptist whether he is the one to come, or should they expect another. In verse 21, we read that “Jesus had just then cured many people of diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to the blind.” He answered: “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them.” Clearly, Jesus’ association with these persons is deliberate, freely chosen, and a validating sign that he is sent from God and living the truth.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), Jesus teaches that true religion means assisting the person in need. In Luke 14:12-13, he tells his host that when he holds a banquet, he should “invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. . . . You will be blessed because they cannot repay you.”

Chapter fifteen recounts three powerful stories of Jesus showing that we are to seek out the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Again, it is important to note that Jesus practices what he preaches.

A final example of who Jesus associates with is found in his story of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31. We are not to be like Lazarus who ignores the poor man. To drive home the point, Jesus declares that our eternal salvation or damnation will be determined by how we treat the poor in our midst.

Through these encounters and others in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was teaching, sharing the good news, and showing how God is present and found in everyday encounters, in conversations with others, and especially around the table, be it the family table or the eucharistic table.

## Conclusion

A remarkable portrait of Jesus and a consistent picture of those he most frequently associated with come forth from Luke’s Gospel. The list includes the sick, poor, sinners, weak, outcast, those looked down upon, the down and out, the estranged, and those at the peripheries. The religious leaders were shocked at the attention he lavished

upon such people, and even his own disciples were slow to learn the lesson.

But the poor and the outsiders were most receptive to Jesus' message and to his healing power. Considered by most as the dregs of society, Jesus singled them out as especially loved by God. He showed them great compassion and the tenderness of the Father. He saw each of them as a child of God and found good in them.

"The poor you will always have with you." These words of Jesus are as true today as in his day. Today it may be the refugees and migrants from the Middle East or Africa that demand our attention. In every age, we are called to give attention to and to care for the handicapped, the illiterate, and the sick in our midst. Women still face discrimination in the first world and beyond. People continue to be persecuted and denied their rights because of their race, religion, or sexual preference.

Throughout its history, the church has been active in addressing these issues. Now, under the leadership of Pope Francis, more than ever we hear the call and the challenge. The pope envisions the church as a field hospital in wartime — ready to move in order to assist those most in need. His vision of the church is not one that is settled and comfortable and only occasionally or even frequently opens its doors and reaches out. Rather, it is always open, always reaching out.

In his words and his pastoral activity, on his visits in Rome, to Italy, and around the globe, Pope Francis consciously, quickly, and joyfully reaches out to the needy. He shares a special affinity for them and urges us not to pass by indifferently. He adds that it is not fully Christian to merely hand a coin to the needy; instead, we are to encounter and meet them, as Jesus did.

Jesus always remains the center. But Francis reminds us that we come closest to Jesus when we imitate his mercy, compassion, and concern for others, especially the outsider. Pope Francis is calling us to conversion *to* the poor, and, indeed, to conversion *by* the poor. That is where we encounter and meet Christ and God. It is a call to advance from sympathy to solidarity, for those at the periphery are an important icon of the God we seek.





## *EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING*

# Integrating Social Teaching with Evangelization - Part I

by Robert Nogosek, CSC

*The church carries out its mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in an age marked by great advances, as seen in the signs of the times, and equally great dangers and challenges.*

Holy Cross Father Robert J. Nogosek has taught and written extensively on many subjects through a distinguished career as an academic and an author. His article “Revisiting *Dei Verbum* on Its Fiftieth Anniversary” appeared in the May/June 2015 issue.

**F**IFTY YEARS AGO WHEN VATICAN II’S *GAUDIUM ET SPES*, THE PASTORAL Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, was promulgated on December 7, 1965, many bishops voting their approval of its final text during the hurried last days of the council recognized that it was an imperfect document needing further development as an expression of the relationship of the church to the world. There needed to be an integration of the church’s social teaching with its mission of evangelization, along with greater consideration given to the forces in the world opposing the Gospel.

Crucial in that post-conciliar development would be two biblical concepts proclaimed by Pope John XXIII and underpinning the composition of *Gaudium et Spes*: the signs of the times and human solidarity. We will consider each concept as regards its origin from Pope John XXIII, its application to *Gaudium et Spes*, and its influence in the post-conciliar development of the church’s social teaching, even including to some extent the call of Pope Francis for “a pastoral conversion” in his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, and for “an ecological conversion” in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*.

### **The Signs of the Times — Papal Origin**

The use Pope John XXIII made of the biblical concept “the signs of the times” for the renewal of the church’s mission to the world came from his lifelong conviction that God acts within human history to bring about his divine plan of establishing the kingdom of God in creation. Already as a young priest teaching church history in the Diocese of Bergamo, Angelo Roncalli had challenged his seminary students to find evidence of God acting in history “to bring about the victory of

the church.”

Many years later, on becoming Pope John XXIII, he extended that challenge to the whole church as his primary reason for summoning an ecumenical council to rekindle the church in its mission to the world today. This was explained in his apostolic constitution *Humanae Salutis*, issued on December 25, 1961, whereby he announced the convening of the council for the autumn of 1962.

*Humanae Salutis* begins by recalling that when the Savior commanded his apostles to preach the Gospel to all peoples, at the same time he pledged as risen Lord to accompany them by his divine presence and power until the end of time (Mt 28:20). John XXIII says that this divine presence and power of the risen Christ in the world accompanying the church’s mission has been most noticeable during history’s gravest periods. This makes it particularly significant in our own time when humanity is experiencing a great crisis in society as it approaches the threshold of a new age. He says the church today has “the broad task of bringing the perennial life-giving energies of the Gospel” to a world having great material progress while lacking a corresponding advance in the moral sphere. This has resulted in a weakening of spiritual values, such that people seek only the pleasures of this world, while for the first time in history there has arisen a militant atheism committed to reorganizing society by excluding God.

Although some people in the church react to this crisis with fear and lamentation, as though the forces of evil are about to triumph on earth, the pope says for his part he prefers to renew his confidence that the Savior has not abandoned the world he redeemed and that the church can find her mission today by discerning the signs of the times pointing to a new worldwide openness of people to the gospel message in the midst of the present darkness of turmoil and evil.

This explanation of the council’s purpose was reiterated by Pope John in his radio address on September 11, 1962, precisely a month before the council was to convene in Rome. In that address, he said the council needs to notice that many people today are sensitive to the attractions of the spirit and have a desire and sense of duty to live in peace with one another. Hence, he says, the council should “exalt . . . the deeper application of fellowship and love which are natural needs of man” and offer in clear language appropriate solutions demanded by the dignity of the human person in accordance with “the equality of all peoples in the exercise of their rights and duties within the entire family of nations.”



A month later at the convening of the council on October 11, 1962, in his opening address to the conciliar assembly, Pope John declared that “by the light of this council, the church . . . will become greater in spiritual riches and, gaining the strength of new energies therefrom, she will look to the future without fear.” Underpinning this remarkable optimism was his statement: “In the present order of things, Divine Providence is leading us to a new order of human relations which, by men’s own efforts and even beyond their very expectations, are directed toward the fulfillment of God’s superior and inscrutable designs.”

Although this optimistic declaration came from Pope John’s own discerning of the signs of the times, there was no further explanation in this opening address about what he meant by a “new order of human relations” offering the church an evangelical opportunity by God’s intervention at this time in history. That explanation would await his encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth), issued exactly six months later on April 11, 1963.

It cited modern developments on four levels of social relationships governed by the moral law written on human hearts by God as Creator and Father of all things such that human persons participate in divine wisdom and goodness by reason of being created in God’s own image and likeness. Thereby, the pope says, people “are most admirably taught, first of all, how they should conduct their mutual dealings among themselves, then how the relationships between the citizens and the public authorities of each state should be regulated, then how states should deal with one another, and finally how . . . individual men and states, and . . . the community of all peoples . . . should act towards each other . . .” (7).

These social relations endow human persons with natural rights, such as the right to life and a worthy standard of living, rights pertaining to moral and cultural values, rights to worship God according to one’s conscience and to choose freely one’s state of life, economic rights such as freedom in economic activity along with decent working conditions and just wages, the right of assembly, immigration rights, and political rights. These natural rights include moral duties, because “in human society to one man’s right there corresponds a duty to all other persons . . .” (30). As social beings, we are “to live with others and to work for one another’s welfare” (31). Accordingly, as the pope will say, “It is each one’s duty to collaborate readily for the common good” (48).

We may question why such an endowment of conscience regarding



relationships in human society should be seen as a modern development, rather than simply be ascribed to the way human beings have been constituted from the beginning of their creation. The pope's answer had already been given in *Humanae Salutis* — that the recent bitter experiences from bloody wars and ruinous ideologies have caused people today to become more reflective and more aware of their own limitations, to yearn to live in peace, and to recognize the need for “closer collaboration and mutual integration of individuals, classes, and nations.” The pope says this makes the world today more disposed than it was in the past to welcome the church's teachings as a contribution in solving the problems of the modern age.

*Gaudium et Spes is the conciliar document most explicitly designed by the council to carry out its ultimate goal as originally envisaged by Pope John.*

Pope John sees all these modern developments in social relations as representing an increased awareness of our “dignity as human persons” (79), and exemplified by workers claiming their rights to participate in the economic, political, and cultural life of society (40), women demanding “the rights and duties befitting a person at home and in public” (41), former colonial peoples attaining the dignity of becoming independent nations (42), citizens of nations demanding “that civil authorities be designated through constitutional procedures and fulfill their duties within constitutional limitations” (79), and people in general “becoming more and more persuaded . . . that disputes that arise between states should be resolved not by recourse to arms but rather by negotiation and agreement” (126), thus leading to the establishment of the United Nations Organization “to facilitate friendly international relations based on justice, mutual respect, and . . . cooperation in every field of endeavor,” from which also resulted a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (142f). He says that also among modern developments “the economic life of nations is becoming more interdependent,” with people “increasingly associating and working together” (130).

Although Pope John issued this encyclical after the first session of the council, its contents influenced very much the basic outlook of *Gaudium et Spes* as largely formulated after he died on June 3, 1963. This made, *Gaudium et Spes* the conciliar document most explicitly designed by the council to carry out its ultimate goal as originally envisaged by Pope John. It is for this reason that *Gaudium et Spes*



begins by emphasizing discernment of the signs of the times.

### **Application to *Gaudium et Spes***

In its introductory statement, *Gaudium et Spes* says that “the church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel.” This means that the church is to “recognize and understand the world in which we live, its expectations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics” (GS, 4). The expectations and longings it then cites as characteristic of today’s world are largely taken from *Pacem in Terris*, namely, that “women claim for themselves an equity with men before the law and in fact,” that “for the first time in human history, all people are convinced that the benefits of culture ought to be and actually can be extended to everyone,” that persons and societies “thirst for a free life worthy of man,” and that “nations try harder every day to bring about a kind of universal community” (GS, 9).

In response to requests by council fathers to clarify the meaning of “the signs of the times,” *Gaudium et Spes* will explain that “Christ is now at work in the hearts of men through the energy of his Spirit . . . (and) arouses not only the desire for the age to come, but, by that very fact, he animates, purifies, and strengthens these noble longings too by which the human family strives to make its life more human and to render the whole earth submissive to this goal” (GS, 38).

### **Post-conciliar Development**

A further development in using the concept of the signs of the times after the council is found in the apostolic letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, issued by Pope Paul VI on May 14, 1971, for commemorating the eightieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum* while at the same time developing church teaching on social justice “in response to the new needs of a changing world” (1). The apostolic letter issues a “universal call for more justice” due to what Pope Paul calls “flagrant inequalities” in the economic, cultural, and political development of the nations. He says that there has arisen in the world today “a yearning for more justice and a desire for a better guaranteed peace in mutual respect among individuals and peoples” (2).

Because attention to these contemporary social problems involves such widely varying situations, he says it is difficult for the church’s magisterium to express a unified message and put forward a solution

that has universal validity. This creates the need for “Christian communities to analyze with objectivity the situation which is proper to their own country, to shed on it the light of the Gospel’s unalterable words, and to draw principles of reflection, norms of judgment, and directives for action from the social teaching of the church” (4). The purpose of this pastoral planning, called “see-judge-act” and directed to concrete situations, is that the church be an agent of change for the attainment of social justice.

*The biblical concept of “the signs of the times” rests on the conviction that God acts within human history to bring about his divine plan of establishing the kingdom in creation.*

Through saying that “Christians must first of all renew their confidence in the forcefulness and special character of the demands made by the Gospel” (4), Pope Paul seems to suggest that the evangelizing mission of the church should be more combative than was envisioned by *Gaudium et Spes*. Later that year, this papal emphasis was followed by those gathered for the 1971 Roman Synod in their document, *Justice in the World*, by declaring that *action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world should be seen as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel* (6). This followed, they said, from the fact that Christian love of neighbor and justice cannot be separated (34). They added that “unless the Christian message of love and justice shows its effectiveness through action in the cause of justice in the world, it will only with difficulty gain credibility with the men of our times” (35). The synod’s statement concluded by calling the church to develop an educational method uniting “the evangelical principles of personal and social morality” (59) for “a renewal of the heart” (51), so that Christians will “serve as the leaven needed for the integral development of the human being” (60).

In response to the papal mandate in *Octogesima Adveniens* that Christian communities analyze and respond to the situation proper to their own country, the Conference of United States Bishops undertook the composition of a pastoral letter on Catholic social teaching and the United States economy in order, they said, “to measure our economy not only by what it produces, but also by how it touches human life and whether it protects or undermines the dignity of the human person” (1). Entitled *Economic Justice for All*, the pastoral letter was issued in 1986 after a laborious process of “careful inquiry, wide



consultation, and prayerful discernment.”

In accord with Pope Paul’s inductive method of see-judge-act as an adaptation for discerning the signs of the times, the pastoral letter noted points of convergence of Catholic social teaching with traditional American values as exemplified by America’s dedication to “liberty and justice for all” in its Pledge of Allegiance, and to the “unfinished work” of “a new birth of freedom (through) government of the people, by the people, for the people,” as declared by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address. The bishops said “we honor our history best by working for the day when all our sisters and brothers share adequately in the American Dream” (9).

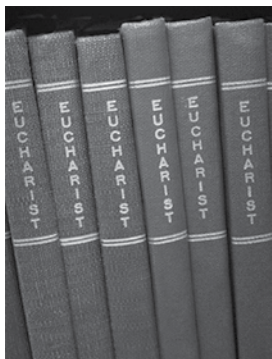
They saw this as requiring the protection of the human rights for every person, rights that are not only civil and political, but also economic (17). It would represent “a ‘New American Experiment’ to implement economic rights, to broaden the sharing of economic power, and to make economic decisions more accountable to the common good” (21). Since such a commitment requires a personal conversion (23), the bishops explain that the purpose of their pastoral letter is a lifelong process of such a change of heart, “not merely to think differently, but also to act differently” (24f). It is identified with *the preferential option for the poor* to strengthen the whole community “by assisting those who are most vulnerable,” and to assess lifestyles, economic policies, and social institutions in terms of their impact on the poor (16). It is in this way, the bishops say, that we will come to recognize that “our faith is tested by the quality of justice among us,” and that “we can best measure our life together by how the poor and the vulnerable are treated” (8).

## Conclusion

As we have seen, in the post-conciliar use of the concept of the signs of the times for integrating the church’s social teaching with its evangelizing mission while recognizing the presence of worldly forces opposing the Gospel, an emphasis emerged on the need for personal conversion. This characterized both the Roman Synod of 1971 and the U.S. Pastoral Letter on the Economy of 1986. Something similar happened in the post-conciliar use of the biblical concept of human solidarity, which now underpins the current development of Catholic social teaching by Pope Francis.

This will be the focus of the second part of this article in the September/October issue.





## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# Eucharist and Mercy

by Owen F. Cummings

*Even for believers, "mercy" is hard to translate . . . and harder to comprehend.*

**"W**E MUST BE SILENT ABOUT GOD IF WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO SPEAK ANEW the message of God's mercy to the people who are in so much physical and spiritual distress" (Walter Kasper<sup>1</sup>).

"There is nothing very astonishing about a God who loves us relentlessly, except that we generally do not believe in one" (James Tunstead Burtchaell, CSC<sup>2</sup>).

### Some Remarks about Language

Human beings are linguistic animals, but perhaps we do not attend adequately to the fragility of language, to the multi-dimensionality of the words we use. There is a fairly obvious conventional understanding of the words we use, which makes our everyday conversations and exchanges possible. Thus, everybody knows what is meant when you say, "Good morning!" or "How are you doing?"

There are times, however, when words do not translate so easily that the meaning is readily available and accessible. One example of such words, I believe, is the word "mercy," the key word in Pope Francis' Year of Mercy. What exactly does "mercy" mean?

A good start may be had by noting the Latin origins of the word. The Latin word for mercy, *miseriordia*, means literally "to have one's heart (*cor*) with the unfortunate (*miseri*)." If we are thinking of God and his mercy, then God has his heart with the unfortunate, that is to say, ourselves. At the same time, one biblical scholar has noted that "the English word 'mercy' is weaker than the biblical concept."<sup>3</sup> The weakness stems from the fact that the biblical Hebrew words that are often translated as "mercy" are much richer and deeper in meaning.

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Two, in particular, come to mind, *hesed* and *rehem*. Biblical experts tell us that these two words are not so easy to translate and that the commonsense understanding of the English word “mercy” does not do adequate justice to them. The French New Testament scholar, Xavier Léon-Dufour writes: “English translations of these Hebrew words and (their Greek equivalents) oscillate between *mercy* and *love*, passing through a spectrum of meanings: tenderness, pity, compassion, clemency, goodness, and even grace. . . . From beginning to end, the manifestation of God’s tenderness is occasioned by human misery; and man, in his turn, ought therefore to show mercy to his neighbor in imitation of his Creator.”<sup>4</sup>

There is in Léon-Dufour’s judgment a very rich register of meaning for these Hebrew words — tenderness, pity, compassion, clemency, goodness, grace, the latter being the code word for God’s constant outreach to his human creatures.

The American biblical scholar, John L. McKenzie, writes in a similar vein: “The Hebrew word *hesed*, translated in the Septuagint by *eleos* and in the Vulgate by *miser cordia*, is rendered by *mercy* in all but the most modern English Bibles. The translation ‘mercy’ is unfortunate; but scholars are not agreed on the proper translation of *hesed*. They are agreed, however, that there is no single English word which is an adequate translation.” So the English word “mercy,” at least in its colloquial understanding, does not do justice to the Hebrew *hesed*.

McKenzie goes on to point out that *hesed* “is also frequently used with *rahamim*, another word difficult to translate, but its relationship with *rehem*, womb or belly, shows that it indicates a genuine emotional state and is often best rendered by mercy or pity.”<sup>5</sup> Or perhaps we might say by “womb-love.” In other words, the Hebrew words *hesed* and *rehem* — tenderness, pity, compassion, and grace — may best be understood as the attitude and disposition of a mother to her baby, “womb-love.” That is God’s attitude and disposition toward humankind.

Think of the beautiful passage in Isaiah 49:15-16: “Can a mother forget the baby at her breast? And have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.”

A spiritual director in the Jesuit tradition, Paul Coutinho, offers a

beautiful reflection on the phrase “I have engraved you on the palms of my hands.” Exploring this text with his scripture professor, this is what he says: “Engraved on the palms of my hands means tattooed’ . . . My experience of God can be summed up in three words: *you are mine*. This understanding continues to define my reality with the divine. God is tattooed on my body, and I am tattooed on God. The divine and I are one. I belong to the divine, and nothing can take that away from me. The divine belongs to me, and nothing can take that away from God. This understanding comes from Isaiah 43:1-7 where God says, ‘I have summoned you by name; you are mine.’ These are not just beautiful words. This is what I live by . . . I have been through much in my years, and I have grown because God has promised me that I am his.”<sup>6</sup> Remarkable words!

*“Grace” is the code word for God’s constant outreach to his human creatures.*

Before moving on, we might ask a further question, “Why are these words so difficult to translate?” Or why are these sentiments of Isaiah and Coutinho so difficult to embrace? I think the answer might take two forms. The first is theological and comes from Cardinal Walter Kasper, who suggests that at least at one level we have let philosophy and metaphysics, important and necessary as they are, overshadow Scripture and other imaginative ways of speaking of God.

While one might argue the finer points in Kasper’s approach, he opines that mercy in theology books is treated but briefly and only after the other metaphysical attributes of God as Subsistent Being, *Ipsum esse subsistens*. From Greek metaphysics, Kasper avers, Christian theologians have taken over the notion that God is “beyond feelings” and God is “beyond suffering.” Again, while acknowledging the importance of philosophical and metaphysical analysis in respect of God, Kasper also writes: “Can a God who is conceived so apathetically be really sympathetic? Pastorally, this conception of God is a catastrophe.”<sup>7</sup>

The second form of an answer to the question “Why are these words so difficult to translate?” is this. We are afraid of and shy away from the demands of love. Which of us is without his or her fears, neuroses, anxieties, and mental health challenges? No one! We are all touched by these demons through nature and nurture, the darkness in every one of us. Perhaps our own personal psychological darkness prevents us from recognizing God as nothing but absolute love, who loves us



with a “womb-love.”

Whatever shape the answer takes to the question, it seems to me a statement of fact that God’s best name is Love, summed up in those most beautiful words in 1 John 4: 16: “God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them.” Love is what God is and what God is about in creation, in redemption, in consummation. So, as we proceed to look at the Eucharist where we see “mercy” in the texts of the Mass, let us understand it as “love.”

### The Eucharist

Of all the sacraments, it is probably the sacrament of penance (reconciliation) that is most closely associated with God’s mercy, God’s “womb-love.” However, all the sacraments of the church are oriented toward the Eucharist, which is the central sacrament of love, the central sacrament in that sense of mercy. The Eucharist is *the* sacrament of love/mercy because in it God comes to us to transform us ever more deeply into communion with himself. If the Eucharist is about anything, it is about God as love. Now, let us scroll down through the text of the Mass, the ordinary of the Mass, to highlight those occasions where the word “mercy” or its equivalent is mentioned.

*The Penitential Act.* “May almighty God *have mercy* on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life”(4).<sup>8</sup> Before this moment is reached, we have been assembled as the holy body of Christ and have heard the presider’s greeting, “*Dominus vobiscum,*” literally “The Lord with you,” “The Lord be with you.” It is the affirmation and conviction that the Lord is with us even when we are not with him. Then we pray, “*Lord, have mercy; Christ, have mercy; Lord, have mercy*” (6-7).

We are not asking the Lord to have mercy on us, to love us, as if we had to persuade God or to cajole him. Rather, we are asking for what we already have, his loving embrace. We always have this embrace, but we are asking here that we may become more porous to the love that God is, and so be transformed. What about our sinfulness? In one way, it needs no comment. Quite simply, unless we are aware of our sinfulness, we are unaware that God is Love. One may not be had without the other.

*The Gloria.* We praise God in the Gloria, recognizing that praise is the ecology for growth in the knowledge and love of God. We pray: “Lord



God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, *have mercy* on us; you take away the sins of the world, *have mercy* on us" (8). Yet again, awareness of God brings simultaneously and necessarily awareness of our sinfulness. Once again we ask for his loving embrace.

*Eucharistic Prayer I (Roman Canon)*. "To you, therefore, *most merciful Father*, we make humble prayer and petition through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord" (84). "To us, also, your servants, who, though sinners, *hope in your abundant mercies*, graciously grant some share and fellowship with your holy apostles and martyrs. . . ." (96). This phrasing from Eucharistic Prayer I shows us the necessary juxtaposition between love and sinfulness. Even though we are sinners, we hope in God's abundant mercies, that is, we hope in the constancy of his love.

*A difficulty may be that we have let philosophy and metaphysics, important and necessary as they are, overshadow Scripture and other imaginative ways of speaking of God.*

*Eucharistic Prayer II*. "Remember also our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all *who have died in your mercy*; welcome them into the light of your face" (105). "All who have died in your mercy, in your love" is all who have died who have not turned their back deliberately and explicitly on the light of Love in their lives. All of us have done so in one way or another at different times in our lives, but when we come face-to-face with Love in judgment, we shall find a welcome unless we do not wish to, even as we recognize the history of our sinfulness.

John Henry Newman had it right in his epic poem *The Dream of Gerontius*. As the dead Gerontius is led by his guardian angel toward the House of Judgment, with a sense of dread of what awaits him there, this dread gives way to the recognition that God is nothing but Love, and so Gerontius cries out, "Take me away, and in the lowest deep there let me be, and there in hope the lone night-watches keep. . . ."<sup>9</sup>

Gerontius is aware that God is nothing but Love, and at the same time that he himself is most unlovely. There is nothing cheap or easy about God as Love. It is painfully purging as with profundity of regret we acknowledge that we are not lovely. And so, we remember our dead who, like Gerontius, have come face-to-face with this God of love.



*Eucharistic Prayer III.* "Listen graciously to the prayers of this family, whom you have summoned before you; in your compassion, *O merciful Father*, gather to yourself all your children scattered throughout the world" (113). *Eucharistic Prayer IV.* "For you came *in mercy* to the aid of all, so that those who seek might find you" (117). "To all of us, your children, grant, *O merciful Father*, that we may enter into a heavenly inheritance with the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God . . ." (122).

In these extracts from Eucharistic Prayers III and IV, we have a sense of the universality of God's love. It is for everyone. The "merciful/loving Father" is asked to gather all his children scattered throughout the world, the key word being *all*. In a similar way, the priest prays, "You came in mercy to the aid of all." This God of love is not a tribal God, whose love is defined according to some ethnic, national, or even religious tradition. The church, according to Vatican II's *Constitution on the Church*, is "the sacrament of salvation" (1). In other words, Christianity exists to signal to the world that God is love and that he wishes to extend this love, this healing and saving and divinizing love, to all of humankind.

*The Communion Rite.* After The Lord's Prayer at the beginning of the Communion Rite, the priest prays, "Deliver us, Lord, we pray, from every evil, graciously grant peace in our days, that, by the *help of your mercy*, we may be always free from sin and safe from all distress . . ." (124). That is followed by "Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, *have mercy on us*" (130). As we approach the moment of Communion, the church is reminding us in these words that, despite the mess we may have made of our lives, God's mercy, God's ever-present "womb-love," is always with us and, indeed, is about to be received by us to enable our deeper transformation and response.

By way of summary, we might say that the text of the Eucharist is both a constant reminder of God's love and also a constant performance of that love. The Eucharist, which is the "source and summit" of the church's entire life, textually and ritually proclaims God's merciful love. That is one of the reasons, perhaps the central reason, why Pope Francis is so insistent on emphasizing the medicinal dimension of the Eucharist for sinners. We are all in need of this healing medicine.

### **George Herbert, "Love III"**

Recently, a Catholic theologian, Stephen Bullivant, made some

remarks about sin. "Truth be told, I sometimes feel a bit sorry for sin. All this fuss about mercy, what with its year and doors. . . . In fact, the same goes for the entirety of the Christian message: repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, redemption, salvation. None of it makes an iota of sense without sin. And not just a little bit of sin . . . but a vast, foetid pile of it, hidden deep within . . . well, me."<sup>10</sup> Bullivant has it right. Every one of us has to deal with the history of sin that is his or her life, and that surely is why all of these references in the Eucharist to "mercy" and "love" exist.

*The Eucharist is both a constant reminder of God's love and also a constant performance of that love.*

But it seems to me that Bullivant is also wrong. My awareness of my sin must be absolutely real, but it cannot be absolute. Only God is absolutely absolute, and the fact of the matter is that this absolute God is unconditional love inviting me to intimate union/communion with himself. If I remain unaware of this, it may be the case that my necessary awareness of sin may develop into an insidious form of narcissism, self-concern.

That is why I want to turn to that early seventeenth-century eucharistic mystic, George Herbert, for the last word on the Eucharist and mercy/love in his magnificent poem "Love III." The poem is about God's invitation to the eucharistic banquet. It is a dialogue between God and the soul at the Eucharist. I have broken the poem up here with a little commentary to render it more accessible.

The broken and sinful soul, ourselves, coming to the Eucharist:

*Love bade me welcome; yet my soul drew back,  
guilty of dust and sin.  
But quick-ey'd Love, observing me grow slack  
from my first entrance in,  
drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,  
if I lack'd anything.*

God recognizes the soul's discomfort in his loving presence and draws near wondering what can be done to make the soul feel more at ease. The soul responds:

*A guest, I answer'd, worthy to be here.*



Perhaps we may hear in these words an echo of the prayer before Communion, "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof. . . ." Immediately, the soul got the reply from God:

*Love said: You shall be he.*

It is as if God pointed to the soul and said, "You, yes, you right there, you are the worthy guest." The soul, however, is so conscious of his brokenness and sinfulness, of the mess he has made of his life that he says to God:

*I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,  
I cannot look on thee.*

So ashamed is he of his past, "the unkind, ungrateful," that he cannot even look up at God's loving face:

*Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,  
who made the eyes but I?*

There could be nothing more reassuring, more comforting and encouraging than someone taking us by the hand. Think of your parents holding your hand crossing a busy street or assisting you up a steep incline. Think of holding someone you love's hand as they are making their way out of this world on their deathbed. Comfort and encouragement.

Here God is that someone. God takes the hand of the soul and smiles warmly: "You say you cannot look on me. But I am the one who made your eyes. Look at the love in my eyes for you." Even with this reassurance, the soul turned in on itself and its sinfulness remains unconvinced:

*Truth, Lord, but I have marr'd them: let my shame  
go where it doth deserve.*

This loving God reminds the soul that in the death of Christ, the death that is the ultimate expression of God's love for us, healing has been given:

*And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?*

Now the soul gets it! The penny drops! God is nothing but love inviting loving union. And so the enlightened soul now responds that he will serve his loving God at this great eucharistic banquet:

*My dear, then I will serve.*

God will not have it. God is not only the host at this banquet, but also the food:

*You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat.*

And so, Holy Communion occurs:

*So I did sit and eat.*

That is what the Eucharist is all about: coming to God's banquet, recognizing one's sinfulness, yes, but sitting down in the presence of the Divine Love and eating that Divine Love sacramentally, so as to be transformed by him.



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Walter Kasper, *Mercy* (New York-Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2014), 5.
- <sup>2</sup> James T. Burtchaell, CSC, *Philemon's Problem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 10.
- <sup>3</sup> Irene Nowell, "Mercy," in J. A. Komonchak and others, ed., *The New Dictionary of Catholic Theology* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1987), 650.
- <sup>4</sup> Xavier Léon-Dufour, "Mercy," in Xavier Léon-Dufour, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (New York: Desclee, 1967), 308.
- <sup>5</sup> John L. McKenzie, *Dictionary of the Bible*, (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1965), 565-566.
- <sup>6</sup> Paul Coutinho, SJ, *How Big Is Your God?* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2007), 73-74.
- <sup>7</sup> Walter Kasper, op. cit., 11.
- <sup>8</sup> The numbers refer to numbers in the Roman Missal.
- <sup>9</sup> See Owen F. Cummings, "Newman's Dream of Gerontius," in his *Liturgical Snapshots: Reflections on the Richness of Our Worship Tradition* (New York-Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2012).
- <sup>10</sup> Stephen Bullivant in *The Catholic Herald* (UK), February 4, 2016.



## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# Cesar Chavez — Heroic Spirituality

by Victor M. Parachin

*Underlying Cesar Chavez's decades-long struggle for the rights and dignity of farm workers was a strong faith, rooted in the Gospel and nourished by the Eucharist, as well as a driving passion for justice.*

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

CEsar CHAVEZ, THE LABOR LEADER AND SOCIAL ACTIVIST, SAID: "ONCE PEOPLE understand the strength of nonviolence — the force it generates, the love it creates, the response it brings from the total community — they will not easily abandon it."

On March 10, 1968, Robert F. Kennedy traveled to Delano, California, to give Cesar Chavez a piece of bread. Chavez, too weak to stand or to speak, received from the hand of Kennedy his first food in more than three weeks. In the presence of several thousand supporters, he accepted the bread and broke his fast during which time he lost 35 pounds.

Chavez had carefully prepared a speech for the occasion, but, unable to stand to deliver it, he asked a friend to read it instead. Three sentences from the speech electrified those present: "I am convinced that the truest act of courage, the strongest act of manliness, is to sacrifice ourselves for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice. To be a man is to suffer for others. God help us to be men." Then, Chavez, Kennedy, and those assembled celebrated a Mass marking the end of the fast.

It was the nonviolent struggle for justice which prompted Chavez to begin the fast. For nearly three years, grape pickers were striking for better wages from growers. As the strike and the grape boycott dragged on, growers began using violence to intimidate the striking workers. In 1966, a grower's representative ran down a striker, permanently crippling the man. Police officers, sympathetic to the growers, harassed and threatened the workers. Consequently, union

members wanted to push back with violence of their own, but Chavez argued against it, calling for patience and a continuous nonviolent presence. His approach was met with indifference and skepticism, so Chavez felt the only way to prevent a rush to violence was a fast.

Inspired by the example of Gandhi, Chavez announced that his last day of eating would be on February 13, 1968. Throughout the fast, he surrounded himself with images of the saints and Our Lady of Guadalupe, and lived only on the Eucharist. These religious practices alienated many of his secular followers. Although some family members, friends, and supporters were unhappy with his decision, Chavez continued the fast, receiving messages of support and solidarity from prominent Americans such as Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert F. Kennedy. The fast was successful both in ending calls to violence and in drawing worldwide attention to the plight of American farm workers.

### **Cesar Chavez's Life**

Cesar Estrada Chavez was born on March 3, 1927, at Yuma, Arizona to a humble Mexican American family. Nothing about his birth and family could have predicted the impact he would have and the legacy he would leave behind. For example:

- There is a portrait of Chavez in the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC;
- In 1973, Chavez received the Jefferson Award for Greatest Public Service Benefiting the Disadvantaged;
- In 1992, he was given the *Pacem in Terris Award*, bestowed by the Catholic Church in the United States on those who make a significant contribution to peace and freedom;
- Chavez was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Bill Clinton in 1994;
- Completely lacking a high school education, Chavez taught himself economics, philosophy, theology, history, and sociology;
- Many major American cities have streets named in his honor;
- California observes March 31 as Cesar Chavez Day, a state holiday;
- In 2011, the U.S. Navy named one of its new cargo ships the *USNS Cesar Chavez*.

During his lifetime, Chavez never earned more than \$6,000 per year. His parents were Librado and Juana. It was his mother Juana, a devout



Catholic, who first instilled concepts of nonviolence in him. Chavez said that although her nonviolent approach to life conflicted with traditional Mexican culture, she consistently stressed the importance of nonviolence: "Despite a culture where you're not a man if you don't fight back, she would say, 'No, it's best to turn the other cheek. God gave you senses like eyes and a mind and a tongue, and you can get out of anything.' She would say, 'It takes two to fight.' That was her favorite. 'It takes two to fight and one can't do it alone.'"

Chavez was the second of five children and was named after his grandfather who came to the United States in 1880. His father owned a grocery store and a small ranch, but both the business and the land were lost during the Great Depression. Because of that, the family relocated to California in search of employment as migrant farm workers.

*True courage, true humanity, is to sacrifice oneself for others in a totally nonviolent struggle for justice.*

Often sleeping in their cars or outside in the fields, the Chavez family roamed from farm to farm, picking apricots, cherries, grapes, carrots, broccoli, peas, and more. The constant movement impacted Chavez's education; he attended 30 different schools and dropped out in the seventh grade after Librado was injured in an automobile accident in 1942. Cesar took his place contributing to the family income doing backbreaking, low-paying farm labor. Chavez toiled in the fields for several years before finding employment with a lumber company. Though he now had a steady job, Chavez could not forget the plight of farm workers.

While working at a lumber mill in San Jose, Chavez's life would be permanently changed by his friendship with Catholic priest Donald McDonnell. Upon ordination, McDonnell specifically asked the Archdiocese of San Francisco for an assignment to migrant workers. Settling in a poor section of San Jose, McDonnell met Chavez, who faithfully attended Mass; soon the two became friends. Chavez would assist McDonnell when he celebrated Mass at migrant labor camps.

Sensing Chavez's deep concern for the plight of struggling and abused migrant workers, McDonnell introduced Chavez to the social teaching of the Catholic Church, especially the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (On the Condition of Labor), issued by Pope Leo XIII in 1891, in which the



pope expressed the right of workers to organize and to seek fair wages and working conditions.

The document was quite radical for its day. It was critical of owners and supportive of workers: "A very few rich men and exceedingly rich men have laid a yoke almost of slavery on the unnumbered masses of non-owning workers. . . . It is most clearly necessary that workers' associations . . . are being formed everywhere, and it is truly to be desired that they grow in number and in active vigor."

### **Encounter with Catholic Social Teaching**

Chavez became intrigued by Catholic social teaching, later explaining: "He (McDonnell) told me about social justice and the church's stand on farm labor and reading from the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, in which he upheld labor unions. I would do anything to get the Father to tell me more about labor history. I began going to the migrant camps with him to help with Mass, to the city jail with him to talk to the prisoners, anything to be with him."

McDonnell also introduced Chavez to biographies of those whose lives were dedicated to the service of others: Francis of Assisi, American labor leaders Eugene V. Debs and John L. Lewis, and Gandhi. The deepest influence upon Chavez came from reading about Gandhi and his approach of nonviolent civil disobedience in dealing with the British.

It was McDonnell who recommended Chavez to Fred Ross, the local representative for the Community Service Organization (CSO), a civil rights group working to help Mexican Americans improve their living conditions. Chavez became a paid employee, conducting voter registration drives, protesting police brutality, and leading nighttime citizenship classes at neighborhood schools. From there, a conviction grew within Chavez that migrant workers needed to organize into their own distinct union. Thus, on September 30, 1962, some 250 supporters met at an abandoned movie theater for the first convention of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA).

With the formation of this union, Chavez began recruiting, organizing, striking, and promoting justice for migrant workers. Chavez objected to the callous treatment given to farm workers, arguing that they should not be viewed with pity but should be treated as human



beings with intrinsic dignity.

Citing the fact that too often farm workers were injured or killed while being transported to the fields in unsafe trucks, he said: "There have been too many accidents in the fields, on trucks, under machines, in buses. So many accidents involving farm workers. People ask if they are deliberate. They are deliberate. I have the sense that they are the result of a farm labor system that treats workers like agricultural implements and not human beings. These accidents happen because employers and labor contractors treat us as if we were not important human beings. . . . The trucks and buses are old and unsafe."

His mission was not an easy one; yet Chavez made it bearable by establishing a spiritual foundation for his activism. Speaking to supporters following his 1968 fast, he referenced the teaching of Jesus. "Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it" (Lk 17:33). Chavez reminded his supporters:

Our struggle is not easy. . . . Those who oppose our cause are rich and powerful, and they have many allies in high places. We are poor. Our allies are few. But we have something the rich do now own. We have our own bodies and spirits and the justice of our cause as our weapons. When we are really honest with ourselves . . . we must admit that our lives are all that really belong to us. So it is how we use our lives that determines what kind of men we are. It is my deepest belief that only by giving our lives do we find life.

Though his opponents were indeed wealthy, powerful, and influential, Chavez's non-violent approach brought him powerful allies. For example, in August 1970, Chavez called for a lettuce strike. Opponents secured a court order blocking it. Chavez continued the lettuce boycott and was arrested and jailed for contempt of court. He would remain in jail until December of that year, when authorities finally released him. During his jail time, he was visited by Robert Kennedy's widow, Ethel, and also by Coretta Scott King, the widow of Martin Luther King, Jr. Visits from the two women brought national attention to Chavez and strengthened the boycott.

### **Man of Faith**

It was his devout Catholic faith which infused all of his activities —

organizing workers, demanding fairness from owners, and leading strikes and boycotts. Los Angeles Archbishop Jose H. Gomez noted that Chavez's "vision was deeply Catholic at heart. He learned his prayers and popular Mexican devotions from his mother. Good priests instructed him in the labor encyclicals of the popes and the church's rich social teaching tradition. Throughout his life, he went to Mass almost every day, and he also spent an hour daily in prayer. He chose to live in voluntary poverty and practiced what he preached: the simple joys of serving his brothers and sisters in Christian life. . . . All his major initiatives began with the celebration of the Eucharist."

*Chavez's mission was not an easy one, but he made it bearable by establishing a spiritual foundation for his activism.*

Over several decades, Chavez led numerous strikes against farm producers, boycotting grapes and lettuce and protesting the use of dangerous pesticides. Little by little, progress was being made. By 1980, over 10,000 migrant workers were receiving higher pay, health coverage, and additional benefits because of union contracts.

Chavez's gains for poor farm workers were greatly enhanced as more and more people around the country supported his quest for justice and fairness for America's poorest of the poor. Americans from all walks of life understood Chavez when he asked: "Should owning a home of your own be the dream all Americans can work toward — except farm workers and Hispanics and other working families, rural or urban? Should home ownership be everyone's right — except farm workers and Hispanics and other working families? Should all people be able to work for the day when they can purchase a home — unless their skin is brown or black, or they work on a farm or factory?"

On April 22, 1993, at the age of 66, Cesar Estrada Chavez died quietly in his sleep. The cause of death was uncertain, but family members suspected that his many lengthy fasts were a factor. They noted that his mother was 99 when she died and his father had lived to 101. Because of the family history of longevity, no one anticipated an early, premature death for Chavez.

Though his expressed wishes were for a simple funeral and burial, his prominence necessitated something larger. His death was headlined



in newspapers all around the world. An estimated 35,000 mourners flooded the city of Delano to pay their respects. They walked behind a simple pine coffin built by Chavez's brother, Richard. Cardinal Roger Mahony, the archbishop of Los Angeles, conducted the funeral Mass and read a message from Pope John Paul II.

The dream and legacy of Cesar Chavez can be summed up in his own words: "From the depth of need and despair, people can work together, can organize themselves to solve their own problems, and fill their own needs with dignity and strength."

### **Wisdom from Cesar Chavez**

"Our only weapon is the truth."

"Nonviolence is more powerful than violence."

"We can change the world if we can do it nonviolently."

"Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. You cannot uneducate the person who has learned to read. You cannot humiliate the person who feels pride. You cannot oppress the people who are not afraid anymore."

"We draw our strength from the very despair in which we have been forced to live. We shall endure."

"Nonviolence is not inaction. It is not discussion. It is not for the timid or weak. . . . Nonviolence is hard work."

"You are never strong enough that you don't need help."

"Only when we have become nonviolent toward all life will we have learned to live well with others."


"Perhaps we can bring the day when children will learn from their earliest days that being fully man and fully woman means to give one's life to the liberation of the brother who suffers."

"We can choose to use our lives for others to bring about a better and more just world for our children. People who make that choice will know hardship and sacrifice. But if you give yourself totally to the

nonviolent struggle for peace and justice, you also find that people will give you their hearts and you will never go hungry and never be alone. And in giving of yourself you will discover a whole new life full of meaning and love.”

“If you really want to make a friend, go to someone’s house and eat with him. The people who give you their food give you their heart.”

“What do we want the church to do? . . . We ask for its presence with us, beside us, as Christ among us. We ask the church to sacrifice with the people for social change, for justice, and for love of brother. We don’t ask for words. We ask for deeds. We don’t ask for paternalism. We ask for servanthood.”

“Jesus’ life and words are a challenge at the same time that they are Good News. . . . By his life, he is calling us to give ourselves to others, to sacrifice for those who suffer, to share our lives with our brothers and sisters who are also oppressed. He is calling us to ‘hunger and thirst after justice’ in the same way that we hunger and thirst after food and water; that is, by putting our yearning into practice.” 

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## In Christ’s Peace Deceased Members

Rev. Aloysius J. Hasenberg  
Diocese of Marquette

Rev. Joseph H. Fennessy  
Diocese of Harrisburg

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 N, O, P, and Q are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during July and August.



## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# For the Universal Prayers in the Jubilee Year of Mercy

by Mary Grace Melcher, OCD

Sister Mary Grace Melcher is a cloistered nun of the Carmel of Terre Haute, Indiana, and the author of *Intercessions for Mass* (Liturgical Press, 2013), a collection of bidding prayers for Sundays, solemnities, and weekdays. The following intercessions and a concluding prayer on the themes of mercy and the Eucharist are written for each Sunday during the Jubilee of Mercy.

### Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 3

For all who feel their need for God's mercy, that they may know the kingdom of God is at hand through the ministry of today's apostles, whom Jesus sends among his people

That we who receive our Lord in this Holy Eucharist may never boast except in his redeeming cross, accepting the marks of his passion in our lives

#### Concluding Prayer

God our Father, you comfort us within Jerusalem, the citadel of your holy church. May the hand of your mercy be outstretched over all the needs we bring to you today. We ask this in Jesus' name.

### Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 10

For all who have been robbed and beaten on the roads of life, that in their distress, they may be surprised by mercy and compassion

That in the encounter of this Eucharist, we may realize that the Author of the law of love is already in our mouths and in our hearts, and bravely carry out his will

#### Concluding Prayer

Eternal Father, you have always showed us your tender mercy. We bring to you our needs, trusting in your divine compassion. Grant what we ask of you through Christ our Lord.

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 17

That our experience of the hospitality of God's mercy may help us to provide in our turn a feast of compassion and tenderness for all his suffering children

That we who welcome Jesus into our hearts in this Eucharist may delight him with our eagerness to choose the better part of humble listening and obedience

### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we bring you our needs and ask confidently for your mercy, in the powerful name of Jesus, our Lord.

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 24

That the beautiful interplay of our confident human prayer and God's divine mercy may make us abound in every blessing and grace

That we who receive the bread of this Holy Eucharist from the heart of our loving Father may quicken our filial trust in his divine liberality

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, you have taught us by your Holy Scriptures to ask without hesitation for what we need. We believe that you will answer our prayers through Jesus our Lord.

## Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — July 31

For all who blindly store up for themselves earthly treasure, that by God's mercy they may see its vanity and convert their wealth into help for those in need

That we who receive Jesus in Holy Communion may allow our lives to be hidden with him in God, pursuing treasure that will last forever

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, we believe that you will answer our prayers, providing all that we truly need. May we gladly share our surplus with our poor brothers and sisters. We pray in Jesus' name.



### **Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — August 7**

That by the Lord's mercy, we may have the grace to direct our life's journey by faith, putting our whole confidence in God, who is entirely trustworthy.

That we, who come to the table of this Holy Eucharist and are fed by the Lord Jesus, may obtain the blessing he gives to his vigilant servants

#### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, we trust you for a gracious answer to all the needs we bring before you today. We ask them in the name of your faithful servant, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time — August 14**

That God's mercy may set our hearts blazing with the fire that Jesus came to bring to the earth, stirring up the witness of obedient lives and prophetic actions

For all of us receiving Jesus in this Eucharist, that for the sake of the joy of his presence, we may have the grace to endure the cross at his side

#### **Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you have proved your prophets true and confirmed their deeds in your name. Strengthen us and grant our prayers, through Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time — August 21**

That the divine mercy, which reaches out to gather all the nations into God's kingdom, may also bring together in unity and worship all the elements of our lives

For all of us who receive this Holy Eucharist, that we may enter with Jesus through the narrow gate of obedience into the joy of his kingdom

#### **Concluding Prayer**

Holy Father, you train us in discipleship and make the least ones first.



Grant our humble prayers, which we offer in the name of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time — August 28**

That we may be given the grace to humbly recognize the reality of our sinfulness, so that we may experience deeply the embrace of God's mercy

That we who partake of Jesus in this Eucharist, who points to himself as gentle and humble of heart, may unite ourselves to the preferences of our divine Guest

**Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we bring our requests before the throne of your mercy, asking especially for the humility that finds favor in your sight. We pray in Jesus' name.



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## PASTORAL LITURGY

# Ministry of Mercy – Order of Christian Funerals: Part 1

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

*Mercy and compassion stand at the heart of the call to minister to those who are experiencing loss and grief.*

Father John Thomas J. Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church, Highland Heights, Ohio, and a liturgical consultant and presenter. You may contact him with a comment or a question at [jtlanesss@gmail.com](mailto:jtlanesss@gmail.com). He is the author of *Guide for Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass*, published by Liturgical Training Publications and the Archdiocese of Chicago in 2015.

**D**URING THIS YEAR OF MERCY, THIS COLUMN HAS BEEN FOCUSING ON HOW we, the church and its leadership, can better respond to Pope Francis' invitation, "Be merciful like the Father." One of the unique opportunities we have is the celebration of the *Order of Christian Funerals*. I am purposely using the title of the church's Roman ritual and this liturgical document because of the abundance of pastoral, theological, and Scriptural materials, and ministry that flow from this source. In the next three columns, let us review the pastoral and ritual elements that assist us in being "the face of mercy" through our pastoral care of the bereaved, evangelization efforts, and more.

The General Introduction of the *Order of Christian Funerals* (OCF) contains a wealth of theological and pastoral support for the ministry of death and dying. Here are a few highlights, especially relevant in light of our reflection during the Year of Mercy and its emphasis on the corporal works of mercy to the deceased and family:

4. At the death of a Christian, whose life of faith was begun in the waters of baptism and strengthened at the eucharistic table, the church intercedes on behalf of the deceased because of its confident belief that death is not the end nor does it break the bonds forged in life. The church also ministers to the sorrowing and consoles them in the funeral rites with the comforting word of God and the sacrament of the Eucharist [when available].

6. The Christian community affirms and expresses the union of the church on earth with the church in heaven in the one great communion of saints. Though separated from the living,

the dead are still at one with the community of believers on earth and benefit from their prayers and intercession. . . . In this way, it recognizes the spiritual bond that still exists between the living and the dead. . . .

7. The celebration of the Christian funeral brings hope and consolation to the living. . . . The funeral rites also recall to all who take part in them God's mercy and judgment and meet the human need to turn always to God in times of crisis.

8. "If one member suffers in the body of Christ which is the church, all the members suffer with that member" (1 Cor 12: 26). . . . The faithful are called to a ministry of consolation to those who have suffered the loss of one whom they love.

9. By giving instruction, pastors and associate pastors [presuming not just priests who are parochial vicars, but also lay pastoral associates who work on pastoral staffs in parish settings and hospitals] should lead the community to a deeper appreciation of its role in the ministry of consolation and to a fuller understanding of the significance of the death of a fellow Christian.

11. The community's principal involvement in the ministry of consolation is expressed in its active participation in the celebration of the funeral rites, particularly the vigil for the deceased, the funeral liturgy [Mass], and the rite of committal. For this reason, these rites should be scheduled at times that permit as many of the community as possible to be present. The assembly's participation can be assisted by the preparation of booklets that contain an outline of the rite; the texts and songs belonging to the people and directions. . . .

17. Whenever possible, ministers should involve the family in planning the funeral rites: in the choice of texts and rites provided in the ritual, in the selection of music for the rites, and in the designation of liturgical ministers. . . . The minister should explain to the family the meaning and significance of each of the funeral rites, especially the vigil, the funeral liturgy, and the rite of committal.


The above paragraphs give guidance to why we do what we do in the preparation, planning, and pastoral care we give. They also serve as a way of formation for future "funeral" or bereavement ministers who

assist the church in this vital ministry of comfort and mercy. Too often, we can be busy as priests or other pastoral ministers. OCF reminds us of one of our prime ministries as a church is to be the face of mercy, to comfort and to care for all who mourn and hope for the resurrection of the dead.

In our next column, we will review the ritual and aspects that are important in sharing the treasure of consolation and care that are integral to this three-part commemoration of Christ's paschal mystery and that of the deceased and the members of the grieving family.

### Calendar Highlights for July and August

- National holidays are observed in July in Canada and the United States. Friday, July 1, is Canada Day, and Monday, July 4, is Independence Day in the United States. Each country's *Roman Missal* includes special prayers for these days.
- The optional memorial of Saint Camillus de Lellis is on Monday, July 18. Consider a service of the anointing the sick during the Mass this day under the patronage of this great saint of pastoral care and healing.
- Remember Good Saint Ann (and Saint Joachim), the grandparents of Jesus, and celebrate the anointing of the sick on their memorial, Tuesday, July 26. The healing power and care of Saint Ann are legendary and continue through the pastoral care and comfort our faith communities extend to our elders, especially as they strive to be loving grandparents and models of faith to the young.
- Pray for World Youth Day, July 26-31, in Krakow, Poland. World Youth Day is a gathering of young people from local churches with the pope, typically celebrated every three years in a different country. The theme of WYD 2016 is "Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy."
- Honor your sacristans and other church volunteers on the memorial of Saint Martha, Friday, July 29, with a special breakfast or gathering.

- Join in a special convocation July 29-31, *Celebrating the Gift of Self in the Year of Mercy*, which is being sponsored by the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament at its national headquarters in suburban Cleveland, Ohio. Go to [blessedsacrament.com](http://blessedsacrament.com) for detailed information or to register.
- Celebrate the Apostle of the Eucharist and founder of two religious congregations dedicated to the Eucharist, Saint Peter Julian Eymard, on his feast day on Tuesday, August 2. You'll find a special novena in his honor at [blessedsacrament.com](http://blessedsacrament.com).
- Monday, August 15, is the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. While not a holy day of obligation this year, celebrate this beautiful feast of Mary's glorification because of her faith and discipleship. Check out the *Book of Blessings* (BB) and *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* for special prayers for this day and the blessing of the harvest.
- New School Year. See BB for the blessings of teachers and students as they are welcomed back to school.
- Schedule a communal penance service for summer or fall during the Year of Mercy. 

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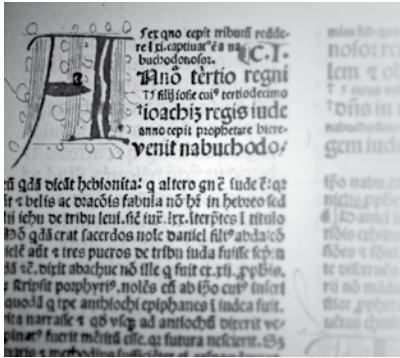
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If you have not yet received the brochure with Convocation details and registration form in the mail, please contact Susan Work (440-442-6311).

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## BREAKING THE WORD

# HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

### Knowledge of Salvation

**D**URING THIS LITURGICAL YEAR, WE READ FROM THE GOSPEL OF LUKE. ONE OF the hermeneutical lenses through which we can understand this Gospel comes from the infancy narrative: knowledge of our salvation is through the forgiveness of our sins (see Lk 1:77).

Throughout Luke's gospel narrative, culminating in the paschal mystery, Jesus proclaims the forgiveness of our sins. Following his resurrection, in missioning his disciples, Jesus reminded them that "repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47). God's mercy knows no bounds and is open for all to accept. In the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, "The salvation which God offers us is the work of his mercy. No human efforts, however good they may be, can enable us to merit so great a gift. God, by his sheer grace, draws us to himself and makes us one with him. He sends his Spirit into our hearts to make us his children, transforming us and enabling us to respond to his love by our lives. The church is sent by Jesus Christ as the sacrament of salvation offered by God" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 112).

Rather than being a derogatory phrase uttered by some Pharisees against our Lord, let us joyfully proclaim of Jesus in every Eucharist: "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them" (Lk 15:2). The Gospel of Luke is indeed a great companion for us during this Jubilee Year of Mercy, for through it we discover that are all invited to dine with Jesus in the kingdom.

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. Based in Cleveland, Father Anthony presently serves the U.S. Province of his congregation as vocation director.

## Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 3, 2016

*God's Promises Are True*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Isaiah 66:10-14c**

Isaiah encourages the people to be patient with God, who will fulfill his promises in due time (see 66:7-9). A future of hope and abundance is promised to God's faithful people.

#### **Galatians 6:14-18**

Concluding the Letter to the Galatians, Paul points to the cross of Christ as the source of salvation and hope, wishing peace and mercy to all who recognize Jesus Christ and proclaim his name. In Christ, a new creation has come about for all humanity.

#### **Luke 10:1-12, 17-20 or 10:1-9**

On the road to Jerusalem (see Lk 9:51), Jesus sends out ahead of him and the Twelve 72 disciples who are to announce that the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus gives them their mission, along with clear instructions on how to carry it out as they go from one town to the next. The shortened version excludes some sayings of Jesus and the report on the return of the seventy-two.

### *Sharing the Word*

"If it's too good to be true, it probably isn't true!" You've heard that saying, right? This saying comes to mind often whenever I see commercials on TV trying to sell some new "gotta have it" product.

I can easily imagine that the people of Isaiah's day probably thought the same thing when he described the promises God had in store for them. In Isaiah's day, the people suffered greatly. And this prophet comes revealing to them God's providential care and concern, God's promised prosperity for those who have hope and faith in him. I'm sure it all sounded too good to be true.

Jesus did the same thing in today's Gospel. Like Isaiah, Jesus revealed the Father's providential care for his disciples. He told them



that they would see not only demons trembling at the name of Christ, which they bore in their hearts, but also other wondrous occurrences like the ability to tread upon serpents and scorpions. And not only that, Jesus assured them that their names are written in heaven and that the kingdom of God is at hand. Again, it all sounds too good to be true, especially for us 2,000 years later.

In our time, we might doubt that God's reign is at hand, that it is among us! We can list the many things preventing us from recognizing the in-breaking of God's kingdom: senseless shootings, domestic violence, poverty, human trafficking, terrorism, and other sins and crimes. Our Christian values are under assault along with our religious liberty and freedom of conscience — all of this as our nation celebrates the anniversary of its independence and freedom. This begs the question: are the promises of Jesus too good to be true? Is God's kingdom really among us?

In this regard, Paul has great wisdom to offer us. He told the Galatians in today's second reading that he boasted in nothing but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Gal 6:16). For Paul, the cross was a sign of God's tender and merciful love for his people, a love fully revealed in his Son. Christ's passion and death and his resurrection from the dead are the beginning of a new creation. The kingdom of God is here and now, and its fullness will be revealed when Christ comes again in glory to judge the living and the dead. The cross reveals the promised kingdom of God and its presence already among us.

We experience God's providential care and the promises of the kingdom when we say "yes" to Christ's call to loving and generous service, to spreading the Gospel. This begins with forgiving our enemies, caring for the poor, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, and other works of mercy in Christ's name. We acknowledge the kingdom of God in faith-filled living and in service to others.

Just as all have a place at the eucharistic table, Jesus assures us that he has purchased a place for us at the table in God's kingdom and that our names are written in heaven.

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty and ever-living God,  
in times of doubt and despair,  
strengthen us with an outpouring of your Holy Spirit,  
so that we may faithfully live in the light of the promises  
given to us by your Son,  
Jesus Christ, our Lord, forever and ever  
Amen.

## Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 10, 2016

*Won't You Be My Neighbor?*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Deuteronomy 30:10-14**

Moses exhorts the people to adhere to the covenant God made with them. The conditions of this covenant, the commandments of God, are not complicated to follow but rather flow from the heart of God to the heart of humankind. Today, we might say that the commandments are not pie-in-the-sky but rather practical and easily understood.

#### **Colossians 1:15-20**

Paul begins his letter to the Colossians by quoting an early liturgical hymn praising Jesus Christ, the image of the invisible God and the firstborn of all creation.

#### **Luke 10:25-37**

A scholar of the law tests Jesus, asking him what it takes to inherit eternal life. Jesus answers his question with a question, asking the scholar to interpret what the law says, to which he replies love God and one's neighbor as one's self. To illustrate the kind of love the law requires, Jesus tells the story of the Good Samaritan.

### *Sharing the Word*

Today's readings remind me of when I was a child. My favorite TV show was *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. At the beginning of every show, the theme music would start and the host, Fred Rogers, changed into a cardigan sweater while singing the title song "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" In a sense, this is the question that Jesus addressed in today's Gospel. He didn't answer the scholar's question "Who is my neighbor," but "Won't you be my neighbor?" By telling the story of the Good Samaritan, Jesus shows us what it means to be a neighbor, to be worthy of eternal life.

As the parable reveals, the neighbor to the robbers' victim

shared with him God's tender love and mercy. He saw someone in need and reached out to help. And the Good Samaritan was only able to do this because he himself experienced God's compassion and mercy in his own life. In other words, if we want to "go and do likewise" (cf. Lk 10:37), as Jesus told the scholar, to love our neighbors as ourselves, we have to first recognize God's power and grace at work in our own lives. This is one reason why we take part in Mass every Sunday.

When we love God and place the Gospel at the center of our lives, it becomes easier to love others. Often, we have to do things for people we love even though we'd rather not (e.g., household chores or visiting in-laws). When we love our husband or wife, when we love our children and friends, it becomes easier to do the things they like to do because we first of all love them. The same is true in our relationship with God: we love others because Jesus loves us, and he loves all people!

Jesus invites us to be lovers: to love God with all our being and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This is the hard part. The Good Samaritan story jabs our consciences, as countless people ask us, "Won't you be my neighbor?" The people we encounter daily ask us, "Won't you be my neighbor?" The children in their mothers' wombs at risk of being aborted, the elderly, and the forgotten — they, too, ask us, "Won't you be my neighbor?" Victims of domestic violence, child abuse, and people addicted to pornography, drugs, and alcohol — they ask us, "Won't you be my neighbor?"

Some of us might find ourselves on the other end of the question: we're the ones seeking love, seeking to be recognized as a beloved daughter or son of God, seeking a neighbor. The Good Samaritan story gives us hope that our brothers and sisters who have more will do more in Jesus' name. We need to be ready to accept their love and mercy. Love is mutual.

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
help us to recognize your merciful face in one another.  
In the name of Jesus your Son,  
we ask for the grace to truly love you  
with all our heart, mind, soul, and being  
and to love our neighbor as ourselves,  
for Jesus is Lord forever and ever.  
Amen.

## Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 17, 2016

*In the Presence of the Most High*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Genesis 18:1-10a**

Three mysterious guests visit Abraham and Sarah. Abraham offers the traditional gestures of hospitality and a meal to them. The three guests promise that in a year's time Sarah will conceive and bear a son. Missing from the lectionary is Sarah's laughter in reaction to the promise made by the visitors.

#### **Colossians 1:24-28**

As a minister in the church, Paul joyfully bears the burdens of the Christian community he is called to serve for the sake of Christ. His ministry is a sharing in the stewardship of the word of God: preaching Jesus Christ to the Gentiles.

#### **Luke 10:38-42**

Jesus visits his friends Martha and her sister Mary. Mary sits at the Lord's feet listening to him, while Martha is ministering about.

### *Sharing the Word*

Don't you wish you could have been at Jesus' feet, learning from him along with Mary? I look forward to the day when I can see Jesus, whom I love so very much, face-to-face and learn from him directly, asking him all sorts of questions. What a wonderful story today's Gospel presents — a story that all of us wish we could've experienced ourselves.

Human beings have often wondered whether we are alone in the universe. As our ancestors looked up to the stars, their hearts questioned whether there was a supreme being who created the cosmos. Are we the product of some cosmological accident or are we the result of divine love?

Sacred Scripture and our church's teachings tell us that we

are not alone in the universe. There is indeed a Creator who created *ex nihilo* the entire cosmos. "God, infinitely perfect and blessed in himself, in a plan of sheer goodness freely created man to make him share in his own blessed life" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1). This is the truth of our faith.

God created us in love and for love, calling our first ancestors, Adam and Eve, into a holy bond with him, a divine marriage. But they sinned by rejecting God's offer of love. As a result, we no longer experience the joy of original holiness, as was found in the garden. Satan's power entered into our world, spreading sin and evil like contagion across the centuries. But a passionate lover like God did not give up on us.

It is for this reason that "at every time and in every place, God draws close to man. He calls man to seek him, to know him, to love him with all his strength. He calls together all men, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of his family, the church. To accomplish this, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son as Redeemer and Savior. In his Son and through him, God invites men to become, in the Holy Spirit, his adopted children and thus become heirs of his blessed life" (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1). This is the Good News we celebrate every Sunday.

Someday we will see Jesus face-to-face. In the meantime, we do not have to wait for death and the resurrection of the dead to have an experience of the risen Christ. We encounter Christ in his church, in her sacraments, in the Scriptures, and in the mercy and compassion shown to one another. In last Sunday's Gospel of the Good Samaritan, Jesus said that the one who showed mercy and compassion is the neighbor. Similarly, God himself has shown infinite mercy and compassion to us and all people through Jesus Christ. As we receive Holy Communion, Christ enters into our lives to transform us over time into a perfect people for God our Father.

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty ever living God,  
you have given us Jesus Christ,  
your beloved Son, to be our Savior and Redeemer.  
As we eat his flesh and drink his blood in the Eucharist,  
you sanctify us with his mercy and grace,  
and invite us to enter into communion with each other.  
Hear our prayers and answer them  
through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 24, 2016

*Lord, Hear our Prayer*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Genesis 18:20-32**

Following the visit by three mysterious guests, Abraham asks God to spare the good people of Sodom and Gomorrah from total destruction. The nature of the sinfulness that inflamed God's wrath against these cities varies within the biblical tradition itself (see Gn 19:4-11; Is 1:9-17; Ez 16:49-50; Jer 23:14) and also among scholars today.

#### **Colossians 2:12-14**

Paul speaks of the role of Jesus Christ in salvation history, pointing to the paschal mystery and the central focus of his preaching (see Col 2:4). Through baptism, Christians share in the death of Christ and also his resurrection here and now.

#### **Luke 11:1-13**

In answer to his disciples' request, Jesus teaches the value of intercessory prayer. The Lord's Prayer is presented as a model for Christian prayer, and Jesus illustrates the tenderness of the Father with a parable on the value of persistence in prayer.

### *Sharing the Word*

There are many things that I love about being a priest. One of them is praying with and for God's holy people. The church asks me as to pray the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours, for the needs of the world, the church, and all people. At every eucharistic celebration, I'm asked to offer the sacrifice for a particular intention as well as for all the living and deceased people of God. In addition to the formal liturgical prayer associated with presiding and offering, I also am asked to keep in my personal prayer the particular needs and intentions brought to my attention by God's people. Praying with and for others is also the task of every disciple.

In various gospel passages, we find Jesus at prayer, either alone, as we see in today's narrative, or with others. Jesus was a man of prayer, always in communion with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. As his disciples, you and I are to imitate our Lord and be a people of prayer.

The first reading is a good illustration for us of how God hears the prayers of his friends, and invites us to pray. Abraham's trust that God would listen to his request on behalf of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah is paradigmatic. It is clear from Genesis that Abraham and God had an intimate relationship with one another, so much so that Abraham is depicted as negotiating with God on behalf of a sinful people. We might say today that Abraham had a lot of *chutzpah* in him as he dared to negotiate with God.

The point for us is that we, too, are invited to an intimate relationship with God, addressing God as "our Father" and recognizing that we are beloved daughters and sons, and sisters and brothers in Christ. Prayer is our family communication, an opportunity to express our love and to experience love itself.

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
you have claimed us  
as your adopted sons and daughters in Christ Jesus.  
Hear our prayers for one another,  
along with our own personal intentions  
through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time July 31, 2016

*Seeking What Is Above*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:21-23**

This passage is from the Book of Ecclesiastes, which, as one commentator notes, is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew *Qoheleth*. The lectionary offers us Qoheleth's observation that in the end others reap the profits of one's harvest.

#### **Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11**

Paul challenges the Colossians to set right their priorities in life, beginning with the glory of God alone. By doing so, believers will eliminate vice and sin in their lives and begin to live for Christ Jesus. In this section of the epistle, Paul articulates a vision of Christian living both for individual right conduct as well as for virtuous family life.

#### **Luke 12:13-21**

A man in the crowd listening to Jesus asks him to adjudicate a family squabble between himself and his brother. Jesus uses the occasion to offer a parable exemplifying the value of living simply and within one's means, because the disciple's true wealth is in heaven.

### *Sharing the Word*

As we are in the midst of a presidential campaign in the United States, today's readings offer us an opportunity to reflect on the church's social teachings. The disparity between rich and poor should give the Christian pause when discussing the major political and economic issues of our time.

Jesus was never an economist; his teachings are neither capitalist nor socialist, and neither are those of his church. Rather, Jesus stands in continuity with the prophets of Israel who spoke of the dignity of every human person created in God's image and likeness along with the stewardship of creation as two essential elements



of the devout life. While the first reading from Ecclesiastes is very pessimistic about the world, a view that stands in stark contrast to the vision set forth in *Gaudium et Spes*, for example, the wisdom found therein resonates with us today. All that we do and the wealth that we accumulate can indeed be vanity if they are not used for the glory of God and the good of others. A modern Qoheleth might say to us, "You can't take it with you when you die!"

In the second reading, Paul encourages the Colossians to seek that which is above, the glory of God alone, in all circumstances. What we say and do in this world is to make a difference here and now. Indeed, for Paul the disciple of Jesus Christ is supposed to live differently because of his or her membership in the family of God, the church.

Finally, Jesus' parable in the Gospel eloquently challenges us to recognize that we are responsible to the Lord for one another. If we are to follow the Lord Jesus as his disciples, then it is inherent upon us to store up treasure in heaven, to be rich in the things that matter to God alone, and to be generous in sharing our blessings. Living in right relationship with God and with one another are characteristic trademarks of the Christian.

As we face major political decisions this November, today's readings and the church's social teaching remind us to treasure every human person — from conception to natural death — to care for and safeguard creation, and to give glory and praise to God alone in all that we say and do.

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty and ever living God,  
your Son Jesus taught us that the poor  
are blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
May we recognize the dignity of every person,  
be prudent stewards of creation,  
and always seek to render praise to you  
through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 7, 2016

*Chosen for the Kingdom of God*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Wisdom 18:6-9**

Today's reading is part of a longer illustration of God's favorable treatment and special care of his people during the Exodus (see Wis 11:2-5). The sacred author points to the Passover as a sign of divine providence in that God spared his people and punished the Egyptians.

#### **Hebrews 11:1-2, 8-19 or 11:1-2, 8-12**

The selection from the Letter to the Hebrews offers us a definition of faith. It is taken from a larger treatise in praise of the Old Testament exemplars of faith such as Abraham and Sarah. The lectionary's short version eliminates the promise of a greater homeland and the significance of Abraham's faith, even to the point of offering his son Isaac in obedience to God.

#### **Luke 12:32-48 or 12:35-40**

The long version of the Gospel includes the admonition to trust in God alone, "for where your treasure is, there also will your heart be" (Lk 12:34), and includes a parable on servants awaiting their master's return from a wedding feast. The short version contains just the parable without the preface and Jesus' explanation of it in reply to Peter's question of its intended audience.

### *Sharing the Word*

Hopefully you didn't miss the introductory line that Jesus said to his disciples: "Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom" (Lk 12:32). I think this is a fundamental hermeneutical key to the parable that follows about the servants who dutifully await their master's return from a wedding banquet.

The first reading from Wisdom is excerpted from a longer treatise that seeks to demonstrate divine providence at work for God's chosen people. What the sacred author wishes to convey is that God, who has chosen this people to be peculiarly his own, loves and sustains them throughout life's journey. As God's chosen people, filled with wisdom and grace, they are invited through faith to a covenant relationship with God and a life of integrity and devotion.

In Luke 12:7, Jesus exhorted his disciples to be courageous in times of persecution, telling them "Do not be afraid. You are worth more than many sparrows." Now, in light of his teachings and his own impending exodus on the cross (see Lk 9:31), Jesus assures his followers that the Father has *chosen them* for the kingdom of God. It is only in this light that the parable of the servants dutifully caring out their tasks while awaiting their master's return makes sense. Jesus is the master who will return in glory; we are the chosen servants called to the task of recognizing and pointing to God's providence and the in-breaking of the kingdom.

Being chosen by God through baptism conveys upon us the awesome responsibility of knowing and carrying out God's will. This is never easy, especially in a culture like ours that can be hostile to the Gospel. But it is not impossible. By following the example of faith given us by our saintly ancestors, as Hebrews suggests, we are to await eagerly our Lord's return in glory with integrity and devotion.

### *Praying the Word*

Good and gracious God,  
you always walk the journey of life  
with your chosen people.  
Strengthen our resolve to faithfully follow your Son  
in every moment of our lives,  
for Jesus is Lord for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time August 14, 2016

*Blessed Be God Who Filled My Soul with Fire*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Jeremiah 38:4-6, 8-10**

With Jerusalem under siege, Jeremiah is falsely accused of defecting to the Chaldeans and is imprisoned (see Jer 37:13-15). The passage offers us a glimpse of the false accusations he endured and his ultimate fate.

#### **Hebrews 12:1-4**

After describing in heroic terms the faithfulness of generations past, the author summarizes their lives as worthy of imitation. Despite opposition and persecution, Christians today need only to imitate the fidelity of God's holy people, keeping Jesus as the focal point of their lives.

#### **Luke 12:49-53**

En route to Jerusalem, Jesus tells his disciples that their discipleship and their faith in him will cause division and anxiety in familial and societal relations. Jesus is filled with zeal, a burning fire, to accomplish his Father's will in Jerusalem.

### *Sharing the Word*

I'm no advertising or marketing expert, but it seems to me that the most successful way to get people to buy a product is to convince them of a need. No car salesman, for example, would ever tell you that if you bought a particular car, it will get you safely to your final destination but will require a lot of maintenance and sacrifice to get you from point A to B. Who would buy such a vehicle? We buy products that make life simpler, not more complicated. Yet our readings indicate that being faithful to the Gospel will require great sacrifice, love, and zeal. There is no easy way to be a disciple of Jesus Christ!

Jeremiah was faithful to the message he heard from God, and for his fidelity, for speaking the truth in love to those in power, he was maltreated and falsely accused of betraying his people. Today,

following in Jeremiah's footsteps, countless Christians are proclaiming a prophetic message of truth and are paying the price for living the Gospel with their blood. The church has new martyrs daily.

Bearing witness to the truth is the task of every Christian, even to the point of shedding blood for the sake of the Gospel. Jesus speaks of a bloodless martyrdom his disciples will experience: divisions in the family, being outcast in society, losing status and friendships. But in the end, as the author of Hebrews counsels us, it is worth everything in order to "rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith" (Heb 12:1-2).

### *Praying the Word*

Faithful and gracious God,  
help us to keep our hearts open to your Holy Spirit  
so that we might remain steadfast  
in following your beloved Son,  
Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time August 21, 2016

*The New Evangelization*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Isaiah 66:18-21**

Near the end of the book, Isaiah tells of the nations coming to Jerusalem in order to offer fitting praise and worship of the Most High. Salvation is offered to all peoples.

#### **Hebrews 12:5-7, 11-13**

The author writes words of encouragement to the early Christian community facing persecution for the sake of the Gospel. He describes such persecution as a “discipline,” something that the community can endure patiently in hope.

#### **Luke 13:22-30**

Using a parable, Jesus teaches that while the nations are invited to dine in the kingdom of God, only those who truly “enter through the narrow gate” will be saved.

### *Sharing the Word*

Humans have a fascination with numbers. Just look at how much we Americans care about them: poll numbers, baseball statistics, Wall Street averages, forecast high and low temperatures, speed limits, gas prices, etc. Our lives are surrounded by numbers of every stripe, denoting practically everything. So it is not surprising that numbers are important in the church as well. Annually, most dioceses take a census and report the numbers of Catholics in a parish, the sacraments received, Mass attendance, etc. But what about the number of people saved?

I'd like to propose that our readings today point us beyond numbering and into the realm of the divine, which is infinite. Numbers are ways that we can understand and control our world. We cannot, however, domesticate or tame God and his mercy. There is no way to

quantify salvation, for God's mercy is infinite and beyond our capacity to understand.

Isaiah concludes on a message of inclusion. Jesus invites his disciples to look beyond themselves and set out on the road of evangelization so that "people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God" (Lk 13:29). Following his resurrection, Jesus will tell his disciples "that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Lk 24:47; see also Lk 1:77).

Preaching God's infinite mercy is the answer to those seeking to quantify salvation. God's mercy is at the heart of the new evangelization encouraged by Popes Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis. God's mercy is the narrow gate through which we enter and dine in the kingdom of God.

### *Praying the Word*

Merciful Father,  
at the summons of your co-eternal Son,  
we seek to dine in your kingdom.  
Hear our humble petitions,  
recognizing that we do not know how to pray as we ought,  
and welcome us at the banquet feast of heaven.  
We make our prayer through Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time August 28, 2016

*All Are Welcome*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Sirach 3:17-18, 20, 28-29**

Offering his wisdom to future generations, Sirach discourses on the importance of the virtue of humility. Existing within one's means, being generous and gracious, and seeking true wisdom makes for a life worth living.

#### **Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24a**

Christians are invited to live differently, approaching God with humility and recognizing Jesus' blood poured out in sacrifice for their salvation.

#### **Luke 14:1, 7-14**

While dining in the home of a "leading Pharisee," Jesus observes how those held in esteem by the host are treated more favorably than those otherwise thought of.

### *Sharing the Word*

Last Sunday, our readings reminded us that everyone is invited to the kingdom of God and that God's mercy is beyond quantification. This Sunday's readings continue this theme, calling us to be attentive to the needs of the least of our brothers and sisters.

Following the proverbial wisdom of Sirach, Jesus exhorts his host to show inclusive hospitality, where all might find a place at the table. My mother and step-father taught me this important lesson in my own life. Nobody, it seemed, was excluded from the table of my family's friendship. Growing up, it appeared that my parents knew virtually the whole town in which we lived. To this day, I run into people who know my family and are grateful for being included in their friendship.

Welcoming the poor and disadvantaged, the rich and affluent



together into one community of faith, is what we Christians learned from our holy Mother Church. Everyone is invited to dine in the kingdom of God; nobody is excluded from God's tender mercy. Jesus is our role model. "Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is nothing else than the culmination of the way he lived his entire life. Moved by his example, we want to enter fully into the fabric of society, sharing the lives of all, listening to their concerns, helping them materially and spiritually in their needs, rejoicing with those who rejoice, weeping with those who weep; arm in arm with others, we are committed to building a new world" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 269).

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
you invite everyone to dine in your kingdom,  
feasting at the banquet table of heaven.  
May your Holy Spirit inspire us  
to welcome all your beloved daughters and sons  
in the holy name of Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord forever and ever.  
Amen.





## *EUCHARIST & CULTURE*

Art • Music • Film •  
Poetry • Books

### Art Review



**BURNING BUSH  
TABERNACLE,**  
John Collier,  
bronze, Saint  
Gianna Beretta  
Molla Church,  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
photo courtesy  
Hillstream Gallery  
[www.hillstream.com](http://www.hillstream.com)

John Christman,  
SSS

Tabernacles can tend to be somewhat uninspiring objects. Sadly, they are often simply prefabricated, mass-produced decorative boxes made for the reposition of the Eucharist. However functional these tabernacles may be for housing the Blessed Sacrament for the sick and the dying, they rarely stir our imaginations despite the profound mystery contained within their walls. Likewise, staring at a box in times of eucharistic prayer and reflection does little to draw our minds and hearts to God. Instead, Catholics tend to relate to God through all the senses, thus the great importance placed upon beautiful and inspiring music, liturgy, and sacred art.

Saint Gianna Beretta Molla Parish in Winnipeg, Manitoba, had such a vision when it commissioned the artist John Collier to design a tabernacle for its Eucharistic Chapel. Collier, an accomplished and acclaimed painter and illustrator, in recent years has dedicated much of his time to religious art, especially in the medium of sculpture. Collier's sculptures of Saint Joseph, Saint Michael the Archangel, Saint Florian, and Saint Mary Magdalene help shape the 9/11 Catholic Memorial at Saint Joseph's Chapel in New York City near Ground Zero, a sublime and moving instillation.

Collier contributed two lovely works of art for the recently completed Church of Saint Gianna Beretta Molla. One is a poignant sculpture of Gianna Beretta Molla pondering a difficult pregnancy in the throes of everyday life. The other is the burning bush tabernacle: a bronze sculpture of a burning bush that houses the Blessed Sacrament. The two are thematically united with the motif of apples. Apples fall from Gianna's grocery bag as she busily goes about the tasks of everyday life, and ripe apples hang amid the branches of the burning tree. Of course, apples are filled with symbolic significance in Christian art. They stir thoughts of temptation, fruitfulness, and self-reflection; certainly a potent symbol then for a place of prayer and reflection.

The burning bush tabernacle itself is dynamic like very few tabernacles. It commands the space with its outstretched bronze branches, each leaf brilliantly articulated and natural. Any sculptor could appreciate the great technical skill of creating such an elaborate piece out of bronze. But beyond the technical prowess the artwork draws you into the mystery of God through a biblical imagination. The use of tree, fruit, fire, and light all have numerous manifestations in Scripture.

The theologian William Brown, in his wonderful book *Seeing the Psalms*, brilliantly explores these images, drawing forth the many levels of meanings these symbols have accrued through history. The point of any great work of art that has contemplation as its aim is to guide reflection but not to limit it. Thus, a rich symbol like a tree can evoke the burning bush, the tree of life, the cedars of Lebanon, even the cross. Our biblical and analogical imaginations draw us deeper into the sacrament as our own lives intersect with mystery we contemplate.

In this sense, Collier's sculptural tabernacle is a lesson in sacred art. Purely pragmatic or didactic religious works of art do little to draw us into an encounter with God. But encounter and communion are what our souls are so often thirsting for. Thus, sacred art that pulls us into relation through the visual language of Scripture and creation stirs memory and imagination. It not only helps to make God more clearly present, but it helps us to be present to God.

## Music Review

Pops Staples was a family man with a vision. Born in 1914 in Mississippi, he learned how to play the guitar at a young age and developed his own unique blues guitar style. As an adult, he gathered his family around him to sing gospel songs at a local church. The combination of his bluesy guitar and gentle voice contrasted with the soulful power of his young daughter Mavis' voice created a sound that launched a career. The Staples Singers made a name for themselves initially in gospel and folk circles, but later to a vast popular audience with number one hits like "I'll Take You There."

Yet beneath their great harmonies and distinctive sound was Pops Staples' Christian faith and social message. He was the one who sought out the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at a church service after hearing him on the radio and struck up a friendship, eventually



Pops Staples  
**DON'T LOSE  
THIS**  
Anti/Epitaph, 2015

John Christman,  
SSS

sharing a stage together. He was the one who heard the young Bob Dylan sing about social justice and decided to add the song to the family repertoire. Besides being a songwriter and family man, Pops Staples indeed had a vision.

After a long career in music and many accolades, Pops Staples died in the year 2000 at the age of 86. Yet before he died, he gathered his daughters together and asked them to make one last album with him. Due to his poor health, they were unable to complete the album but shortly before he died he told his daughter Mavis, "Don't lose this," of the songs they recorded together.

Recently, after a late career resurgence of her own, Mavis entrusted the material to the producer and musician Jeff Tweedy, who had worked with her on her Grammy Award-winning album *You Are Not Alone*. The resulting album entitled *Don't Lose This* is an amazing tribute to Pops Staples' music and life.

Tweedy gives the songs an almost timeless quality by removing everything that was extraneous. For most of the songs, he removed the original instruments and left only Pops' signature guitar, vocals, and his daughters' backup singing. To these, he sometimes adds perfectly placed bass and his son Spencer's brilliant restrained but syncopated drumming.

But it's Pops' effortless and smooth voice sharing wisdom gleaned from a lifetime speaking the truth in challenging circumstances that really captures your attention. Each song has such a poignant tone. Whether he sings about friendships that persist through life's travails or the hope of seeing his children again in heaven, each song has a grandeur and dignity about it. It's the last artistic rendering of a man who spent his life in music and singing about justice. As such, it's an honor to hear and a joy to share.

## Poetry

God's Glory !

Ablaze in glory . . .  
God in his humanity:  
Transfiguration!

Mystery of love . . .  
Shared life in the Eucharist:  
God's glory in me!

Indwelling presence . . .  
My heart sings of God's glory:  
Sweet awakening!

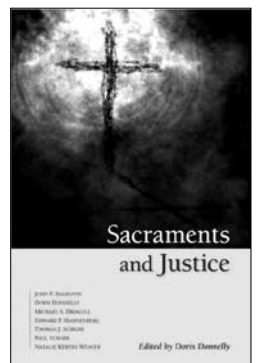
God's glory revealed . . .  
In creatures and creation:  
My soul rejoices!

With longing, I wait . . .  
Until God comes in glory:  
Maranatha! Come!

Jeanette Martino Land

## Book Review

The title of this book captured my attention leading me to think that this would be a particularly nuanced book, perhaps with a left-leaning theology. I anticipated reading the take on "justice" of the very fine theological and liturgical writers who highlight each of the sacraments. Instead, this series of articles on the seven sacraments highlights the language of symbol and the importance of connecting the sacraments and modern concerns, gives a brief history of each sacrament, reviews the documents of the twentieth century, especially in light of the Second Vatican Council, and introduces each of the sacraments in its rite and in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Through the lens of justice, the "best practices" of the sacraments are explained.



**SACRAMENTS  
AND JUSTICE**  
Doris K. Donnelly,  
ed.  
Collegetown,  
Minnesota:  
Liturgical Press,  
2014  
120 pp., \$16.95

Each chapter features a different sacrament, following a brief introduction. Lavish footnotes highlight the historical documentation and recent papal pronouncements. Jesuit John F. Baldwin refers to the fine ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist, & Ministry* with surprising frequency in his chapter on baptism. Professor Edward Hahnenberg writes on confirmation, summarizing (a little too simply) where it falls today in theology and in practice. Page 26 would be helpful for a pastor or DRE to write about why we do the sacrament today.

Father Michael Driscoll gives an excellent overview of the language of "Eucharist" and "liturgy," the dismissal rite, and living what we receive. Professor Doris Donnelly expounds on penance/reconciliation and five important reasons to "meet the hungers of the human heart" with this sacrament. Professor Natalie Kertes Weaver seamlessly synthesizes historical and societal issues with marriage, giving "justice" to the church in dialogue with the social, political, and biomedical culture in which family life is lived today.

Jesuit Thomas Scirghi reports on the church's order, especially the order of the priesthood, but offers an interesting observation that Jesus "identified more with the deacon and the position of service" (93). He repeats the quote of Dominican theologian Edward Schillebeeckx, "We have a shortage of men who wish to be ordained and live a celibate life" (97). Scirghi ends the chapter with a strong statement: "Is it right and just that so many go without being nourished by the Eucharist?" (97). Lastly, Father Paul Turner discusses the anointing of the sick, emphasizing the 1921 expansion of the sacrament in advance of death by Pope Benedict XV. Furthermore, Turner reminds us of the justice that allows for ailing children to be anointed (see *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, 168-174 and page 110 of this book).

This is a highly recommended resource for the sacraments and their proper celebration, which can provide valuable assistance to ministers who wish to lead truly transformative sacramental celebrations.

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The title of the book already introduces us very clearly to the intention of the author. Prompted both by his vast knowledge of missiology and his practical mission experiences in the local churches of Asia, especially in the Philippines and Bangladesh, Father Kroeger gives expression to a renewed commitment to evangelization.

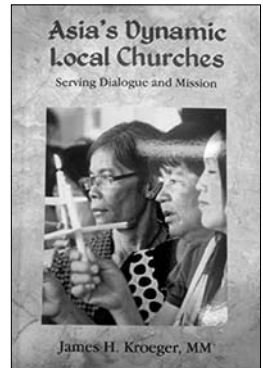
The main thrust of the book is to highlight inculturating faith in the diverse and plural religious contexts of Asia, the process of which should bring the “light and power of the Gospel into the multi-religious and pluri-cultural reality of contemporary Asia” (79). He warns that mission in Asia has no future if the local churches do not discover their own identity. In his own words, “This struggle to integrate faith and life involves a process of ecclesial self-discovery” (56). The author presents a focused synthesis of principles and elements of a Catholic vision of evangelization, placing emphasis on the Asian desire to be “Asian in their way of thinking, praying, living, communicating their own Christ-experience to others” (56).

Reading this book is an authentic learning experience of many facets. Among others, the presentation of the pivotal characteristics and emphases of four decades of FABC theology is commendable and much appreciated. The author blends the teaching of FABC in each chapter and makes each chapter stand on its own.

The presentation of ten defining traits that characterize the “new evangelization” in Chapter 7 is also very interesting and a bit overwhelming. The fundamental quality at the heart of these ten traits toward a successful evangelization is joy. The author is convinced that the lack of joy is an obstacle to effective evangelization. It is hoped that the book will provide the Basic Christian Communities of Asia with a broader vision of ecclesiology in their own contexts in order to face the day-to-day challenges and to demonstrate the true joy of the Gospel, as highlighted by Pope Francis in his *Evangelii Gaudium*.

The selected bibliography at the end of each chapter is of great benefit for all, especially the reader who may want to do more research on particular topics to have a deeper understanding of contextual theology.

Overall, in this book, Kroeger provides true leadership in recognizing and demonstrating the richness of Asian theology. The challenge

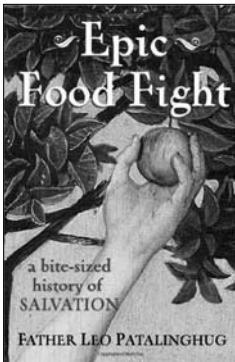


**ASIA'S DYNAMIC  
LOCAL  
CHURCHES:  
SERVING  
DIALOGUE AND  
MISSION**  
James H. Kroeger,  
MM  
Quezon City,  
Philippines:  
Claretian  
Communications,  
2014  
\$19.99 (Amazon)

placed before us today is twofold. On the one hand, to appreciate the profound and extensive renewal that is taking place already in the dynamic local churches of Asia. On the other hand, to assist those local churches in whatever way that may be required, in theory and practice, to face the contemporary challenges toward a fuller understanding of the “new evangelization.” This book makes an invaluable contribution toward these ends.

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Blessed Sacrament Scholasticate  
Ampitiya, Kandy, Sri Lanka

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**EPIC FOOD  
FIGHT:  
A BITE-SIZED  
HISTORY OF  
SALVATION**  
Leo Patalinghug  
Cincinnati, Ohio:  
Servants Books,  
2014  
153 pp., \$17.99

Father Leo Patalinghug is a chef, radio and TV personality, speaker, and the founder of the movement Grace before Meals.

This is a very interesting book, unique in its own way. The Introduction is entitled “The Appetizer.” Chapter 1 is “God’s Diet Plan.” You get the idea! Each chapter contains a prayer or scripture quote, a theological discussion, and ideas and questions for reflection. Unlike some of his other books, this one does not include recipes or suggestions on how to cook. The focus is on the theological element of food. Patalinghug uses everyday food language to make his points.

Patalinghug’s emphasis is on feeding his flock with the “truth of the faith.” His goal is to cook for people in order to bring them together. He calls this “his food apostolate,” his way of evangelizing. I think he’s on to something because everyone needs and enjoys food. He expounds on “The Exodus and Passing-over the Food Enslavement” (Ex 11); “The Provisions of Manna, Meat, and Hard Rock Water” (Ex 16); and “Joseph’s Well-Fared Program” (Gen 37), among others. I was pleasantly astonished at how food could be so biblical.

Chapter 4 is on priests and homilies, in which he advises “Keep the Message Focused and Bite-Sized”; “Provide a Balanced Seasoning of the Message”; “Serve a Fresh Message”; and “Consider the Timing and Temperature of the Homily,” etc. It is a unique approach to an often discussed matter.



I had difficulty with his emphasis on sin, sinners, and Satan. We commit sins, but that isn't what defines us; being made in the image and likeness of God is what defines us. It is fascinating that in almost all of Pope John Paul II's writings and allocutions, he underscores the dignity of the human person and our being fashioned in the divine image. I also had difficulty with the frequent mention of Satan and of the world at war between good and evil. It is not an equal struggle, for Scripture teaches that "where sin abounds, grace abounds all the more" (Rom 5:21-22).

Satan does not appear in the Bible until the Book of Job, and then the word is a description of a job, a prosecutor, rather than a proper name. Many of our ideas of Satan are less biblical and come from Puritanical preaching and images of hellfire and brimstone. Also, a personal Satan gets blamed for much of the evil in the world, rather than accepting our own responsibility and understanding the reality of structural sin. If you want to research this more completely, I suggest *Satan, A Biography* by Henry Ansgar Kelley.

I enjoyed Leo Patalinghug's book and learned much about Scripture and food from it.

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Loyola University  
New Orleans, Louisiana



## *EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS*

### Sister Angela Marie Salazar, SND

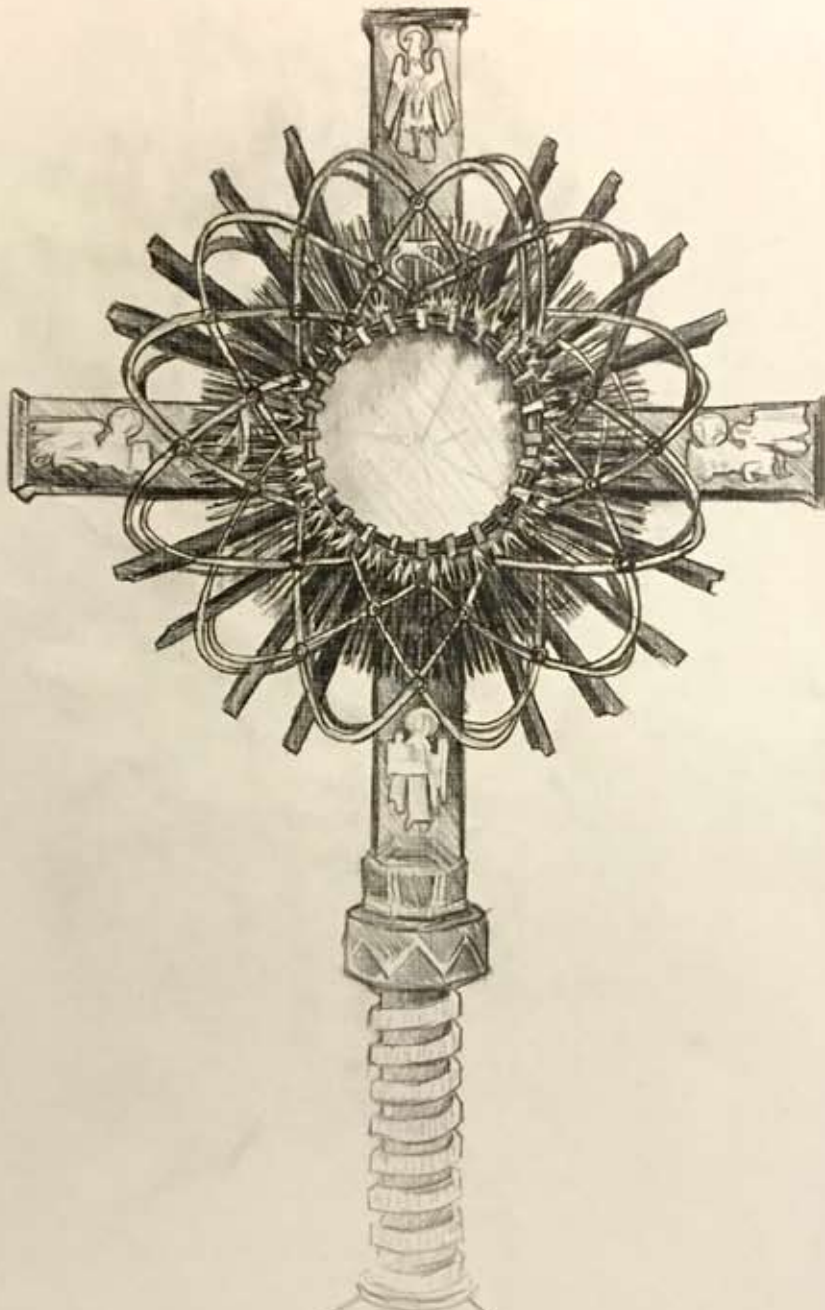
I began to have a relationship with Jesus and a love for the Eucharist as a small child growing up in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My family was the first to teach me the Catholic faith. Although I grew up knowing the importance of the Eucharist by witnessing eucharistic devotion in my family, it was necessary for me to develop my own personal love for Jesus in the Eucharist.

One of the gifts God has given me is the gift of music. I began to use this gift at my parish by playing violin in the choir. As I played, I began to enter more deeply into the celebration of the Mass, and my music became prayer. My love for Jesus deepened, and I developed a desire to grow in my love for the Eucharist. I am amazed at the gentleness of God as I reflect on how he used the gift of music to draw me to himself.

As my love for the Eucharist grew, my trust in God's guidance for my life deepened, and I began discerning a vocation to religious life with the Sisters of Notre Dame. Eucharistic adoration provided a time of silence in which I was able to listen to God. I became aware of God guiding my life through other people, and I responded to the opportunities presented to me. My prayer and listening in eucharistic adoration gave me the courage to say "yes" to God's call.

Receiving the Eucharist is life-giving for me. Frequent reception of the Eucharist reminds me that my life belongs to God and that his love and guidance are always with me. In the resurrection account in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus assures us of his presence and calls us to respond. Jesus says: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations . . ., teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age" (28:19-20). Yes, Jesus is with us, most especially in the Holy Eucharist. Let us never take for granted this precious gift and pray that our love for Jesus in the Eucharist ever deepens and that our adoration in this life prepares us for the eternal love of heaven.





When one has experienced heaven and the God of the Tabernacle, there is no other happiness, no other consolation here on earth. And you realize how much you are loved by the good Master!

*Eymard*  
S. J. S.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard  
letter to Mme d'Andigne Oct. 17 1861

