

Emmanuel



Eucharistic Spirituality

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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 122 Number 6



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FROM THE EDITOR

Sixteen and a half-years ago when Pope John Paul II canonized the Polish nun and mystic Maria Faustina Kowalska, Catholics everywhere began talking about Divine Mercy, and images of Christ with warm rays of light emanating from his outstretched arms appeared in churches and chapels around the world, as in her visions. I often thought to myself that it was as if *the church and the world had suddenly discovered mercy!*

It's understandable, I suppose. We live in an age when people often seek to supplement their experience of the church's liturgy and public prayer with a variety of private devotions.

As we near the end of this Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy on Christ the King, we might ask ourselves, what exactly is the net result of it all? Is it simply to be reminded of mercy and to allow it to enter again into our thinking and our theological language?

Pope Francis counters this perception in *Misericordiae Vultus*, where he writes: "We will entrust the life of the church, all humanity, and the entire cosmos to the Lordship of Christ, asking him to pour out his mercy upon us like the morning dew, so that everyone may work together to build a brighter future. How much I desire that the year . . . be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God!"

The key to the holy year, then, is not the discovery of mercy, but "that the year . . . *be steeped in mercy, so that we can go out to every man and woman, bringing the goodness and tenderness of God!*" And the Holy Father enumerates certain practical strategies for doing this.

I take away from this jubilee two powerful convictions. The first is about God. It is a heightened awareness that the fundamental

posture of God toward creation, and everyone in it, is one of mercy. God, the Lover, is absolutely extravagant in bestowing mercy, not distinguishing those who are “worthy” from those who are not, but lavishing it abundantly upon all. This is revealed especially in Jesus, “the face of mercy,” who was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and who died even for Judas and Peter, and for you and me.

The second is about us. If we wish to be truly *like* Jesus (and therefore *like* the Father), we must “suspend judgment” in approaching others and, instead, view them as God does, as fully deserving of our time, our patience, our ministry, our compassion. The Samaritan Woman at the Well (Jn 4:3-42) is a prime example of this. Everyone but Jesus regarded her with disdain; he saw her as a precious daughter of God and touched her deepest needs with unconditional love and acceptance.

Creation is hungry for such mercy. May the church be, as Pope Francis has prayed, the servant of mercy and the embodiment of it!

Starting in January

I am very pleased to announce that a team of three biblical and pastoral theologians, all associated with Catholic Theological Union in Chicago, will write our reflections on the Sunday readings during the year 2017. They are: Dianne Bergant, CSA, the Carroll Stuhlmueller, CP, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Old Testament Studies; John R. Barker, OFM, Assistant Professor of Old Testament Studies; and Barbara Shanahan, director of the Catholic Biblical Studies Program in the Diocese of Buffalo. We are deeply grateful to them for taking on this project for us.

At the same time, I thank Anthony Marshall, SSS, for writing the biblical reflections for the concluding three-year cycle. It’s a monumental task of about 180 columns over that span of time, and he has done admirably. Anthony is a young priest and preacher, and he loves the word of God and the church.

Blessings on your Advent and Christmas seasons!



Anthony Schueller, SSS



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Curates and Curators at the High Altar: How the New Clericalism Hurts Liturgical Renewal

by Michael E. DeSanctis

Pope Francis has called for an honest reexamination of clericalism in the church. This includes attitudes toward worship, the laity, and even the liturgical environment.

Michael E. DeSanctis is professor of fine arts and the director of the Honors Program at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania, with an interdisciplinary approach encompassing pastoral studies and theology. He writes extensively on church architecture and serves as a liturgical designer and consultant.

SAINT JUDE THE APOSTLE CHURCH IN ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA, OCCUPIES A SITE ONLY yards from the entrance of Presque Isle State Park, a sandy land mass in the shape of a French curve with a French name to boot, which is said to attract more visitors to its natural beauties annually than Yellowstone. Inescapable as part of one's approach to the park is the sight of the landmark church, its distinctive roof form rising to a summit-cross fashioned from steel I-beams of the sort that are synonymous with architectural construction in our time. The latter stands sentinel-like, sturdy and unbending against the harshest of Erie's notorious "lake effect" weather, a symbol of the durability of the Gospel, to be sure, but no less the strength of intent that prevailed among Saint Jude parishioners themselves over 40 years ago, as they erected a place of worship completely at home in the modern world.

Modernity was something the people of Saint Jude found neither foreign nor especially threatening but a condition of life as potent to the imaginations of prosperous, college-educated Catholics in post-World War II America as the ancient rites of their church. A distinctly modern ambience pervaded every inch of the shiny, suburban landscape they'd chosen to inhabit with their young families. It found its way into the designs of the spacious new homes for which they thanked God on Sunday mornings, in their new cars and appliances, the new leisure time activities they enjoyed — even in the new sets of social relationships they maintained while going about the business of living as fully committed Christians in an age of extraordinary technological advances.

The look of their parish campus, too, was altogether novel. Fixed at city's edge, amid the open expanses of strip plazas and fast-food restaurants,

the place bore little resemblance to the urban neighborhoods in which American Catholicism had thrived for generations. It was not, in any real sense, a destination to which its users *walked* but a kind of way station for car-loads of “commuter Catholics” eager to establish a parochial identity through brick and mortar as reflective of modern values as every other dimension of their lives. Hadn’t the bishops of Vatican II recently challenged them to be followers of Christ in “the world of *today*” (*Gaudiam et Spes*, 1) and restated in various ways the distinction made by Pope John XXIII himself between the essence of Catholic belief and the innumerable ways in which that belief is expressed? Likewise, hadn’t the council noted that alongside those forms of liturgical and artistic expression from the past should stand “the art of our own days” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 21, 123), a phrase Saint Jude parishioners took to mean any creative gesture possessing the lean, pared-to-the-bone aesthetic of High-Modernism?



Fig. 1 Interior view, Saint Jude the Apostle Church, Erie, Pennsylvania (Photo courtesy Michael E. DeSanctis)

So it was in 1970 that Saint Jude Parish set about constructing a Modern-styled place of worship on a centralized plan, its nave and sanctuary so fluidly connected as to form a single entity. Even as the building rose it seemed to embody the parish’s progressive spirit, along with a virtual canon of design developed over the course of decades by those architects associated with the international Liturgical Movement. The lineage of its underlying plan, for example, could be traced to the experimental churches of the 1920s and ‘30s conceived by the German architects Rudolf Schwarz and Dominikus Böhm, and their American counterpart Barry Byrne. Its interior details (fig. 1), which resembled more immediately aspects of Marcel Breuer’s famous abbey church for the Benedictine community of Collegeville, Minnesota, were being replicated in dozens of other construction projects concurrently underway in the burgeoning, suburban corners of Catholic dioceses across the United States. The designer of Saint Jude himself (Edward A. Kern, AIA, 1933-2005), a graduate of the



University of Notre Dame's then Department of Architecture, hoped to create a church in keeping with the disciplined reductionism generally espoused by his alma mater and widely publicized in the professional literature of the day.



Fig. 2 Aerial view, Saint Jude the Apostle Church (Photo courtesy Robert Tarkowski Photography)

In the end, the building's exterior form (fig. 2) would assume a tent-like appearance reminiscent of the fabric tabernacle marking the place of God's presence to ancient Israel. Described by the presiding bishop on the day of its dedication as "one of the most graceful houses of worship in our community," the building soon became a model for post-Vatican II church design throughout the Diocese of Erie. To the people of Saint Jude, however, it was simply an authentic expression of how they understood their place both in the church and in the world and a gesture of hospitality to the countless visitors expected to join them in worship, straight from the beaches and lagoons of Presque Isle. In the decades since, it has retained its local reputation as one of the first of a new crop of Catholic churches designed to allow lay and ordained worshipers to occupy a unified space symbolic of their own unity in Christ.

Upon arriving for weekend services several years ago, however, worshipers discovered the forward section of Saint Jude arrayed in floor candles, the handiwork of a newly-arrived pastor unaccustomed to so intimate a liturgical setting and anxious to distinguish more clearly his sacerdotal function within it. Acting on his own, the priest had positioned several candles at the threshold-step of the sanctuary's broad apron, an area never previously reserved for clergy by local rule or railing but open to any member of the assembly in the course of the liturgical action.

More puzzling to parishioners, still, was the multiplication of candles situated near the tabernacle, whose prominence within a reredos niche on the setting's primary axis had previously been considered sufficient. The object was now offset not only by a requisite sanctuary lamp but by twin table candles at its doors and a pair of nearby candlesticks tall enough to bracket its form. As it turned out, these were the first of several changes the priest would make to Saint Jude for the stated purpose of converting the structure "from an auditorium into something that look[ed] like a real church."

Further alterations to Saint Jude have come at the hands of an even more recent pastor, whose announced plans for interior improvements turned out to be a pretext for cladding the sanctuary steps and floor surface in marble veneers. In this instance, too, the surprise to parishioners stemmed as much from ignorance of the priest's true intentions as from the resulting intrusion into their liturgical home of highly polished and variegated elements that, amid surroundings characterized by a quiet dignity, seemed to shout aloud, "Look at me!"

As suggested by a survey of trends in American Catholic church-building I prepared not long ago for *America* magazine ("Upon This Foundation: New Traditional Churches," May 28, 2012), a "Look at me!" attitude and fussy territoriality are what show through most plainly nowadays in the physical changes being made to places like Saint Jude Church by a wave of priests intent on undoing the achievements of their immediate predecessors, a generation or two of men animated by the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council. The latter spent decades in parish settings vesting laypeople in their role as full partakers in the solemn rites of the church and tackling church construction and renovation projects designed to support this end.

Vatican II vested laypeople in their role as full partakers in the solemn rites of the church.

There was something exhilarating about the work, these men insist, and a common conviction that their priesthood was enlarged precisely by the degree to which they welcomed committed laymen and laywomen into the once-rarified confines of the sanctuary. Indeed, the comment one often heard from pastors soon after the council as they went about removing from churches the physical



boundaries between clergy and laity was that they merely wanted to be closer to their people. Short of transforming the physical fabric of the sacred places in their custody, many simply used the homily, the sign of peace, or the recessional prescribed by the *Novus Ordo* as opportunities to flee the gated community of the presbyterate for the marvel of the pews. It was enough to compel such men to roll up their sleeves for the sake of good worship and weigh into the task of making liturgy an act of spiritual engagement for all members of the assembly, one celebration of the Eucharist at a time.

Seldom did one encounter among the clergy, as one does increasingly today, idle chatter about consecrated hands being fitted better to “chalices than calluses” or speculation on the extent to which a priest’s individual identity should evaporate while presiding at Mass to make room for some sullen, stiff-as-an-icon *persona Christi*. For men called to renewal by jolly Saint John XXIII and assured by his brother saint, John Paul II, that *every* Christian stands *alter Christus* by reason of baptism, pondering at length the supposed ontological chasm separating them from the laity would have seemed laughable. The people of God needed tending along with patient instruction on the art entailed not only in such minor ritual gestures as, say, “bringing up the gifts,” but in presenting *themselves* as gifts at the very altars they once deemed unapproachable. It was piety that most consumed the ranks of self-declared “VCI” priests, not polity, nor the fear afflicting today’s “JPII’ers” that any reduction in the architectural trappings unique to their station suggests some measure of personal diminution.

Given that even priests-in-training today can be known to speak dismissively of Vatican II and express support for the “reforming of the reform” that proceeds in some ecclesiastical circles under the residual momentum of Benedict XVI’s pontificate, we shouldn’t be surprised to find many of the newly-ordained staking out corners of *terra sacerdotalis* in the places where they preside. The truth is that many younger men attracted to the priesthood seem genuinely adverse to the *leōs* of liturgy’s historical origins and familiar only with the canonical rules for rendering the details of its *ourgia* as accurately as possible.

One could argue, in fact, that a kind of ritualized asociality attracts many of them to the deep and dark sanctuaries that were once mainstays of Catholic architecture, despite their claims of wanting primarily to restore the grandeur that marked places of worship before, as one

neo-traditionalist pastor puts it, “the council made us turn them into airplane hangars and Pizza Huts.” When young priests today confess to not being “people persons,” they confirm a recent British study published in *Pastoral Psychology* magazine that identifies nearly 60% of Catholic clergy in the United States as “introverts.” Those who are not may hope to dodge the open season on priests that has resulted from the Catholic Church’s sex abuse scandals by treating their place at the altar as part of a “disappearing act,” literally a chance to hide in plain sight within a confection of “Look at me!” vestments and sanctuary décor that redirects the attention of lay onlookers from themselves.

Though it’s beyond the scope of this essay to explain why today’s priests so often adopt a liturgical manner tinged with escapism, my hunch is that many find the tidy, unencumbered rapport between man and mensa available through, say, an old-fashioned “private Mass” or some fiddleback-toward-the-baptized variation on the Tridentine Mass less emotionally demanding than the task of moderating the spontaneous dialogue between God and God’s people popularized in parishes over the last half-century.

A type of “spiritual worldliness” poses a great danger when pastors disengage themselves from the real lives and difficulties of the people of God and view the church exclusively “from above and afar.”

The gulf between ordained and lay members of a parish is never wider, I would argue, than when changes are made to a place of worship in the heavy-handed manner described at the outset of this essay. Members of one Catholic community who moved into a brand-new church less than a decade ago, for example, were dismayed recently not to have had a say in their pastor’s decision to attach a large, rectangular tabletop to the square-bodied altar that stands in their midst. The object now possesses a more traditional profile and the ability to accommodate the rare concelebration of priests, but the understated elegance of its original form and detailing are gone for good. Gone, too, since the pastor directed that holy water stoups be affixed to the processional doors of their church, is any incentive for parishioners to bless themselves directly from the baptismal font nearby, an intended feature of the elaborate entrance sequencing worked out by the building’s architects.



At another parish where I once served as a design consultant, the pastor chose Holy Thursday as the occasion for consigning to a dumpster whole sections of the custom grillwork installed in the 1990s to distinguish the liturgical heart of his church from its Blessed Sacrament chapel. The goal here, presumably, was to increase the prominence of the tabernacle during celebrations of the Eucharist. “It’s like the importance of what we’re doing together at the altar doesn’t matter anymore,” a choir director from yet another parish lamented to me not long ago. “Everything’s about the priest again, or ‘the loss of the sacred,’ or making things look old-fashioned again,” she added, having wrestled with a young pastor committed to “de-renovating” his church for the sake of retrieving the hierarchical ordering of its parts prior to Vatican II.

The musician’s words could apply just as easily to what members of one cathedral parish experienced recently when a newly-installed bishop gave their previously-updated place of worship a thoroughly traditionalist working-over, complete with enough autobiographical references to make the structure truly feel like his own. Restoration experts were engaged to supervise every aspect of the project, which included fabrication of a *cathedra* mimicking the chair in the historic Roman basilica where the bishop first celebrated Mass as a priest. Over this was introduced an imposing *canopeum* carried on faux-marble columns along with ceiling ornamentation that looked as if it, too, had been lifted directly from some ancient European source of personal significance to the bishop.

Certainly, no one would begrudge an ordinary his right to a symbolic church of reasonable beauty and comfort or cheat him of the chance to display within it a gallery-grade souvenir or two of the career that secured his place within the episcopate in the first place. Even so, one wonders whether there isn’t inherent in this example an element of the very institutionalized pedantry passed off as tradition-keeping that has been the temptation of prelates and the burden of laypeople for centuries — something akin to the situation made plain recently when a handful of churchmen reworked the Roman Missal on the premise that what English-speaking Catholics most needed to escape the general banality of their lives was a dose of formal, antique-sounding prose. So rich in objects and outfits and occasions of a certain quality is the realm of the clergy, perhaps, that many of its members simply can’t help but confuse their fundamental roles as curates of the church for something more narrowly *curatorial* and the churches they inhabit

as showcases for the alluring outer finery of sacramental prayer.

My aim here is not to suggest that we disregard the church's great legacy of artistic achievement or to propose that the Catholic sanctuary be made the arena for a liturgical free-for-all in which priests and laypeople might trade roles indiscriminately. I am well aware, in fact, that my dismay over the manner in which parish churches across the country are sporadically undergoing reversion to a pre-Vatican II appearance sounds remarkably like the complaints we've heard for years from those opposed to the dismantling of Catholic tradition by the council's most zealous proponents: "They scrapped the Latin and pried out the altar rails without asking, then wonder why we're angry and confused!"

The appearance of Pope Francis' *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), however, provides an opportunity for participants from all sides in Catholicism's perennial liturgy wars to judge whether they haven't adopted what is essentially a connoisseur's affinity for the externals of ritual and thereby reduced the church itself to a kind of "museum piece" (95). Catholics of any stripe, both lay and ordained, can certainly succumb to what the pope calls "ostentatious preoccupation [with] the liturgy" (95), which might be interpreted to mean a fastidiousness about every aspect of ritualized prayer except the degree to which its attraction transcends aesthetics. The pope makes clear that this type of "spiritual worldliness" (93-97) poses greatest danger to pastors, however, who disengage themselves from "the real lives and difficulties of [the people of God]" (96) by viewing the church exclusively "from above and afar" (97).

Prayer arises from a deeper, less self-conscious part of the human psyche than art. It has the expansive tendencies of sound waves or the affairs of the human heart, of love itself, and their perdurance too.

So great a concern to Francis is the estrangement of pastors from their flocks that he revisits the issue in his now-famous Christmas address to the Roman Curia of 2014, a statement that leads one to wonder whether the changes being witnessed lately in American Catholic church architecture aren't symptomatic of the need on the part of some pastors literally "to build walls and routines around themselves" or to reverence "idols" of their own making (6).



The “hoarding” of worldly possessions (13), too, of which Francis speaks, may be judged to play a part in the way our sanctuaries are at times becoming once more great showplaces of material luxury largely benefitting the clergy. As I learned while serving a parish whose sanctuary space had been filled with artifacts resurrected from the church basement, a rectory need not be the only location at the clergy’s disposal to double as exhibit space for precious collectibles. The sacred clutter that attaches to hoarder-priests, often with a bias toward the antique or the grandiose, appears to do much to assuage the *horror vacui* underlying their affliction. It takes its most benign and popularly-acceptable form, for example, in the over-the-top displays of phony firs and quick-assembly lights that obscure even the altars in some parishes during the Christmas season or the acres of potted lilies, garden statuary, rock formations, and trickling fountains that accompany the Eastertide.

Likewise, it goes unmentioned or is treated as proper routine in those cases involving priests who demand to be provided liturgical vesture and vessels only of the finest quality — not, presumably, because God makes note of such things but because the clergy from a neighboring parish might. What Pope Francis describes as clerical “rivalry and vainglory” (2014 Christmas Message, 11) of this sort was at least partly responsible for the decision made by one pastor with whom I’m familiar to acquire a presider’s chair for his church of exceptionally fine construction. Of no surprise to anyone familiar with the chair’s manufacturer was its cost to the parish, though its outward form bore no stylistic connection to the sanctuary in which it was intended to stand. In the end, the chair’s intrinsic beauty was lost on those unable to appreciate it except from a distance, and its presence in their church was taken more as an expression of priestly one-upmanship than as a serious gesture toward communal worship.

There is nothing in Francis’ recent exhortations that the pope hasn’t already made the church ponder while watching him maneuver the streets of Rome or the host of secular venues in which his admiring followers attest to encountering something unmistakably sacral. Through his much-publicized aversion to “popemobiles” and papal lodging, the pope has demonstrated that the priesthood need not be lived out in luxurious isolation from the great preponderance of souls trying to find their way in the world. Neither need it assume the quasi-corporate image popular with chancery types nor other ecclesial office-holders, which suggests that even Christ preferred French cuffs

while attending to his earthly affairs.

Likewise, Francis' habit in ceremonial settings of straying from prepared texts and the stage directions of his Vatican handlers reminds us that prayer cannot claim the degree of formality required of art, even in a church that weds the two to the point of indistinguishability. Prayer arises from a deeper, less self-conscious part of the human psyche than art, and isn't nearly as comfortable with the kind of artifice that is the domain of painters, actors, and musicians. Prayer has the expansive tendencies of sound waves or the affairs of the human heart, of love itself, and their perdurance too.

In the West, at least, art asks to be "set apart," held at arm's length or wedged into framing elements intended to distinguish it from life's more fleeting attractions. The prayer of the church, however, can no more be contained or controlled in its heavenward assent than the incense by which it is given substance, despite the efforts of custodial-minded clerics and others fearful of it becoming too unwieldy a thing. Even when dressed up most smartly as sacrament, the church's prayer cannot help but spill out from the tailored contours in which we imagine it captive, including those we've looked historically to architecture to provide.

Such abstractions, unfortunately, seem not to figure prominently in the guidelines for sacred worship and art from parish rectories or church offices these days. What reigns instead is an almost singular concern with shooing laypeople away from sacrificial altars and back to their pews, after seeming to let them run riot in the House of God for decades with their so-called "ministries" and claims of "baptismal priesthood."

According to several prominent priest-commentators, in fact, it's time to let the faithful in on the secret that the *participatio actuosa* offered them by Vatican II (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14) never implied close, bodily involvement in the liturgical performance of priests at all, but only an enhanced version of mental telepathy between nave and sanctuary perfectly achievable from one's seat. In short, the argument goes, we need to get back to celebrating thanksgiving in our churches in the way we Americans have long observed November's secular feast in our homes: parental figures ensconced in the Irish linen and fine China of the dining room, children consigned to a side table or the kitchen to fiddle with paper and plastic. The architectural means



for achieving such a division are obvious and amount mostly to refitting our places of worship with various boundary-markers for lay and clerical precincts that were swept from the scene after Vatican II.

How any of this squares with the message of even *greater* cooperation between clergy and laity now emerging from Rome is a mystery. Less so is Pope Francis' impatience with a clerical culture determined to preserve every outward sign of its privileged place. Indeed, with the kind of impish irreverence for saintly decorum that possesses young boys, old men, and a great many saints, Francis is doing his best to track the dust of the world into the tidy sphere of the clergy. How else to move the church's ordained ministers beyond self-absorption into true relationship with the entire, unwashed people of God?

One only hopes that a local version of the same might play out in parishes throughout the United States and beyond — with no need for imported soil or even a trace of beach sand to aid the effort — and that priests of all ages and liturgical persuasions would begin to regard their “workplace” less a refuge from the lay faithful in their charge than the very point of entry into fuller union with them whenever the church gives voice to its prayer.





EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Sacraments as Symbolic Encounters with God

by Robert J. Nogosek, CSC

What does the placement of the altar reveal about the sacramental theology of Vatican II?

THE MOST DRAMATIC CHANGE IN SUNDAY WORSHIP EXPRESSING THE LITURGICAL renewal of Vatican II was having a free-standing altar, with the priest facing the people, instead of turning his back to them while performing the sacred rite of the Eucharist on an altar constructed like a shelf in front of the tabernacle.

In order for us to be fully at home in this conciliar reform of the sacramental rites that began already in the 1960s, we needed a new systematic theology of the sacraments such as only became available years later in such works as Edward J. Kilmartin's *Christian Liturgy*, published in 1988, and Louis-Marie Chauvet's *Symbol and Sacrament*, published in English in 1995, even though available 20 years earlier in French. Rather than analyzing a sacrament as "an outward sign instituted by Christ to give grace," this new theology described the sacraments as *symbolic encounters with God as Blessed Trinity through acts of the church as prayer of the risen Jesus Christ*. The unpacking of this summary of the new theology of the sacraments involves the three following steps: 1. Symbolic Encounters with God; 2. With God as Blessed Trinity; and 3. Acts of the Church as Prayer of the Risen Jesus Christ.

Holy Cross Father Robert J. Nogosek, a frequent contributor to *Emmanuel*, has taught and written extensively on many subjects in a distinguished career as an academic and author.

Symbolic Encounters with God

After Saint Augustine had defined sacraments as *holy signs of saving grace*, the Western theology of the Middle Ages correctly took this to mean that the words and gestures of a sacramental rite signify the divine grace received through that rite. This theology of the sacraments, however, then went on to ask how the sign itself could be an *instrument* causing the grace; and in answer proposed the theory that the sacred sign represents an intention in the mind of Jesus



Christ which he expresses through the sacramental rite as a means of sharing with us his “grace of union,” which as a “holy anointing” harmonized his humanity with his being the Son of God.

This source of grace seemed suggested by John 1:16: “From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.” Thus, according to this pre-Vatican II theology, the outward sign expressed by the ritual indicates the idea Jesus Christ has of the effect of sacramental grace he intends to confer on the recipient from and through his sacred humanity. This intention was likened originally to that of a craftsman shaping a thing being crafted, and centuries later even to that of a golfer hitting a golf ball so it would land on the green.

Although this was seen as the way in his public life Jesus of Nazareth had performed such mighty works as healing lepers, calming a storm, and even raising the dead, now in his heavenly life Jesus Christ intends through the sacraments to apply to properly-disposed recipients the saving gift he merited by his redemptive act. This explanation of the outward sign of the sacramental rite as an “instrumental cause” of grace through the mental intention of the risen Jesus has served the church well, both for showing the need to receive grace through receiving sacraments and for identifying the purpose of each sacrament in order properly to dispose the recipients.

The saving grace specific to each sacrament is indicated by the outward sign of ritual words and gestures used by the minister, who intends “to do what the church does.” The ritual action of the minister provides Jesus Christ with the words and gestures indicating the effect of the saving grace intended, and thereby those words and gestures become that of Jesus Christ himself.

In the new sacramental theology, however, the sacramental rites are designated not as signs but as symbols, with the term “sign” representing the idea of the effect of sacramental grace as a sacred thing, or *res*, and “symbol” representing the language of self-communication characteristic of a personal encounter for creating or renewing a communion of persons. The sacramental encounter begins with God’s self-communication, as an “I” addressing the recipient as a beloved “thou,” and presenting a personal sharing of self as a gift that is both gratuitous and gracious.

It is gratuitous in not being owed to the recipient, and gracious by its

implicit invitation that the recipient not only recognize and welcome God's self-communication as a gift, but also reciprocate by a similar gift of self in order to establish a personal communion of shared life with God through mutual self-bestowal. The sacramental rite will thus involve a covenantal action initiating or renewing a mutual commitment of God and the recipient to belong to each other.

This personalist interpretation of sacramental rites makes it appropriate for the altar of eucharistic sacrifice to be located between the presiding priest and the gathered assembly so that the altar represent not only the self-sacrifice offered to and for the recipients on the part of the crucified and risen Christ, but also the response of self-sacrifice by the assembled followers of Christ. Both sacrifices as acts of self-bestowal are to be placed on the same altar and merged into one same sacrifice through the priestly act of Jesus Christ offering the self-sacrifice of the faithful as included in his own redeeming sacrifice. Thereby it is made the combined sacrifice of both the head and the members of the church.

As Eternal High Priest, the risen Jesus acts through his presence in the gathering of the members of the church, as promised in Matthew 18:19f: "Amen, amen, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Vatican II referred to this text in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), 7. As a result, it is also appropriate for the ordained priest to face the assembly because of his pastoral responsibility to gather the assembly into one body for their active participation in the ritual of worship, in accordance with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 11, that "when the liturgy is celebrated, more is required than the mere observation of the laws governing valid and licit celebrations;" it is also the priest's duty "to ensure that the faithful take part knowingly, actively, and fruitfully." The priest "presides" in order that the assembled church "celebrates" the Eucharist.

With God as Blessed Trinity

This explanation of sacramental rites as symbolic encounters with God recognizes that the faithful, as living in space and time, can only offer a part of themselves in self-gift, whereas God's own self-



gift involves the gift of all that God is, namely, as the Blessed Trinity. The divine gift of self, as unlimited, involves the unbegotten Father offering himself to us through the missions of his divine Son and the Holy Spirit. Consequently, the sacramental rites need to express not only the action of Jesus Christ as Son of God (as the pre-Vatican II theology stressed), but also that of the Holy Spirit (which the pre-Vatican II theology neglected).

The New Testament had stated that the mission of the Holy Spirit in human history was conveyed by Jesus to his followers by reason of his resurrection. In his conversation with the woman at the well, Jesus, in John 4:10, had referred to "the gift of God" that he could grant to others. In John 7:39, however, we are told that this gift was not given until Jesus was glorified. In 1 John 1:3, this same gift is identified with the personal communion in life, light, and love of the Father and his divine Son that is now shared with believers and unites them intimately both with God and with one another.

The sacramental theology of Vatican II describes sacraments as "symbolic encounters with God as Blessed Trinity through acts of the church as prayer of the risen Jesus Christ."

To explain how the resurrection from the dead enabled Jesus Christ to extend the procession of the Holy Spirit into the mission of the indwelling Spirit to his followers, the new theology suggests that by entering into eternity, the grace of union in the human soul of Jesus was so transformed that his human self-gift to the Father completely coincided with his divine self-bestowal to the Father within their Trinitarian life. Since the procession of the Holy Spirit is identified with the mutual self-bestowal between God the Father and God the Son, the self-bestowal of the glorified Christ in loving his followers will convey to them the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

To receive the self-bestowal of the risen Jesus is to receive the Holy Spirit, and coincides with the proclamation of John the Baptist that "he will baptize you with the holy spirit" (Mk 1:8). The new theology of sacraments as symbolic encounters with God indicates that this sharing of the Trinitarian communion with believers is brought about through sacramental rites.

The pre-Vatican II theology had distinguished the sacraments by

describing the “sacramental grace” conveyed through the sacramental rite as “a created grace” for healing and sanctifying recipients, rather than as the “uncreated grace” for gifting the recipients with the Holy Spirit. The created grace effected by the sacraments was termed “habitual grace” as likened to the habitual disposition of a virtue affecting our humanity, but the actual attainment of friendship with God seems to have been left to our own subsequent initiative.

In the new theology based on the Vatican II reform of the liturgy, however, friendship with God as a communion of persons is brought about by the sacramental rite itself through conferring the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Thereby, as church, we become “the temple of God” (1 Cor 3:17) in accord with *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 2, which says: “Day by day the liturgy builds up those within the church into the Lord’s holy temple. . . .” Even though the pre-Vatican II theology may well have recognized that this personal communion with God was the ultimate purpose of all the sacraments, it sidelined the sacramental effect of uncreated grace as not serving to distinguish one sacrament from another through a sacrament’s outward sign representing Christ’s intention.

The sacramental encounter begins with God’s self-communication, as an “I” addressing the recipient as a beloved “thou.”

In following the liturgical reform of Vatican II, the new sacramental theology insists that the source of sacramental grace is “the paschal mystery,” which is intended to include both the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because the pre-Vatican II theology had seen the redemption to be merited by an act of Jesus in time and space, it could not include his resurrection as meritorious because it occurred beyond time and space. By using the term “paschal mystery,” the new theology is able to return to the biblical and patristic tradition that includes the resurrection in the redemptive act, and thereby be in accord with Paul’s statement in his letter to the Romans that God’s Son had been “handed over for our transgressions and . . . raised from the dead for our justification” (4:25).

Other statements in the New Testament refer to the resurrection of Jesus as his “exaltation” by his completing the paschal mystery through his ascension and consequent enthronement as Messiah beside God the Father. Thereby, the risen Jesus became the Lord of



history and was empowered in a royal priesthood, such that as head of the church he conveys the Holy Spirit into space and time that those adopted as sons and daughters of God may participate in the Trinitarian communion of Father and Son.

Acts of the Church as Prayer of the Risen Jesus Christ

All this leads to recognizing that sacramental acts are acts of the church as an extension of the action of the Blessed Trinity in establishing the church through the mission of the Holy Spirit. This also makes it appropriate to locate the altar between priest and people in the eucharistic rite in order to recognize that sacramental rites are fundamental acts of the church, a truth that had been neglected in the pre-Vatican II theology through its description of sacramental rites as performed by individual ministers of Christ rather than by the church assembled as the body of Christ.

The central location of the altar also represents that the church assembly itself is the intended recipient of the Eucharist to enable it being formed into the body of Christ as the temple of God. Since the intended recipients of the other six sacraments are individual members of the church, it is appropriate that these other sacraments as acts of the church be administered within the eucharistic celebration, with the sole exception of the sacrament of reconciliation as designed to restore peace with God to individuals through a sacramental rite restoring peace with the church.

As Eternal High Priest, the risen Jesus acts through his presence in the gathering of the members of the church.

This recognition that sacraments are acts of the church offers a new way to understand how the sacramental rites effect grace *ex opere operato* (by the rite itself), namely, by the rite being the intercessory prayer of the risen Jesus as seated on the right hand of the throne of God. This follows from the promise of Jesus at the Last Supper that after he returns to the Father whatever they ask in his name he will do "so the Father may be glorified in the Son" (Jn 14:13). Because the pre-Vatican II theology had attributed the effect of *ex opere operato* to the way Jesus in his public life seemed to have performed his mighty works, namely, through his divine authority as the incarnate Son of God, the liturgy had tended to employ declarative statements in the

sacramental formulas as designating the actual words and gestures of Jesus Christ.

Now, however, the new theology has replaced this explanation with that of the intercessory prayer of the risen Jesus as Eternal High Priest in accordance with Hebrews 7:25 that “he is always able to save those who approach God through him, since he lives forever to make intercession for them.” As a consequence, the liturgy since Vatican II tends to formulate sacramental rites as invocations rather than declarations.

We see this exemplified in the reformulated Eucharistic Prayers through their emphasis on the invocation, or *epiclesis*, that precedes the consecratory words of institution and petitions the sending of the Holy Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ. It is to be noted that the subsequent words of institution as the “consecration” are addressed to the Father to recall what Jesus did at the Last Supper rather than represent the declarative pronouncement of Jesus Christ here and now in the sacramental formula.

This suggests that wherever the formulas of other sacraments contain declarative or indicative statements, these statements also should be understood as addressed to the Father for representing our faith that, as the prayer of the assembled church in the name of the risen Jesus as Eternal High Priest, that which is requested in the sacramental rite will be granted by the heavenly Father. This argues for the presiding minister to put his heart into the words and gestures as prayer addressed to the heavenly Father in the name of Jesus as “living and reigning with the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit,” rather than simply perform the ritual as the hands and voice of Jesus Christ. It also suggests we reject any tendency to think of ordination as empowering a priest such that even outside the context of the church’s liturgical worship, he could transform any bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

Conclusion

For us to become completely at home with the liturgical renewal of Vatican II, more may be needed than this personalist theory of sacramental rites. This is because its language of personal encounter clashes with the dominant outlook of our scientific and technological culture. That outlook tends to objectify whatever is outside us as an object, or “it,” to be observed and even controlled rather than be




lovingly welcomed as the revelatory gift of a “thou.”

As Chauvet took pains to demonstrate, this objectifying outlook, typical of individualism and fostered by the Enlightenment initiating our modern age, has intensified a tendency already within the theology of the sacraments inherited from the Middle Ages that we think of sacramental grace as a “thing” placed under our control as created grace, rather than as being drawn into a state of personal friendship with God through the uncreated grace of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As a consequence, for us to feel completely engaged in celebrating a sacrament as a personal encounter with God we may need to become “I-Thou” persons rather than remain contemporary “I-it” individuals.

The central location of the altar represents that the assembly itself is the intended recipient of the Eucharist to enable it being formed into the body of Christ as the temple of God

Such a fundamental change in outlook could be aided by taking to heart Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) in its description of faith as a personal encounter with God rather than as an act of obedience to the authority of God in revealing truths of salvation. *Dei Verbum* describes the object of Christian faith as God’s self-disclosure through the person of Jesus Christ. Although this results in our faith involving a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, it needs to go beyond the evangelical acceptance of Jesus as our friend and “personal Savior.” We also are to respect the awesome majesty of the risen Jesus as Eternal High Priest, who, as head of the church, shares with us as members of his body the gift of the indwelling Holy Spirit. This bonds us not only with him as our personal friend, but also with his other followers with whom we are to form a Christian community participating in the life of the church.

According to Vatican II’s Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (*Lumen Gentium*), number 1, this life of the church will involve forming ourselves to be “a kind of sacrament or sign of intimate union with God, and of the unity of all mankind, (and) . . . also an instrument for the achievement of such union and unity.” Thereby we will understand the reason for the invocation after the eucharistic consecration that all who participate in this sacrament may be gathered into one by the Holy Spirit. 



EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Karl Adam on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

Karl Adam's teachings greatly influenced Vatican II, bringing together a rich variety of insights into the church, its relationship to Christ, its mission, and its liturgy and sacraments.

KARL ADAM (1876-1966) WAS ONE OF THE GREAT CATHOLIC THINKERS OF the twentieth century. Born in Bavaria to a large Catholic family, he received his early education at Amburg, studied philosophy and theology at Regensburg, was ordained a priest in 1900, and took his doctorate in theology at the University of Munich in 1904. After a few years in a parish, he was allowed to focus on scholarly interests and a career in the academy. He became a professor at the University of Munich in 1915, assumed the chair of moral theology at the University of Strasbourg in 1917, and took over the chair of dogmatic theology the University of Tübingen in 1919.¹

An expert in historical and systematic theology, Adam was especially noted for his lectures on the church and his knowledge of the theology of Augustine and the church fathers. In the years leading up to the Second World War, he initially (and somewhat naively) tried to reconcile his Catholicism with National Socialism, but eventually criticized the Nazi party's heavy-handed tactics and its endorsement of neo-pagan worship and practices. Heavily influenced by the German neo-romantic tradition, he is best remembered for books such as *The Spirit of Catholicism* (1924), *Christ Our Brother* (1927), and *The Son of God* (1933). His thinking influenced a generation of Catholic scholars and had an impact on the proceedings of the Second Vatican Council, especially in its emphasis on the church as *communio*. His teaching on the Eucharist flows from this organic theological vision of the church as community.²

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The Spirit of Catholicism

Adam's theological and spiritual outlook shines through most clearly in *The Spirit of Catholicism*, an influential work that has been translated into several languages and often reprinted in English.³ Acclaimed as one of the best introductions to the Catholic faith of its day, the book aims "to provide a calm, dispassionate, clearly written consideration of the fundamental concepts of the Catholic faith which would explain to all, Catholic and non-Catholic alike, exactly what the Catholic Church is."⁴

In the book, Adam seeks to capture the essence of the diverse yet unified reality known as Catholicism. He points out that Catholicism, in its very heart, affirms the existence of an intimate union that exists between Christ and his church. This bond reflects the Pauline mystery of the body of Christ and permeates every aspect of Catholicism's dogmatic and moral teaching, as well as its life of worship. The church's dogmatic theology centers on Christ; her moral teaching seeks to transform believers and make them like Christ; she conducts her worship through, with, and in Christ.

The church, according to Adam, is a visible and invisible community of believers. This idea of community is fundamental to the church's self-understanding and expression. Like a body, the church is a unified organism with different functions differentiated among its various members. The authority of the church's hierarchy flows from this underlying unity and is a service to it.⁵

Catholicism has its roots in the affirmation of the intimate relationship between God, Christ, and his church. Christianity is "more than a system of thought," but "a living stream of divine life flowing out from Christ and bearing his truth and his life, pure and uncontaminated, down the centuries."⁶ The church is a living organism that mediates this life to the world in a visible way through her sacramental life and mission. Its organic life is both visible and invisible with a hierarchical structure that insures the purity of the faith and a sacramental system offering visible signs of invisible grace. The church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. It is a union of believers at various stages in their journey into God and the fullness of life. Mary, the mother of the church, holds a special place in this community, because she is the first to experience the fullness of her son's redemptive mission.⁷

Adam goes on to describe the church's vital role in the process of

salvation. Christ's body exists for one reason and one reason alone: to sanctify humanity by carrying out its missionary mandate of going forth and making disciples of all nations. It sanctifies by the power of the Holy Spirit in virtue of the creative power of the Father and the redemptive love of the Son. By proclaiming God's word and celebrating the sacraments, it immerses those it reaches in Christ's paschal mystery.

For this reason, all true Christians are oriented toward the church and their invisible union with it must some day become a visible union. In this respect, the church has an important educative task to lead the human family to God through her teaching and moral discipline. Its sacramental action is the primary way by which it fosters the spread of the Gospel and continues Christ's redemptive action in the world.⁸

Adam admits that a gap exists between the vision the church seeks to embody and its lived historical reality.⁹ He recognizes certain tensions existing between theology and divine mystery, authority and freedom, liturgical formalism and personal piety. Because of these tensions, the need for the incarnation becomes ever clearer, since through it (and only through it) will humanity ever find its way to God. This mystery extends far beyond the Word becoming flesh in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. If Jesus is "the way and the truth and the light,"¹⁰ the Eucharist is the continuation of the incarnational principle through time and the way God has chosen to continue his redemptive and sanctifying mission in the world. As Saint Athanasius reminds us, "God became human so that humanity might become divine."¹¹ By becoming the very food we eat, God promises to transform humanity by the divinizing power of Christ's redemptive grace.

Adam's Teaching on the Eucharist

Adam's teaching on the Eucharist flows from his sacramental understanding of the church and its sanctifying mission.¹² "The sacraments," he maintains, "breathe the very spirit of primitive Christianity" and "are the truest expression and result of that original and central Christian belief that the Christian should be inseparably united with Christ and should live in Christ."¹³ Through Catholic sacramental practice and piety, "Christ is faithfully affirmed and experienced as the Lord of the community, as its invisible strength and principle of activity."¹⁴ For him, the sacraments express "the fundamental nature of the church, the fact that Christ lives in her."¹⁵



For Adam, “there is no sanctity in the church which is not sacramental, and there is no sacramental act which is not at the same time a striving for sanctity.”¹⁶ The seven sacraments embrace all of human life and make every aspect of it holy: “The soul at peace with God is sanctified in confirmation and Holy Eucharist; the soul burdened with sin in baptism and penance; the afflicted soul, in the awful hour of death, in the last anointing. The community life is also sanctified by the sacramental blessing: on its social side by the sacrament of matrimony, on its religious side by the sacrament of holy orders.”¹⁷

Adam goes on to describe the sacramental realism at the heart of the church’s life and mission: “It is before all else the realism of its sacramental thought which give the sacramental worship of the church its religious and moral value. The church does not attenuate the sacrament into an empty symbol, or into a sign of grace which obtains all its efficacy from subjective faith.”¹⁸ The sacraments are thus “a real expression of our Lord’s gracious will, a sign of Christ (*signum Christi*), and as such it already ensures the presence of his grace through itself, through its actual performance.”¹⁹ He highlights here an underlying truth of Catholic sacramental doctrine: “A sacrament is not fulfilled by the fact that one believes in it, but by the fact that it is performed.”²⁰

According to Adam, the Pauline mystery of the body of Christ permeates every aspect of Catholicism’s dogmatic and moral teaching, as well as its life of worship.

For Adam, “the Sacrament of the Altar is the strongest, profoundest, most intimate memorial of the Lord, until he comes again. And therefore we can never forget Jesus, though the centuries and millennia pass, and though nations and civilizations are ever perishing and rising anew.”²¹ As a result, “there is no heart in the world, not even the heart of father or mother, that is so loved by millions and millions, so truly and loyally, so practically and devotedly, as is the heart of Jesus.”²² He understands “that in the sacraments, and especially in the Sacrament of the Altar, the fundamental idea of the church is most plainly represented, the idea, that is, of the incorporation of the faithful in Christ.”²³

Adam also highlights the beauty of the Eucharist and the way it inspires creative and artistic endeavors: “The life and activity of the

church are irradiated with innocent joy, serene brightness, devout gladness. The source of all this devout happiness is the tabernacle, belief in the beneficent presence of eternal Love."²⁴ Catholic churches, by their very nature, are eucharistic in orientation: "They have sprung from a living faith in the sacramental presence of our Lord. And where this faith has departed, they lose their deepest meaning and are left without the idea which created and inspired them. They are beautiful but dead, bodies without a soul."²⁵

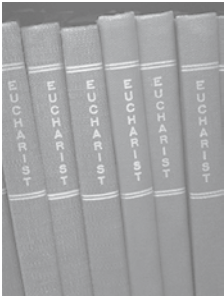
The church, for Adam, is the living mystical body of Christ; the Eucharist, the transforming, nourishing food that feeds its members with the life-giving body and blood of its Divine Master. As such, "the Mass is never an individual act, but always essentially a community act."²⁶ This is true not merely in the sense that the whole community should take part in it, but also and emphatically in the sense that participation in the one bread gives the community its true cohesion and unity, and builds it up into the supernatural organism of the body of Christ in which form it is presented to the Father by the hand of the Divine High Priest."²⁷

This communal dimension of the Eucharist lies at its very heart and forms the basis of the church's identity: "The ultimate meaning of Holy Communion is not union with the uncreated Word, with the pure Godhead, as some ancient Greek theologians erroneously held; nor is it more than a half-truth to say that its meaning is union with the living Christ. The full truth is that it is union with Christ and through Christ with all his members, in whom, in mysterious yet real manner, he achieves his fullness. The Eucharist is not the sacrament of the personal Christ alone; it is also at the same time and for that very reason the sacrament of the mystical Christ. It is a community thing, through and through."²⁸ In this respect, the Eucharist lies at the very heart of the church — and vice versa.

Observations

Although these insights do not exhaust the richness of Adam's teaching on the Eucharist, they provide a general sketch of its main contours and invite careful scrutiny. The following observations seek to bring out some of the ramifications of his teaching with special emphasis on their relevance for the church today.

1. To begin with, Adam is a sacramental realist who sees the Eucharist not merely as a sign or symbol pointing to a transcendent



spiritual reality, but a continuation of the incarnational principal by which the Word of God became human in the person of Jesus and now divinizes our humanity by means of his eucharistic body and blood. Here, Adam echoes the traditional eucharistic teaching of the church with its threefold emphasis on the Eucharist as presence, sacrifice, and banquet. The *real* presence of Christ in the sacrament is rooted in the *real* sacrificial offering of the Mass, which is a *real* but unbloody manifestation of the one sacrifice of Calvary and a *real* (albeit sacred) meal in which we receive nourishment that incorporates our humanity into Christ's. His teaching shows how these elements are themselves intimately related and co-inhere in such a way that one cannot be dropped without doing damage to integrity of the sacrament. His sacramental realism challenges today's believers to ponder the deeper meaning of the eucharistic mystery and the central role it plays in their ongoing redemption.

The Eucharist is the continuation of the incarnational principal by which the Word of God became human and now divinizes our humanity by means of his eucharistic body and blood.

2. Adam sees the Eucharist as embedded in the community of the faithful. This ecclesiological dimension lies at the very heart of the sacrament and captures the very reason for its existence. The Eucharist exists for the supernatural organism that is the church and is the primary means by which it continues its sanctifying mission in the world. If the members of the believing community are members of Christ's mystical body, the Eucharist provides the transforming, sanctifying nourishment by which they remain in Christ and perform their unique functions within his body. In this respect, the Eucharist is primarily a communal sacrament, one that unites the members of the body, rebuilds them so that they may properly perform their functions within the body, and energizes them for their mission in the world. This important communal dimension of the sacrament supports personal eucharistic piety and, when properly understood, actually deepens it. Authentic eucharistic devotion leads a person to a deeper love for and celebration of the liturgy. Believers find their true identities in the encounter.

3. Adam understands that the church, as a living, unified organism, continually changes over time and yet remains the same.

The body of Christ developed from its roots in primitive Christianity in much the same way that a seed grows into a tree or a child matures to adolescence and adulthood. That her understanding of herself deepens and matures through history has concrete implications for theology in all its various aspects, including its sacramental theology. Adam understands that the church will never be able to capture the fullness of the mystery of the Eucharist through theological concepts and must remain open at least to the possibility of more profound theological presentations that capture the mystery more fully while remaining in continuity with those tried and true expressions that have gone before. The church's positive theological understanding of the Eucharist, in other words, can adequately convey certain truths about the mystery of the sacrament, but will never fully exhaust it. Adam sustains a realistic view of what theology can and cannot do. Its purpose is to sustain the living organism of the church, not reduce it to a closed system. His teaching on the Eucharist reflects this important theological nuance.

4. When viewing the Eucharist in its relationship to the other sacraments, Adam highlights its important sanctifying role in the church's life and mission. When the faithful approach the sacrament with the proper dispositions, the grace of the Spirit conforms them more closely unto the image of Christ. This transformative, divinizing function of the sacrament deepens the communion of the faithful with Christ and empowers them to follow him more closely and partake more deeply in his mission. The Eucharist is thus intimately related to the church's mandate "to make disciples of all nations."²⁹ Communion with Christ empowers the members of his body to proclaim his message through their words, deeds, and their very lives. Communion with Christ inevitably leads to mission with Christ. As Adam so eloquently points out, the Eucharist is a sacrament of the mystical Christ, and Christ is ever arising anew in the life of the community of the faithful. His insight echoes the words of the apostle Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me."³⁰

5. Adam highlights the impact of the Eucharist on the imagination of the faithful. He emphasizes the creative role it has had in inspiring many of the world's great masterpieces in the areas of music, art, literature, sculpture, and architecture. It does so because its inherent beauty has inspired believers to capture something of its mystery and wonder in the work of human hands. These attempts are the artist's



way of paying homage to God, the master artisan and craftsman, who in the sacrament has given the world a living memorial of the only begotten Son. The Eucharist has sometimes been called the “icon of Christ.” As a living icon, it offers a window through which the faithful can gaze on and ponder eternity. As the sacrament of the mystical Christ, it continues to this day to cultivate the imagination of the faithful and inspire them to create new works of beauty to touch the hearts of believers and non-believers alike. If the Eucharist embodies the hope in the final transformation all of human existence itself, then the beauty of the art it has inspired points to the divine metamorphosis that the imagination itself yearns for and will one day undergo.

Communion with Christ empowers the members of his body to proclaim his message through their words, deeds, and their very lives.

6. Adam points out the eschatological orientation of the Eucharist by calling it “the strongest, profoundest, most intimate memorial of the Lord, until he comes again.” In doing so, he highlights the sacrament’s role as both the visible presence of God’s kingdom in our midst and a visible sign of its fullness in the world to come. The Eucharist is the sacrament of the new creation: it both realizes the kingdom in the here-and-now and points to its fruition at the end of time. It embodies in a concrete, visible way the “already-but-not-yet” character of the historical manifestation of the kingdom. As an eschatological manifestation of the Messianic banquet, it exists both in and out of time. Its historical manifestation, moreover, while rooted in past events, makes the love of God palpably present and instills in the community of the faithful a hope that God’s reign will one be fully realized. The Eucharist thus points to God’s redemptive action in the past, his continuing presence in the community of the faithful, and his coming in glory at the end of time.

7. Finally, Adam’s thought on the communal nature of the church and its implications for the Eucharist had a direct impact on the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council with its emphasis on the people of God and the Eucharist as “the source and summit of the Christian life.”³¹ His writings on the church as the mystical body united in Christ as a unitary organism of the faithful contributed to the renewal of Catholic theology and prepared the way for the council’s emphasis on the church as *communio*. Writing at a time when

personal piety permeated much of Catholic spirituality, his emphasis on the church as a mystical communion of believers encouraged the faithful to look beyond their private devotional practices and to see that they worship God first and foremost as a people united in Christ as members of his body. Communion in Christ, for Adam, goes to the very heart of the church and underlies every aspect of its visible and invisible dimensions. Although he was not the only Catholic theologian focusing on such issues in the decades leading up to the council, his voice was clear, rooted in the tradition, prominent, and influential.

Conclusion

Karl Adam is remembered as an insightful thinker who was able to translate Catholicism's rich theological and spiritual tradition into terms that engaged a wide audience, both intellectual and popular. He had the ability to convey the most difficult of theological concepts in a way that would both capture the imagination of his readers and engage their understanding of what it meant to be a member of Christ's mystical body. This ability led him to produce a body of writing that would impact a generation of theologians and lay much of the important groundwork for the Second Vatican Council.

Adam's insights into the communal nature of the church touched a sensitive cord in the hearts of his readers, one that challenged them to ponder their place in the community of the faithful and rethink what, in his day, was an overly individualistic approach to Catholic piety and devotion. His efforts to depict the church as a vital, living organism of many members working for the common task of proclaiming the Gospel in the concrete historical circumstances of daily life resonated with the tradition and challenged believers to find ways of implementing the message of Christ. That his own implementation of these insights, at times, fell short should encourage the community of the faithful to redouble their efforts to allow Christ's paschal mystery to quietly weave its way into their lives.

Adam's teaching on the Eucharist is timely, well argued, traditional, and profound. He places the sacrament at the heart of Christ's body, the church, and draws keen insights into the meaning of communion with Christ and his mission to the world. The Eucharist, he held, was the church's lifeblood, for it gave believers access to the life-giving body and blood of Christ and incorporated them ever more deeply



into his redemptive mission. Adam was a sacramental realist, and the Eucharist, for him, was the sacrament of redeemed reality, a visible sign of the new creation, and an eschatological symbol of a reality yet to come.



Notes

- ¹ "Foreword" to Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/SPIRCATH.HTM> (accessed January 5, 2015).
- ² Ibid. For Adam's dealings with Nazi Germany, see Robert A. Krieg, "Karl Adam, National Socialism, and Catholic Tradition," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 432-456.
- ³ All future citations from this book come from Karl Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism* (London/Sydney: Sheed and Ward, Ltd, 1929; 8th impression 1969).
- ⁴ "Foreword" to Karl Adam, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/SPIRCATH.HTM>.
- ⁵ Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 15-33 (accessed January 5, 2015).
- ⁶ Ibid., viii.
- ⁷ Ibid., 51-70, 122-130, 162-182.
- ⁸ Ibid., 203-241.
- ⁹ Ibid., 242-263.
- ¹⁰ Jn 14:6 (All scripture citations come from the *New American Bible*, revised edition).
- ¹¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, *De incarnatione*, 54.3.
- ¹² Adam, *The Spirit of Catholicism*, 22.
- ¹³ Ibid.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 213.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., 213-214.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 214.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Ibid., 21.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid., 21-22
- ²⁴ Ibid., 220.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 220-221.
- ²⁶ Karl Adam, "Through Christ Our Lord," trans. Justin McCann, www.americancatholicpress.org/Karl_Adam_Through_Christ_Page2.html (accessed January 5, 2015).
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Mt 28:19.
- ³⁰ Gal 2:20.
- ³¹ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 11; http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed January 5, 2015).



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Illness, Healing, and the Eucharist¹

by Owen F. Cummings

Advent invites us to reflect on the mystery of God entering deeply and irrevocably into our human reality. In what way do faith and the Eucharist help us to face suffering in our life and in the lives of others?

I BEGIN WITH SOME WORDS OF THE LATE MARILYN SCHWAB, OSB, THE Prioress of Queen of Angels Monastery and a pioneer in the field of long-term nursing: “Each one of us is called by God when he called us into existence, and the call essentially is to become most fully that unique person God had in mind when he created me. The most basic vocation each of us has is to become the best possible self — to realize my potential. True asceticism, from the time of the desert fathers until now . . . in spite of changes in language and style with culture and time . . . has always been focused on this reality of becoming one’s truest self.”² Each human person is called by God. Each human person in that literal sense receives a vocation, a calling, and Sister Marilyn suggests that that vocation is to become one’s truest self.

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Who am I when I attempt to become my truest self? The Christian answer can only be: “I am with you the body of Christ; I am embodied in Christ.” Anything less than this misses the meaning of our identity in communion. Embodied in Christ, how do I as a Christian deal with illness, how do I understand myself when I am sick?

What Some Theologians Have to Say

Two quotations will set the parameters for this reflection on the meaning of illness in the particular worldview of the Christian tradition. The first: “The body is your only home in the universe. It is your house of belonging here in the world. It is a very sacred temple. To spend time in silence before the mystery of your body brings you towards wisdom and holiness. It is unfortunate that it is only when we



are ill that we realize how tender, fragile, and precious is the house of belonging called the body.”³

From the Irish Catholic theologian John O’Donohue, we learn through these words, perhaps relearn, just how precious our bodies are, that the body is “the house of belonging here in the world.” It demands, therefore, care, reverence, appropriate self-love. The body is not something that I happen to have, but who I happen to be. To be human is to be embodied. The body is holy as a temple of the Holy Spirit, in the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:19. It is not to be abused.

The second: “The Eucharist is the normative Christian way of facing suffering and death without letting them have the last word.”⁴ From the Irish Anglican theologian David Ford, we learn that for the Christian the Eucharist is how we face suffering and death. In the Eucharist, Jesus tells us: “This is my body for you. This is me for you. Eat and be well, be well everlastingly.”

Our reflection here will circle around in different ways, like the foci of an ellipse, reverence and loving care for ourselves as embodied beings, and the Eucharist as the eternal medicine that heals perfectly.

One philosopher opens an intriguing essay, “On Illness and Human Meaning,” with these pointed questions: “What is the point, the purpose, the meaning of an illness in any particular life? Is it an absurd deprivation, depriving us of any contribution at all to the meaning of particular human lives? Or is there more to it than that?”⁵

There is more to it than that for a Christian. What is the purpose, the meaning of an illness in any particular life? There is no neutral, no simply objective answer to this question, free of presuppositions. This leads the theologian John Macquarrie to state very clearly, “I have no new wisdom to offer on suffering considered as a ‘problem,’ and do not believe that human wisdom can find a solution.”⁶ Human wisdom can only take you so far in this area.

Macquarrie is not suggesting that it is impossible to find a response to suffering in an individual’s life, a response that may be able to provide direction and meaning in some degree. Rather, he is engaging with the more basic question of *why* suffering and illness as such happen. He is pointing to what he takes to be the failures of theodicy, those philosophical attempts to reconcile the reality of God with the

experience of suffering. Another author describes what we are like in this situation of serious illness or suffering:

(Serious illness) confronts us with powerlessness in the face of rampant destruction (like Hurricane Katrina). It pokes holes in the levees of daily normality behind which we hide our mortality even from ourselves. It breaks up ordinary communication among families and friends as the sick person ventures into experiences that cannot be adequately shared. And it shows us as we are: sometimes devastated by loss, sometimes bewildered, sometimes anxious, sometimes terrified, sometimes nobly generous, sometimes sinfully petty and self-centered as we struggle to survive. Our masks stripped away, we become frighteningly vulnerable in our nakedness of spirit. . . .⁷

The value of Genevieve Glen's point of view is her recognition of the complexity of human responses to the experience of illness and suffering. In that final sentence, "Our masks stripped away, we become frighteningly vulnerable in our nakedness of spirit," she indicates the power of illness and suffering over the human spirit.

Perhaps the best that may be done in the face of existential human suffering, in the face of illness and sickness, is not to offer an explanation, not to seek for an intellectually satisfying theodicy — although that challenge must continue to be met simply because we are rational beings — but rather to offer a vision, to describe a worldview. Any answer worth anything is going to invite us to consider a worldview, to enter into a particular worldview with particular presuppositions and preconceptions.

Thinking About Illness

"We need to let the Lord be the Master of our lives and our time. Try to think of time as a gift given in trust, and enjoy the beauty of each moment. . . ."⁸ What would these words mean if you're sick? What would it mean to let the Lord be Master of our sickness, to see the time of sickness as a gift given in trust, and, even when the phrase seems utterly paradoxical, "to enjoy the beauty of each moment"? Or is this bending and twisting language to breaking point?

No one likes to be sick. There is a certain fear of illness. However, the fear of illness is not always nor necessarily a fear of dying and death.



Undoubtedly, dying and death are in some measure frightening, but there is a sense in which lingering illness may be even more frightening and anxiety-provoking. Lingering illness quite literally places us on the margins of life, decentralizes us, takes us out of the mainstream, and raises all kinds of questions for us, perhaps including questions of self-worth. When illness lingers for some time, we feel on our own, even in circumstances where we are loved, cared for, visited, and made to feel wanted.

The Irish Dominican priest-poet Paul Murray puts his finger on the fear produced by illness as he describes his own experience: "I found myself haunted by the fear that, as a result of the almost continual tiredness I felt, I would never again be back to my old self, never again, perhaps, be able to relax enough to enjoy, for example, the company of family and friends. And, directly linked with this thought was the fear of becoming, and perhaps for the rest of my life, a sort of displaced self, a permanently sick person, a mere object of people's kindness and consideration."⁹ Most of us can probably identify with the very real fears expressed by Paul Murray in this passage.

It is not just that God wants us to be healed and to be whole; God is our healing and our wholeness.

Nonetheless, we are not *defined* as people prone to illness, especially as we grow older, but we are defined as Christians. If we are defined as Christians, a variety of consequences follows. Thus, we are made for communion with the Divine Communion of the Trinity. God passionately desires us. We know this language well. We are so accustomed to hearing it in different registers. The fact of the matter is that God thirsts for us, thirsts for our companionship. That's why we exist at all, and that is our final end, to be *one-d* with the God whose best name is Love.

We are initiated into that communion through baptism and confirmation and Eucharist; we are sustained in that communion through the ongoing reception of the Eucharist; the fracturing of that communion is healed by penance and reconciliation. We are, in a word, thoroughly eucharistic in our identity as Christians. If we are ill, or when we become Christians who are ill, that eucharistic identity does not cease to be. What we need to do is to fathom in the context of illness and the sacrament of the anointing of the sick the dimensions

and aspects of our eucharistic identity.

Looking to the Scriptures

Marilyn Schwab was, of course, a Benedictine nun. Benedictines are scripted people. They live in and around the Scriptures every day of their lives. Do the Scriptures have anything of significance to say to us about illness and sickness? There are some fine passages in the Old Testament that communicate something of God's desire to heal us, but surely the fundamental passage is Exodus 15:26, in which we read the marvelous words, "I, the Lord, am your healer." The words were spoken to the pilgrim Hebrews *en route* to the Promised Land.

These words offer us as well as those to whom they were originally addressed comfort, consolation, and hope. God is our healer. The great Protestant theologian, Karl Barth, described those words as "the divine magna carta in all matters of health and related questions."¹⁰ The Magna Carta was the great foundational document of authority and governance in early medieval England. It laid down the markers, as it were, for the exercise of power. Karl Barth is claiming that these words of God lay down the markers for our approach to healing: "I, the Lord, am your healer." It is not just that God wants us to be healed and to be whole. He *is* our healing and our wholeness.

Another Old Testament passage — one that is not particularly well known — praises the physician's profession as skills are applied for those who are sick. It comes from the Book of Ben Sira, probably written in the Jewish community of Alexandria about 100 years before Christ: "Hold the physician in honor, for he is essential to you, and God it was who established his profession. From God, the doctor has his wisdom, and the king provides for his sustenance. His knowledge makes the doctor distinguished, and gives him access to those in authority. God makes the earth yield healing herbs which the prudent man should not neglect" (Sir 38:1-4).

This is an interesting passage providing us with insight into a scriptural view of the physician. God is the source of the physician's healing skills, "from God, the doctor has his wisdom" (2). Similarly, God is understood as the source and origin of pharmacology, "God makes the earth yield healing herbs" (4). The physician's skills come from God and are a gift from God. The healing herbs come from God and are a gift from God. This is Ben Sira's way of saying to us that God desires our healing, and



in this world the conduits of that healing are gifted by God through physicians and through medicines.

Staying with the same chapter of Ben Sira, we are also provided with insight for one who is sick: “My son, when you are ill, delay not, but pray to God, who will heal you. Flee wickedness; let your hands be just, cleanse your heart of every sin; offer your sweet-smelling oblation and petition, a rich offering according to your means. Then give the doctor his place lest he leave; for you need him too” (Sir 38:9-12).

The earlier verses root all healing ultimately in God, but now Ben Sira presents an entirely theocentric, and one might say, “modern” approach to illness. Prayer should mark the whole course of life, and so, when one is sick, “pray to God, who will heal you” (9). The author recognizes the interconnection between illness and moral performance, “Flee wickedness, let your hands be just, cleanse your heart of every sin” (10). It would be just plain silly to claim that every illness is related to some aspect of our moral lives — the decisions we make, the way we live, the habits we develop. Few people, if any, consciously make themselves ill with chosen deliberation. But the modern medical world more and more acknowledges the complex interplay between how we live and how we get sick and how we heal.

God’s healing outreach toward humankind is understood by Christians to have reached its unsurpassable and climactic expression in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

We are flawed human beings. That fact is inescapable. But our health would be so much better in so many ways if we fled wickedness, had just hands, and cleansed our hearts of sin. Notice that it is only after making this range of recommendations that Ben Sira goes on to urge worship, “Offer your sweet-smelling oblation and petition” (11). The passage exudes a most holistic approach to illness. If we place the Exodus claim that God is our healer alongside the perspective of Ben Sira, there emerges a fine theology of healing.

Although Karl Barth was right to name Exodus 15:26 as the divine magna carta of healing, he knew that it was but the beginning of God’s charter of healing. God’s healing outreach toward humankind is understood by Christians to have reached its unsurpassable and

climactic expression in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is God's healing of humankind *par excellence*.

Jesus, God's healing *as* healer, reaches out in the pages of the Gospels to lepers and the paralyzed, to those with mental health challenges and to the woman with the issue of blood, to Simon Peter's fevered mother-in-law, and to many more unnamed persons. This unique historic expression of God's healing as healer is no longer ours. In the sense of his historic and unique being one of us, once upon a time, the healing Jesus is no longer with us. Yet, in Jesus' self-gift as Eucharist, God's healing as healer remains just as really ours as for the sick of his own time. By assuming us into himself through the gift of his body and blood, we may say that as his body becomes ours, ours becomes his, as his blood becomes ours, ours becomes his.

One might extend this line of thinking in relation to illness and suffering so that, as we are Christ's body on earth, so our human suffering is taken up into Christ's sufferings, and his suffering may be understood as present in ours. Christ's suffering may be understood as present in ours, and ours in his.

Paul speaks of a mystical identification with the suffering Christ: being one in his sufferings, becoming one in his death.

The novelist, the late Nuala O'Faolain, tells of how she went into the Catholic cathedral in Dublin one Good Friday just to sit down and be at peace for a while. And, of course, she noticed that the cathedral was prepared for the Good Friday service of the Lord's passion. She thought to herself: "What about the passion of ordinary people? What about the sufferings, the crucifixion, if you will, of ordinary people?"¹¹ In a profound sense, O'Faolain missed the whole point of Good Friday, which is not only about a remembrance of what Christ suffered in the past, but about what Christ suffers in the present and will continue to suffer until the end of time. Good Friday is not just about the historic, biological body of Christ, but also about the corporate, ecclesial body of Christ, which we are.

This is no new way of thinking in the Christian tradition. It is there in Paul's Letter to the Philippians in the mid-first century: ". . . To know (Jesus Christ) and the power of his resurrection and the communion



of his sufferings by being shaped, by, with and to his death" (3:10, my translation). Paul is talking about a mystical identification with the suffering Christ: being one in his sufferings, becoming one in his death. Moving to the sixteenth century, a Capuchin, Benedict of Canfield (1563-1610), comments on this sentence of Paul in a particularly striking way: "Therefore our own pains, insofar as they are not ours but those of Christ, must be deeply respected."

How wonderful! And more: our pains are as much to be revered as those of Jesus Christ in his own passion. For if people correctly adore him with so much devotion in images on the Good Friday cross, *why may we then not revere him on the living cross that we ourselves are?*¹² Our pains, our sufferings, and, yes, our illnesses are Christ on the cross because we are in him and he is in us.

Take another particularly forceful expression of this line of thinking, found in the eighteenth-century Anglican bishop of Edinburgh, Thomas Rattray (died 1743): "As by this strict union betwixt him, the head and us the members, his sufferings are imputed to us, so ours also are imputed to him so as not so much to be reckoned our own sufferings as the sufferings of Christ in us, and we are said to fill up what is wanting in the afflictions of Christ in our flesh, for his body's sake which is the church."¹³ Echoing elements of Pauline theology and Christology, Benedict of Canfield and Bishop Rattray underscore the consequences of our union with the Lord. If I am one with Jesus Christ, and if he is one with me, there is identification. We may push this line of thought further. In that most profound ontological sense, the Eucharist, as the self-gift of the risen and ascended Healer, is effecting our healing at the deepest level of all. Our deepest and most complete healing is yet to come, in the healing that is eternal communion in and with the Trinity in heaven, and so also with one another.

The Pastoral Care of the Sick

In an immediately practical manner, when about when we fall sick or succumb to illness? This is where the church's sacrament of the anointing of the sick comes fully into play. We could not do better than begin with the introduction to the *Pastoral Care of the Sick*. The paragraphs of this introduction provide us with the shape of the Christian response to sickness and illness. There we read the remarkable statement that "Christ is still pained and tormented in his members, made like him."¹⁴ This echoes the remarks of Paul, of Benedict

of Canfield, and of Bishop Thomas Rattray cited above, underscoring our union with Christ, and Christ's union with us. Except by our own free, deliberate, and utterly contrary choice, our union with Christ is indissoluble. The healer is *always* healing us.

The introduction goes on to insist that "we should fight strenuously against all sickness and carefully seek the blessings of good health, so that we may fulfill our role in human society and in the church."¹⁵ You might say that our strenuously fighting sickness and carefully attending to good health signals to others not simply that we are waiting for the final, eschatological healing of heaven, but also that this healing through good health, through the fostering and cultivation of good health, is already a real, albeit temporary possession.

"Those who are seriously ill need the special help of God's grace in this time of anxiety, lest they be broken in spirit, and, under the pressure of temptation, perhaps weakened in their faith. This is why, through the sacrament of anointing, Christ strengthens the faithful who are afflicted by illness, providing them with the strongest means of support."¹⁶ This affirmation of the introduction to the *Pastoral Care of the Sick* invites us to recognize that the sacrament of anointing is intended to strengthen the faithful precisely as faithful, as the body of Christ.

Certainly it offers comfort and consolation, but we must never lose sight of the fact that it equally has to do with the strengthening and confirming of our eucharistic-ecclesial identity. In order to further this insight, the text goes on to instruct that "priests with pastoral responsibilities should see to it that the sick and aged, even though not seriously ill or in danger of death, are given every opportunity to receive the Eucharist frequently, even daily, especially during the Easter season."¹⁷

A Word About the Minister

In the Catholic tradition, the one who anoints the sick person is the priest, even as all are called to minister to the sick in various ways. The question we want to think about for a moment is: Who is ministering to whom?

In the passage dealing with the last judgement in Matthew's Gospel, the sheep are divided from the goats on the basis of whether or not they saw Christ in the hungry, the sick, the naked, and those in prison:



“For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me. . . . I tell you solemnly, insofar as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me” (Mt 25:35, 40). Here, the Lord identifies himself with the hungry, sick, and the marginal. Furthermore, one might say that he identifies with the sheep, that is, those who recognize the Christ in the marginal. This is the scriptural basis for ministry to the sick.

The sketch of the anointing of the sick and care of the sick presented here falls within an understanding of the church as communion centered on the Eucharist: the body of Christ making the body of Christ attending to the body of Christ. This has definite implications for the self-understanding of the minister to the sick, whether that minister is an ordained priest bringing the oil of anointing, or a lay-person bringing the Eucharist. In either case, and with appropriate qualifications, there are implications for their self-understanding, and not just for the role they are performing or the service they bring.

In the Eucharist, Jesus tells us: “This is my body for you. This is me for you. Eat and be well, be well everlastingly.”

One contemporary theologian, Lawrence Paul Hemming, puts it like this:

I always discover you as one who comes to me in a guise of Christ, a guise which is already profoundly constitutive of who I am. Moreover, this can never be a confrontation, for the demand to love you is already laid on me by Christ, or rather, I could not hope that you might encounter Christ in me except that I loved you. I never confront your gaze, for together we are called to seek out God’s love for us. There is a sense in which my encounter with you is therefore also a self-encounter at the deepest level, the level where I am called to be redeemed.¹⁸

This admirable appreciation of the minister *vis-à-vis* the sick calls for some extension. Two things arise from it. First, the minister and the sick mutually encounter one another as the body of Christ. They have been made such by baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist,

and sustained as such through the Eucharist. You could say that the deepest level of their identity is already constituted before this particular encounter takes place.

Second, there is no unilateral gift or service of the one to the other. The minister is inadequately understood as offering a service to the sick person. Both serve. The minister brings the consolation and strength of the church, while the sick person offers the powerfully vulnerable and tangible reminder of the need of the minister as much as the sick for final redemption.

Conclusion

In the context of serious illness, and sometimes debilitating but not serious, life-threatening illness, so much depends on what is referred to as “the will to live.” This is a very real, though not so easily defined notion. It is not simply the desire to endure, for endurance is not the same as living. The will to live is more like the experienced desire to flourish, to make a contribution, to move out from the confinement of one’s own presently diminished situation and context into the wider world of others. And the will to live is evoked.

This is how therapist Rachel Remen describes the will to live: “I think that’s what healing is — evoking the will to live. And it’s evoked not by doing something, but by receiving another person, by letting another person know that their pain and their suffering and their fear matters. By not being indifferent. You know, the will to live is a kind of mystical concept . . . in our drive for expertise and mastery, we look past the mystery, which is right there for us to wonder about.”¹⁹

According to Remen, healing is the will to live, and living means so much more than biological survival. Her phrase, “The will to live is a kind of mystical concept,” is powerful in the way in which she describes it here. There is yet another dimension to this will to live for the Christian. It is what we have been trying to describe in this reflection. Paul is talking about a mystical identification with the suffering Christ: being one in his sufferings, becoming one in his death. It brings a healing peace, and Healing Peace is another name for Jesus.

Marilyn Schwab knew this well. We began with her words. Let us end with them: “Peace is a priceless gift . . . a gift of the Holy Spirit. The kind of peace Jesus gives confers a deep abiding serenity in the midst of



trouble and conflict and doubt, and can certainly be present, often is most evident, in times of conflict or difficulty. So we should not be looking to make all the difficult things go away so we can have peace. Rather we should be searching for the peace that can transcend the turbulence of conflicts with others, and the conflicts inside ourselves. Our own inner conflicts, our own dissatisfaction with the way our lives work out, or our own discouragement in feeling we have failed. . . . Only a deep faith in Jesus and the power of his resurrection can bring us the peace which will abide with us no matter what happens."²⁰ That peace for Catholic Christians is the Eucharist.



Notes

¹ Although much revised here, this essay began life as the 11th Annual Sister Marilyn Schwab Memorial Lecture at Queen of Angels Monastery, Mount Angel, Oregon, on June 27, 2006. Sister Marilyn's journal was published privately.

² Marilyn Schwab, OSB, "Excerpts from Weekly Chapter Conferences," 1980-1982, 3.

³ John O'Donohue, *Anam Chara* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 43-44.

⁴ David F. Ford, "L'Arche and Jesus, What Is the Theology?" in Frances M. Young, ed., *Encounters with Mystery* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1997), 87.

⁵ William Mathews, SJ, "On Illness and Human Meaning," *Milltown Studies* 48 (Winter 2001), 124.

⁶ John Macquarrie, "Suffering," in his *In Search of Humanity* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 222, 225, slightly adapted.

⁷ Genevieve Glen, OSB, "Pastoral Care of the Sick," *Today's Liturgy* (Ordinary Time 2, September 3-December 2, 2006), 6.

⁸ Marilyn Schwab, OSB, "Excerpts from Weekly Chapter Conferences," 4.

⁹ Paul Murray, OP, "Bad Health — Good News?" *Priests and People* 15 (2001), 87.

¹⁰ *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 3, 4 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1961), 369. Contrast with Barth the absolute lack of interest in these words in the classic commentary of Martin Noth, *Exodus, A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 127-129.

¹¹ Nuala O'Faolain, *Are You Somebody?* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1996), 198.

¹² Benedict of Canfield, OFM Cap., *Rule of Perfection*, 1609.

¹³ W. J. Grisbrooke, ed., *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (London: S.P.C.K., 1958), 143.

¹⁴ *Pastoral Care of the Sick* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1983), par. 2, 10.

¹⁵ *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, par. 3, 10.

¹⁶ *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, par. 5, 12.

¹⁷ *Pastoral Care of the Sick*, par. 72, 50.

¹⁸ Lawrence Paul Hemming, "Self-Exposure: Who Am I in Pastoring?" *Priests and People* 15 (2001), 97-98.

¹⁹ Cited in John Carmody, *A Theology of Illness* (Tulsa: University of Tulsa Press, 1993), 2.

²⁰ Marilyn Schwab, OSB, "Excerpts from Weekly Chapter Conferences," 11.



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

For the Universal Prayers in the Jubilee Year of Mercy

by Mary Grace Melcher, OCD

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time — November 6

That the steadfast hope we have in eternal life by the mercy of God will encourage our hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word

That we who receive in this Eucharist Jesus, the God of the living, may ourselves be animated and active in his sight through confidence and love

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, for whom all are alive and held in mercy, may we who are sustained in the communion of your saints receive your gracious answer to the needs we entrust to your divine care. We pray in Jesus' name.

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time — November 13

That the sun of justice with its healing rays may arise upon us in God's great mercy, giving us strength and courage for every challenge and hardship we may face

That we who receive Jesus in this Eucharist may also receive from him the gift of his wisdom in speaking and the perseverance by which we will secure our lives

Concluding Prayer

When the day comes that is blazing like an oven and we are put to the test, may we place all our hope in you, Heavenly Father, for the answer to our humble prayers. We pray in the name of Jesus.

Sister Mary Grace Melcher, a cloistered nun of the Carmel of Terre Haute, Indiana, is the author of *Intercessions for Mass* (Liturgical Press, 2013), a collection of bidding prayers for Sundays, solemnities, and weekdays. For the past year, she has written intercessions and a concluding prayer for each Sunday of the Jubilee of Mercy.



Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe — November 20

That we who have been transferred to the kingdom of the beloved Son, in whom we have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, may please him by our confidence in his mercy and our good works in his name

That we, who receive in this Eucharist the Anointed One and the Eternal King, may render him the homage of our reverence and loyal obedience

Concluding Prayer

Jesus, remember us when you come into your kingdom, and present to your Father all our needs and petitions. We ask for mercy, Heavenly Father, in Jesus' name.



In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Since its inception, *Emmanuel* has published a list of deceased members of the Priests' Eucharistic League, remembering those who have served the church generously and faithfully and have passed into the promised eternal life. Priests in the Eucharistic League whose names begin with V, W, X, Y, and Z are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during November and December.



PASTORAL LITURGY

Further Thoughts on Funerals

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

As a church, we are called to be the face of God's mercy and care for those who grieve.

AS WE END THE YEAR OF MERCY, WE RETURN TO A THEME BEGUN EARLIER THIS YEAR, reviewing and addressing issues in the *Order for Christian Funerals*. The OCF provides opportunities for catechesis, pastoral care, and reflection on best practices.

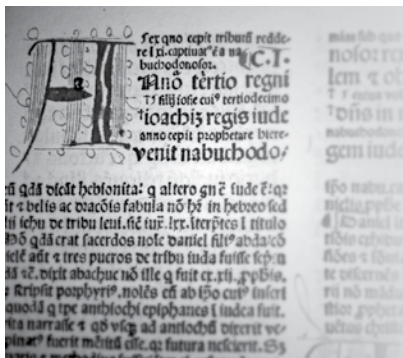
- Occasionally, especially at a time of change in parish personnel, have a luncheon whereby funeral home personnel can understand your procedures. Include everyone who ministers at a funeral, even the receptionist, maintenance staff, and school administration.
- Plan the funeral with the family. It is important to communicate the structure of a funeral liturgy. We all have our own templates; meeting together lets the family know how and when things will happen. It also shows sensitivity in their time of loss. Provide a liturgical guide with a selection of readings and music. Encourage appropriate music by reminding people that certain popular songs are best suited to the vigil, not the Mass.
- Parishes sometimes find it difficult to assure music at funerals; sharing resources among parishes can be a helpful solution.
- Many families are choosing to schedule the wake at the church on the day of the funeral. Where praying the rosary is commonplace, combine it with prayers from the vigil in the OCF.
- Train other ministers to assist: sacristans, altar servers, grief ministers, etc.

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.

- Have a member of the clergy or a lay minister receive the body when it arrives at the door of the church. Go out to greet the family; waiting at the entrance of the church does not communicate the same sense of care.
- The Sign of the Cross and the Penitential Act are omitted. The introductory rites in the OCF take precedence.
- Offer Communion under both species. With so many gluten allergies these days, we show thoughtfulness by having a chalice available. Avoid lecturing people publicly about who may or may not receive Communion.
- Allow a moment of remembrance after Communion, when requested. The OCF allows it, and it often means so much to families. To ensure that it does not become a “canonization” or overly long, offer to have someone assist in writing out the text.
- If your parish does not have a bereavement ministry, work in collaboration with churches, funeral services, or hospitals that do. A six-week program is fairly standard.
- Besides the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls), schedule a few times in the year for people to gather with others who have recently lost loved ones. Include a potluck.
- During November, encourage parishioners to learn and sing music such as the “Song of Farewell.” Have a workshop on planning a funeral liturgy. This is an opportunity for catechesis and can greatly reassure those who worry that their families may not know their wishes.

This is not an exhaustive list; it comes from years of people sharing with me what went well and what was “not so good.” We are a conduit of mercy and compassion for those who grieve. Pope Francis reminds us that we are to be the face of God’s mercy, just as Christ was. Let us take time in this Month of All Souls to evaluate our ministry to the bereaved — with the OCF as a backdrop — in order that our parishes can truly be centers of comfort in the midst of the paschal mystery of death and dying.





BREAKING THE WORD

HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time/Advent/Christmas

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

Time to Say Goodbye!

With this column, it is time for me to say, “Adios!” I have now completed the Breaking the Word column for the entire three-year liturgical cycle and am concluding this task on a note of gratitude.

Firstly, I am grateful to our editor, Father Anthony Schueller, SSS, for the opportunity to write in these esteemed pages of *Emmanuel* Magazine. Secondly, I am grateful to you, the readers of *Emmanuel*, for taking the time to read these reflections and make use of them as you see fit. I have heard from some faithful subscribers, and I appreciate the encouragement and words of kindness that have been offered concerning this column.

A final, heartfelt “Thank You” to my confreres in the consecrated life, my brothers of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament. As religious dedicated to the Eucharist, we seek to understand all reality in the light of this great gift of Jesus Christ. You continue to inspire me in the eucharistic life, and for this I am truly grateful.

In composing these reflections on the word of God, my goal has been to do so through a “eucharistic prism” so that, in the imagery of a heavenly mentor of mine, Father Eugene LaVerdiere, SSS, they may indeed reflect the “Word of God made sacrament.” I pray that these simple reflections serve to advance the eucharistic reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time November 6, 2016

The Lord is Faithful

Breaking the Word

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

As a result of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes seeking to squash a revolt in Judea (see 2 Mc 5:11ff), persecution erupts and many devout Jews are put to death for their fidelity to the covenant, including the seven brothers who are the subject of today's pericope. Resurrection from the dead for the just is clearly articulated as a hope by two of the siblings before their martyrdom.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Paul speaks lovingly to the Christian community in Thessalonica at the conclusion of this second letter to them, encouraging them to remain faith to God, who himself is loving and ever faithful. God's love and fidelity are the source of strength for Christians among the non-believers.

Luke 20:27-38

The Sadducees, who do not believe in the resurrection from the dead, challenge Jesus and try to entrap him in a casuistic tale. Jesus preaches on the resurrection and says that God is Lord of the living not the dead.

Sharing the Word

This is the time in our liturgical year when the readings and orations point us toward the culmination of time and the glorious return of our Lord Jesus as judge of the living and the dead. The end times are in vogue in our Sunday celebrations as we near the solemnity of Christ the King. Today's readings, in particular, are a potent reminder for us of one of the central mysteries of our Christian

faith: the resurrection from the dead.

The Old Testament books of 1 and 2 Maccabees detail the persecution of the Jewish people by the Seleucid Empire in the second century B.C. They also give the clearest testimony to faith in the resurrection found in the Hebrew Scriptures. As Christians, we believe that because of Jesus' own resurrection from the dead on that first Easter, the course of human history has forever changed. Death is no longer the final destination for believers. In Christ, death has become a transformation to life eternal with the Trinity, the angels, and the saints in glory.

Paul reminds the persecuted Christians of his own day to remain faithful to God, who loves them dearly (cf. 2 Thes 2:16) and to persevere in the good works common to believers. From Paul's own autobiography (see 2 Cor 11:22-30), we know that he suffered much for the sake of the Gospel, so strong was his belief in Jesus' resurrection and the hope of future glory in Christ. It is Paul's words and example that are worthy of our emulation "as we await the blessed hope and the coming of our Savior, Jesus Christ" (*Roman Missal*, embolism).

Praying the Word

God of the living,
in you all life finds both its origin and its destiny.
May your faithful love and abiding presence
be the source of our hope and joy as we look forward
to the glorious return of your coeternal Son, Jesus Christ,
who is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time November 13, 2016

Our Redemption Is at Hand

Breaking the Word

Malachi 3:19-20a

The lectionary presents the last few verses of the Old Testament for our edification this Sunday. Herein, the prophet Malachi speaks of the final judgment as a day filled with frightful imagery and the specter God's justice.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-12

Paul concludes his words to the Thessalonians by exhorting them to work diligently in the Lord's service, following his example.

Luke 21:5-19

Within the temple precincts, Jesus predicts that sacred edifice's demise. He also speaks of the end times and of the extraordinary signs that will accompany the day of judgment. The Christian community should not be surprised by persecutions; faithful perseverance is what is expected of believers.

Sharing the Word

On this penultimate Sunday of the church year, our readings direct our attention to the finality of the world as we know it and the expected return of Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice. I believe that a little background on apocryphal genre is in order.

Apocryphal literature, such as that found in the first reading and this passage from Luke's Gospel, is based on a "worldview that is indebted to ancient Near Eastern myths and to Hebrew prophecy, but which arose in response to the new challenges of the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The essential ingredients of this worldview were a reliance on supernatural revelation, over and above received tradition

and human reasoning, a sense that human affairs are determined to a great degree by supernatural agents, and the belief that human life is subject to divine judgment, culminating in reward or punishment after death. . . . The dominant form of Jewish apocalypticism . . . also anticipated a denouement of history, culminating in divine intervention and a judgment of all nations on a cosmic scale. This judgment, however, would typically be followed by a resurrection of the dead, which allowed for retribution on an individual as well as a national scale" (John J. Collins, "From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End" in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Volume 1: *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, [John J. Collins, ed.; New York: Continuum, 2000] 157).

Jesus' second coming in glory, which we profess in the Creed and anticipate at every celebration of the Eucharist, is a day for which we can truly hope. God's divine justice has been longed for by countless generations, including our very own. Coming to the end of the Jubilee Year of Mercy, it is prescient to reflect on the relationship between divine judgment and divine mercy. Pope Francis puts it this way: "Mercy is not opposed to justice but rather expresses God's way of reaching out to the sinner, offering him a new chance to look at himself, convert, and believe. . . . God's justice is his mercy given to everyone as a grace that flows from the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the cross of Christ is God's judgment on all of us and on the whole world, because through it he offers us the certitude of love and new life" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 21).

Praying the Word

God our Father,
your justice is manifest in divine mercy.
May we spend this week in joyful anticipation
of the glorious return of our Savior,
Jesus Christ,
who is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

Our Lord Jesus Christ,
King of the Universe
November 20, 2016

Today You Will Be with Me in Paradise!

Breaking the Word

2 Samuel 5:1-3

David is hailed for his bravery and anointed king of Israel.

Colossians 1:12-20

At the beginning of the Letter to the Colossians, Paul reminds the early Christian community of the salvation wrought by Christ Jesus.

Luke 23:35-43

Unique to Luke's Gospel is today's scene from Jesus' passion. The so-called "good thief" is promised a place in paradise (*parádeisos*), which in this context means communion or fellowship with Christ (cf. *TDNT*, 778).

Sharing the Word

Today we conclude both the liturgical year and the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy. As we bring to a fitting conclusion this great jubilee, the Gospel states that the extent of God's mercy is limitless. On the cross, dying for the forgiveness of sins, Jesus expresses the mercy of God for the repentant sinner hanging next to him. At that man's "eleventh hour," he had an amazing encounter with Christ on the cross and underwent a conversion pleading, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). It is a simple oration uttered in complete trust of divine mercy.

This passion scene is uniquely Lucan, and it shows how God's greatest power is his mercy. Jesus, in a moment of supreme weakness — hanging naked on the cross, dying and suffering agony — offers

the repentant criminal divine mercy: "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Lk 23:43). "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way," writes Pope Francis, quoting Thomas Aquinas and underscoring that "God's mercy, rather than a sign of weakness, is the mark of his omnipotence" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 6). For those who open their hearts to encountering Christ, the King of the universe, God's infinite mercy is readily available. Let us conclude this Extraordinary Jubilee thanking God, the all merciful, for the experience of liturgically and ecclesially reflecting on this wondrous mystery of divine mercy.

Praying the Word

Almighty and ever-living God,
in a wonderful way, you demonstrate your majesty
through your divine mercy.
Help us to always acclaim Jesus Christ as King,
for he lives and reigns forever and ever.
Amen.

First Sunday of Advent November 27, 2016

Stay Vigilant, Stay Awake!

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 2:1-5

Selections from Isaiah will be used throughout the Advent Sundays. Today's reading describes the belief in God as not only the God of Israel but also a universal God. Hence, Isaiah depicts the nations streaming to the Lord's house (1) and God as the judge of all the nations (4).

Romans 13:11-14

Paul's admonition to the Roman Christians is one of vigilance and a call to action. Being a Christian means waiting for the return of Christ in glory by living a life of virtue and steadfastness.

Matthew 24:37-44

Like Paul in the second reading, the Gospel, too, depicts Jesus calling his disciples to stay awake and be alert for the coming of the Son of Man (42). The imagery of one person being taken while another is left behind alerts us to the fate that lies ahead for the servants of the Lord.

Sharing the Word

On this First Sunday of Advent, we are invited to prepare for the glorious return of Christ, who is the universal judge and Savior. Paul tells us that the best preparation is living a life of virtue: keeping our eyes and our hearts fixed on the Lord Jesus and making no provision for fleshly desires. Jesus compares our vigilance to that of a householder who prevents his house from being broken into and robbed by staying awake during the night.

As Christians, we have received the gift of putting on Christ at our baptism, and so we are a new people, a people who are alert to

the signs of the times as we await the fullness of God's salvation when Christ will come to judge the living and the dead at the end of time.

Praying the Word

Eternal God,
you promised your people a Savior
who would redeem all the nations;
help us to prepare for the glorious return of Jesus Christ
by being alert to his power and mercy in our lives.
May our lives reflect holiness and goodness to all around us.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Second Sunday of Advent December 4, 2016

Welcoming the Presence of Christ

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 11:1-10

Isaiah's promise of justice for the oppressed calls to mind Pope Paul VI's 1972 Message for the World Day of Peace: "If you want peace, work for justice." The peace of which Isaiah wrote is of divine origin and something wholly extraordinary, beyond human capacity to achieve. Hence, the unique juxtaposition of babies and cobras, cows and bears as neighbors, etc.

Romans 15:4-9

Encouragement and endurance are the keywords for this pericope. Paul encourages his audience to steadfastness in the Christian life. The promises of God are valid for Jews and Gentiles alike.

Matthew 3:1-12

Matthew introduces us to the forerunner of the Christ, the prophet John the Baptist. He is depicted as a wild man who eats bugs, wears clothes made from camel hair, and dwells in the desert. The primary message of John, and later of Jesus, is a call to repentance for the coming kingdom.

Sharing the Word

John the Baptist is a favorite character of Advent. He was the Martha Stewart of his day: not describing good housekeeping techniques, but good *soul-keeping*. And the tool of such good soul-keeping is repentance. The Greek word *metanoia* means a complete change of mind and heart. It demands turning around 180 degrees. This is the message of John the Baptist: to completely redirect one's life in order to welcome the promised Savior, Jesus Christ.

One of the ways we can prepare for the Lord's coming, commemorated at Christmas and anticipated on the Last Day, is by availing ourselves of the sacrament of penance. Pope Francis reminds us that confession is not comparable to going to the dry cleaner's. Instead, "confession is indeed a meeting with Jesus when we can feel his tenderness." Welcoming the presence of Christ into our hearts this Advent requires some serious soul-keeping, a true *metanoia*.

Praying the Word

Lord Jesus,
each day is your gift.
Help us prepare in this holy season
for your glorious return at the end of time
by changing those things in our lives
that keep us from loving you
and our brothers and sisters.
Amen.

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary December 8, 2016

Hail Mary, Full of Grace!

Breaking the Word

Genesis 3:9-15, 20

The first reading for this feast recalls Adam and Eve's prideful disobedience — the original sin — and God's promise of one who will destroy the ancient foe, the serpent.

Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12

Paul speaks of being chosen and destined for salvation in Jesus Christ. God has prepared each one of us to be holy in his sight. Therefore, we have much to be thankful as we rejoice in God's abundant blessings.

Luke 1:26-38

Today's Gospel depicts the scene of the annunciation and Mary's *Fiat*. The angel Gabriel greets Mary as "full of grace," and she responds to God's invitation with her profound, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word" (38).

Sharing the Word

Full of grace! As Christians, we joyfully believe that God the Most High, in wisdom and love, prepared the Virgin Mary to be the worthy mother of his Son. What today's feast means is that in a unique and marvelous way, God allowed no stain of Adam's sin to touch her, for she shared beforehand in the salvation Jesus Christ would bring by his saving death. And so God kept Mary sinless from the first moment of her conception. This is what the Immaculate Conception means.

Like Mary, we have been prepared by God for a particular vocation in life. This is the point of the second reading: each of us has been uniquely blessed by almighty God and called to be holy. We live

out our baptismal call to holiness as laypersons, religious, or clergy. The call to holiness is the same, but the path is unique and differs according to our particular vocation.

Praying the Word

Help us, Virgin Mother,
to recognize the many ways
in which God has blessed and gifted us.
With your prayers,
may we always be ready to serve your son Jesus Christ
as true and devoted servants.
Hail Mary, full of grace. . . . Amen.

Third Sunday of Advent December 11, 2016

The Lord Will Come to Save Us

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 35:1-6a, 10

Isaiah presents us with an image of death turned to life, a desert in full bloom and filled with God's glory. It is a scene of opposites: a parched land is filled with exultant praise, the lowly fear nothing, the blind see, the deaf hear, and the lame leap like a stag.

James 5:7-10

James encourages his fellow Christians to be patient as they await the Lord's coming. He offers the example of a farmer who waits patiently for harvest time.

Matthew 11:2-11

The end of the career of John the Baptist is narrated in today's Gospel. John is in prison, and doubtful. Echoing the first reading from Isaiah, Jesus reminds John that the incredible transformations that were once promised are now happening everywhere (4-5). The kingdom of God is breaking forth upon humanity.

Sharing the Word

What a change from last Sunday! John the Baptist seemed to have his act together, didn't he? He was a man with a clear mission and a compelling mandate from God. He thought he knew who Jesus was in his life, and he preached the coming of the Christ seemingly without doubt.

Today, however, is a different story. We see John in prison, filled with doubt and questions. Was this Jesus the one about whom he was preaching? Was his mission a failure? Was God with him while he was in prison?

The patience that James preached, and which the church seeks in this Advent season, is precisely where faith can mature and grow, as it did for John. Today, we're invited to recall the presence and love of God active so in the past and know that he is with us now. This realization sows confidence and hope in our hearts. God never abandons us! God is ever merciful and faithful.

Praying the Word

O God,
at times we are overwhelmed with doubts and questions.
Help us with your powerful grace
to always remember your mercy and faithful love,
and to recognize your Holy Spirit at work
in the everyday challenges of life.
May we live this day in the joy and peace
which your Christ will bestow on us at his coming.
Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 18, 2016

God is with Us!

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 7:10-14

This is the famous Emmanuel prophecy addressed to Ahaz in a time of crisis and need. Isaiah invites the king and the nation to trust in God's faithfulness rather than succumb to fear. It sets up today's Gospel very nicely.

Romans 1:1-7

In these opening verses of the epistle to the Romans, Paul emphatically declares his faith in Jesus Christ: Son of God by the Spirit's power, and Son of David "according to the flesh" (1:3).

Matthew 1:18-24

As Advent draws to a close, the Gospel for this final Sunday of the season depicts the annunciation to Joseph, son of David, concerning Mary's conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Sharing the Word

What God promised to Ahaz in the first reading is fulfilled in the scene in today's Gospel. Jesus is the promised Savior, and he is truly God's presence among us — *Emmanuel*. At the end of the Gospel of Matthew, following the resurrection, Jesus makes his own the promise that the angel made to Joseph, namely, "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Mt 28:20).

As we prepare for the liturgical commemoration of Christ's first coming among us at Christmas, we do well to recall his promise to remain with us always. The Second Vatican Council enumerated five such ways in which the risen Christ is present to his church: in

the ministry of bishops and priests, in the word proclaimed, in the sacraments, when the church prays and worships God, and especially in the Eucharist (see *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 7). We also can add that Christ is present in the least brothers and sisters of ours (see Mt 25:40), and in other moments and experiences throughout our lives. God's promised Savior, Jesus Christ, remains with us always as we wait for his return in glory.

Praying the Word

Lord Jesus,
you promised to remain always with your church.
Like Isaiah and Paul,
may we never lack the ability to trust
in your promises and your abiding presence.
We await your coming again in glory one day,
sustained by your word and your sacrament.
Amen.

Nativity of the Lord
Christmas
Mass at Midnight
December 25, 2016

Today is Born our Savior, Christ the Lord!

Breaking the Word

Isaiah 9:1-6

Isaiah poetically describes the various names and titles of the Child born to save us: “Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace” (5). His Davidic kingdom will last forever; justice and right judgment will sustain it.

Titus 2:11-14

The grace of God that saves all is none other than our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Luke 2:1-14

This is the gospel story most associated with Christmas: the census, the birth in Bethlehem, the laying of the Christ Child in a manger, angels singing, and shepherds being the first to receive the Good News — Gospel — of our salvation in Jesus Christ!

Sharing the Word

Dean Martin sings, “You’re nobody till somebody loves you,” a message that fits well with today’s celebration of Christmas. We are the beloved sons and daughters of God our Father. He has loved us and marvelously fulfilled his ancient promise to send a Savior and Redeemer. Jesus is God’s promised Savior, the only begotten Son.

From the beginning of time, God has desired to share his life and his love with creation and all of us. This desire of God is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. Now, we are invited to love God in return. Jesus

shows us the way, and we respond according to our personal call, our situation in life, our gifts, and our talents. The wonder and mystery is that we can experience God personally and intimately in Christ, and celebrate God's love manifested powerfully in the Eucharist.

Christmas proclaims God's saving love, which is life-giving in every way. May the knowledge of God's love for us deepen in this Christmas season. The world might tell us that we're nobody until somebody loves us, but today's celebration reminds us that, indeed, Somebody loves us! God loves us so much that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Savior and Redeemer.

Praying the Word

Thank you, Father most holy,
for fulfilling your promises
by sending us a Savior and a Redeemer.
Your mercy and love are infinite!
May we spend this Christmas with grateful hearts.
Through your promised Savior, Jesus Christ,
who is Lord forever and ever.
Amen.

Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph December 30, 2016

When a Sunday does not occur between December 25 and January 1, this feast is celebrated on December 30 with *only one reading before the Gospel*.

The Family as a Community of Love and Sharing

Breaking the Word

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14 (I)

The author's ideal family is portrayed. Sons are encouraged to revere their fathers as an atonement for sin, a preservation from sin, and the source of blessings.

Colossians 3:12-21 or Colossians 3:12-17 (II)

Paul tells the members of the church how a Christian community is to be organized. The longer version of the reading includes several admonitions: for wives to be subordinate to their husbands, husbands to love their wives generously, and children to be obedient.

Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

Matthew depicts the Holy Family fleeing into Egypt in order to avoid Herod's jealous wrath. His return to Nazareth was to fulfill the prophecy that God would call his son out of Egypt.

Sharing the Word

It is sad to say that many families today suffer the effects of divorce, adultery, poverty and homelessness, abusive situations, and pornography — just to name a few of the challenges confronting couples and families. At the same time, the number of Catholic weddings has fallen precipitously in recent years. In the midst of such "bad news," today's feast sets a tone of prayer and hopefulness for

family life in the image of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

While the language of Paul's words regarding wives in the second reading sounds harsh, even jarring to our modern ears, it was welcome news in his day. Compare, for example, Paul's admonition to wives, husbands, and children with the reading from Sirach, which speaks only of the relationship between a father and a son, with barely a mention of a mother and wife.

We understand today that family life is grounded in the mutual love and communion of both husband and wife. Their loving and sacramental union is essential for healthy, happy, and holy children, and an antidote to the doom and gloom that is so often reported.

Praying the Word

Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,
you are the model of family life
and our source of joy this day.
We pray for all engaged couples,
for married persons, and for families.
May they experience the help of your mercy
so that the church and society
may always be blessed
with healthy, happy, and holy families.
Amen.





EUCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
Poetry • Books

Art Review



Fra Angelico
THE
ANNUNCIATORY
ANGEL, detail

Michael Perez, SSS,
and John
Christman, SSS

There's a popular novel by Dan Brown entitled *Angels and Demons*. And given the tone and tenor of Hollywood movies these days, I imagine many people seeing that title for the first time would expect the story to be heavy on the demons and light on the angels. Demons, demonic possession, and supernatural evil spirits seem to proliferate in television, novels, and film. Sadly, it seems that when our secular culture does contemplate the spiritual realm it is inclined to do so with an eye toward evil and fear. But it doesn't have to be that way.

Angels in the Catholic tradition are protectors, healers, and bringers of God's good news. They are good, holy, and inspirational. The archangel Michael is designated "guardian of your (God's) people" in the Book of Daniel 12:1. The archangel Raphael accompanies Tobias, heals Tobit, and proclaims, "I am Raphael, one of the seven angels who stand ever ready to enter the presence of the glory of the Lord (Tb 12:15)." Similarly, the archangel Gabriel announces the good news of the birth of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Luke.

We are likely most acquainted with Gabriel, whom we hear about in the liturgy when the Gospel of Luke is read, especially during the Christmas season or on feasts of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We are all familiar with these words: "In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary" (Lk 1:26-28). Gabriel, whose beautiful words to Mary inspired her awe-inspiring Magnificat, announced the coming of Emmanuel.

Throughout the history of Christian art, there have been numerous depictions of angels. From the sculpted angels that line the exteriors of innumerable churches and cathedrals to the luminous angels that fill so many stained glass windows, the presence of angels is ubiquitous in Catholic liturgical experience. Who can forget the unrivalled artistry

of Giotto's distraught and agonized angels crying at Jesus' crucifixion? Or Henry Tanner's annunciation that portrays the angel Gabriel as pure light warmly shining upon the young Virgin Mary?

Of course, no list, however brief, of famous depictions of angels would be complete without mention of the great early Italian Renaissance artist Fra Angelico. His is the annunciation we likely have in mind when we picture Gabriel speaking his history-altering words to Mary. His are the angels we likely picture welcoming the saints to heaven. His are the angels we imagine singing their song at the birth of our Messiah.

This Advent and Christmas, then, perhaps we can put away for a while the supernatural horror films and novels and focus instead on the good spirits in our tradition. The angels who hold banners joyously proclaiming the birth of Jesus that are part of our nativity scenes. The angels who powerfully proclaim the good news of salvation in our scripture readings. The angels who join in festive hymns of praise, singing "Gloria in excelsis Deo." Let us as a church delight in the good angels and in their message of salvation.

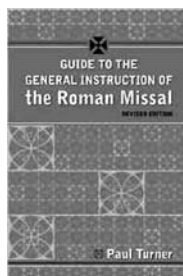
Book Reviews



IN THESE OR SIMILAR WORDS: PRAYING AND CRAFTING THE LANGUAGE OF THE LITURGY
Paul Turner
Franklin Park, Illinois:
World Library Publications, 2014
112 pp., \$18.95



WHOSE MASS IS IT? WHY PEOPLE CARE SO MUCH ABOUT THE CATHOLIC LITURGY
Paul Turner
Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2015
134 pp., \$14.95



A GUIDE TO THE GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL, REVISED EDITION
Paul Turner
Chicago, Illinois:
Liturgy Training Publications, 2011
32 pp., \$5.00

What did I do on my vacation? Catch up on my Paul Turner books! Turner provides three important resources of late to assist the church,

and specifically priests, in knowing why we do what we do at Mass and the expectations the church has of its prayer leaders. Turner is noted for his writing acumen and for answering important questions from the great wealth of church history, theology, and rubrics, making pastoral needs understood and fulfilled through his explanations.

In These or Similar Words is a special guide for understanding the directives for priests found in the third edition of the *Roman Missal* (RM). Turner examines the places in the liturgy that allow for variation and extemporaneous “prepared” words, those where we are not to vary from the words in the RM, and a list of words that are currently being used in the RM. His explanation of the history and reasons for the revision process is valuable, as is his perspective on why particular “new” words were used in the texts of the RM. The glossary of these words is a major piece in this work.

Furthermore, Turner reviews some of the actions, such as genuflections or bows, and what is appropriate when and how. He comments on many actions and words that are left over from previous eras and why the revised RM has a clear preference for certain practices. This is a great resource for those who serve in the ministry of presider.

Whose Mass Is It? is a more scholarly work, offering a summary of the theology and historical realities in the Catholic Church that led to the new RM. The Second Vatican Council awakened the experience of the liturgy for all, with everyone having a position “at the table.” Turner reviews in great depth the prayers of the RM, the history of the sacramentaries, and how “ownership” of the Mass stretches from Christ praying to God the Father, to the priest, to everyday worshipers who felt that the Mass was now theirs. He gives an excellent summary of the history of the U.S. process for the translation of the RM in the 1990s, the drama around the catechism, and the unfolding of the early twenty-first century tug of war that ultimately produced the RM.

Turner reflects on all the stakeholders who are part of the liturgy and the power struggle that ensued in bringing the present Mass texts to reality. Ultimately, however, the liturgy belongs to Christ, and Turner never fails to emphasize this truth. Chapter 7 summarizes the varying pieces of “Whose Mass is it?” and gives a valuable bibliography and excellent endnotes.

Finally, *A Guide to the General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) provides a succinct summary of the reason for the GIRM. In very short

“chapters” or topics [they are not numbered as chapters], the sacrifice of Christ is highlighted, as well as the holiness of the Eucharist, the participation of the ministers, the purpose of the celebration of the Mass, and the understanding of the changes in the missal.

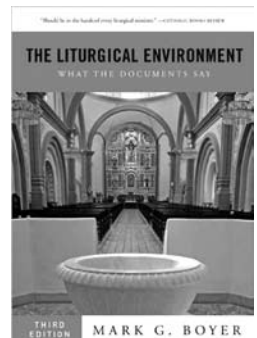
This resource, while a few years old now, will prove a good review for new liturgical ministers who assist with the Mass or as a study guide for other members of your parish, such as the pastoral council or an adult faith-sharing group. Many Catholics might appreciate a clear articulation of “why we do what we do” at Mass. In this brief pamphlet, we have a very helpful resource that will help us unpack the purpose for which we celebrate the Mass.

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

Every now and then, it is good to brush up on liturgical law as it applies to our worship space and ritual life. Mark Boyer captures the importance of the liturgical art and environment of our sacred spaces in the expanded and comprehensive third edition of this important work. It is a no-nonsense book, taking each piece of our liturgical furniture and vessels and detailing their significance to our worship spaces and the rituals that take place within them.

In 15 chapters, Boyer uses the updated ritual books, including *Built of Living Stones*, to illustrate the importance of each item to the overall vision of Catholic worship, and suggests helpful catechesis for parishioners and liturgy committee members. He quotes source after source in this volume, making it a handy reference to ensure your liturgical environments are in conformity with liturgical law. Additionally, three chapters (11, 13, and 14) discuss the importance of shrines, popular devotions, progressive solemnity and marriage, funerals, and the pastoral care of the sick.

Boyer’s stress on the baptismal font as tomb and womb will help your parish renew your baptismal area; the same holds true for his teaching on the importance of reservation of the Eucharist in a specific tabernacle and space. Pastors might quote selections in Sunday bulletins and on church websites to offer further catechesis



**THE LITURGICAL
ENVIRONMENT:
WHAT THE
DOCUMENTS
SAY**
(Third Edition)
Mark G. Boyer
Collegeville,
Minnesota:
Liturgical Press,
2015
296 pp., \$25.95

and to help parishioners understand the why and the wherefore of our rich liturgical practice.

Well worth the read, this book is an important investment for pastors, liturgy commissions, seminarians, and all who have responsibility for the church's worship environment. I highly recommend it.

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



**SHE: ROBED AND
WORDLESS;
POEMS BY LOU
ELLA HICKMAN**
Lou Ella Hickman,
IWBS
Winston-Salem,
North Carolina:
Press 53, 2015

Perhaps the most famous line in the movie *Contact*, based on the novel by Carl Sagan, is: "They should have sent a *poet*." Dr. Ellie Arroway (Jodie Foster) has been flung into deep outer space and can hardly believe the beauty of the galaxies, nebulae, stars, and planets she is seeing.

Incarnate Word Sister Lou Ella Hickman *is* a poet, and the stars she visits in her little volume reflect the women she picks from the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. A couple of them — like David's mother — are not exactly *in* the Bible, but had to have existed. Hickman writes a few lines about each as if she is launching them into the night sky. She very helpfully includes in her notes at the end of the book the scripture passage that inspired each poem.

And what poems! Each one is a little masterpiece. Each one reminds me of Archibald MacLeish's famous dictum: "A poem should not *mean*, but *be*." Many of them have a Zen koan quality about them. Take this three-liner called "she/winter" that is the prologue:

dark like some shy wolf
came and she was robbed wordless
a forest and snow

It quiets the mind, reduces it to contemplation. Like much of Scripture, there is nothing to do with it except to imagine your heart has two hands and can squeeze it until drops of, well, grace drip onto your spirit. Even the titles of these little gems give evidence that this is not some ordinary romp through Scripture: "a jewish girl advises the wife of naaman," "sarah talks to isaac," "the rape of tamar: ten years later," "a

woman at the last supper." [She eschews capital letters throughout].

And so, these poems would make an excellent way to jump start your meditation, like a miniature *lectio divina*. Or what would it be like to put them before a bible study group, first reading the Scripture and then the poem, letting them both sit there in the room as if they were sacred oils for healing.

As Richard Rohr reminds us in one of his daily meditations (May 8, 2016): "I'm convinced that once you learn how to look out at life from the contemplative eyes of the True Self, your politics and economics are going to change on their own."

she: robed and wordless might be just the thing for an election year. Sending a poet who knows how to see into *that* night sky might change everything!

Joseph R. LaGuardia
Interim Dean
School of Graduate and Professional Studies
Ursuline College
Pepper Pike, Ohio

Poetry

Taking Holy Communion

Taste the Light of the world
in your innermost room
the place for speaking

in monosyllables for
a three-person God.
Come, Lord, Come.

In the quiet rapture
of your pew bowed like an ark
travel in a new language.

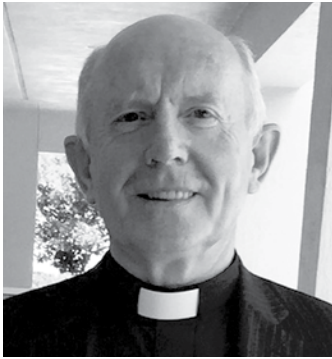
Sojourn in parables
be lulled into visions
dress in holy clothes

with golden birds
sewn into the sleeves
pinions for your journey.

Between earth's furrows
and eternity's horizons
realize God is within you.

See the Lamb's blood
protecting the lintels of your room.
Come, Lord, Come.

Philip C. Kolin



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

George Dunne, SSS

Like many life-long Catholics, the celebration of the Eucharist has been at the heart of my faith for as long as I can remember. Growing up in Ireland in the '50s and '60s was an experience of living in a Catholic ethos of weekly Mass and the sacraments and the great liturgical celebrations that were woven into the fabric of our national identity, most especially the annual festivities associated with Ireland's patron, Saint Patrick.

The year 1975 marked a turning point in my life. I was 24 years old and grappling with thoughts of priesthood and religious life. I had finished two years of college in Scotland designed for late vocations and was working in a store in my home town, Dublin, while still awaiting some "sign" from God of the path I should take. One evening I was attending Mass in my parish church celebrated by the associate pastor. I have a vivid memory that during the Eucharistic Prayer he prayed the words with such devotion and meaning that I seemed to be hearing them for the first time. I left with a renewed appreciation for the Eucharist and a realization that here was the "sign" I was seeking!

From that moment on, the prayers of the Eucharist took on a new significance in my life and continue to do so. I began to be more attentive to those prayers and appreciative of the inspiration they offer for growth in the spiritual life. They articulate our common faith and draw us into a movement of praise and blessing, cognizant of God's ever-faithful love.

While working in Dublin, I would often attend weekday Mass at a small chapel staffed by a religious community called the Blessed Sacrament Congregation. Like most Dubliners, I knew the chapel only as "the Blessed Sacrament Chapel."

I learned at Easter that I was entitled to a week's vacation. I decided to spend the week on retreat at a Trappist monastery in the Irish countryside. There I befriended a monk who became my spiritual guide. During one of our daily walks around the monastery property, he suggested I speak with a friend of his who was a member of a community in Dublin at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, the same chapel I was attending. Even I could not ignore the guiding hand of God in the path he wished me to go!

In February 1976, I joined the Blessed Sacrament Congregation as a postulant and next year will celebrate 40 years of religious profession. As I do so, I will be especially grateful for the witness of the Blessed Sacrament Community in Dublin and the priest who opened my eyes and heart to the often under-appreciated beauty of our Eucharistic Prayers.



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Anthony Schueller, S.S.S.

(Signed) Anthony Schueller, S.S.S., Editor, Emmanuel.

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“ I am writing to give you good news which will bring joy to your heart which is so dedicated to the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Last Sunday, the Feast of the Precious Blood, I preached in our chapel about this beautiful redemptive devotion to the precious blood, the reason for its divine worship...I am convinced that devout souls who honor the precious blood of our Lord halt human bloodshed ...”

Eymard
Sp. J. S.

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, Vol.5 of Letters #1820

