

# Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality

September/October 2016



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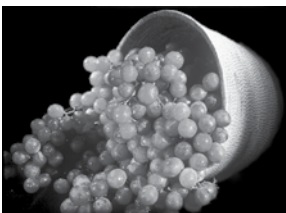
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# Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 122 Number 5



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## FROM THE EDITOR

In mid-May, I participated in the ordination liturgy of the Diocese of Cleveland at the Cathedral of Saint John the Evangelist during which five deacons were ordained as priests. It was a beautiful celebration before an overflowing assembly.

As the newly ordained priests were invested with the stole and the chasuble, symbols of their office in the church, the choir sang a gorgeous hymn entitled *Heart of a Shepherd*, composed by Rory Cooney who makes use of the Gelineau verses of Psalm 23 in a highly original interpretation. The refrain goes:

If you love me, feed my lambs;  
be my heart, my voice, my hands.  
If you love me, feed my sheep.  
And for my part, *I give you the heart of a shepherd.*

The words of the refrain especially resonated with me since the familiar text from John 21, which tells of the miraculous catch of fish, the breakfast Jesus prepared for his disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and his threefold questioning of Peter, was the Gospel for my own ordination in the late 1970s. The experience reignited powerful memories of that day.

During a Mass on the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus on June 3, at the end of a special three-day Jubilee of Mercy for priests and seminarians in the city of Rome, Pope Francis again touched on a theme that he first articulated in the opening days of his papacy: that shepherds must be close to the people and wholly committed to them.

The Holy Father encouraged the priests gathered in Saint Peter's Square that day to be joyful, daring, and to seek out even those who are most distant from God. "A shepherd after the heart of God," he

said, “has a heart sufficiently free to set aside his own concerns. He does not live by calculating his gains or how long he has worked: he is not an accountant of the Spirit, but [someone] who seeks out those in need. . . . In seeking, he finds, and he finds because he takes risks. He does not stop when disappointed and he does not yield to weariness. Indeed, he is stubborn in doing good, anointed with the divine obstinacy that loses sight of no one.”

We are able to love and serve in this manner because each of us has first been touched by love — the love of God in Christ his Son. “There I know I am welcomed and understood as I am; there, with all my sins and limitations, I know the certainty that I am chosen and loved.” Francis’ words reminded me of something he said in a highly publicized interview following his election, in answer to the question “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?”, “I am a sinner.” Implicitly, he was also saying, “I am loved and redeemed by Christ.”

The call to have the heart of a shepherd pertains *to all who serve the church*, the people of God, in ministry: the ordained, those in the consecrated life, and those in lay ecclesial ministry. It is good for us to ask frequently, as the Holy Father suggested in his homily, “Where is my heart directed?” And to recall moments of first love and intensity when our souls were touched by God and we heard the Shepherd’s call to follow him.

### **In This Issue**

At the start of a new pastoral year, Robert Nogosek, CSC, shares the conclusion of his article on “Integrating Social Teaching with Evangelization.” Owen F. Cummings, deacon and academic dean at Oregon’s Mount Angel Seminary, examines the theology of mercy and love in the Gospels of Luke and John. We are grateful to Owen for his beautiful Year of Mercy reflections which enrich our understanding and living of divine mercy as disciples and ministers. Dennis J. Billy, CSSR, writes another in his excellent series on various writers and the Eucharist, highlighting here the writings and sermons of Ronald Knox, the Anglican convert and Catholic priest.



Anthony Schueller, SSS



## EUCCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

# Integrating Social Teaching with Evangelization, Part II

by Robert J. Nogosek

*The church carries out its mission of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ in a spirit of solidarity with all people, recognizing that the world faces great challenges and difficulties regarding the protection and care of the earth, our common home.*

Holy Cross  
Father Robert  
J. Nogosek  
has taught  
and written  
extensively on  
many subjects  
throughout a  
distinguished  
career as an  
academic and  
an author. This  
is the second  
part of his  
article which  
appeared in the  
July/August 2016  
issue.

The bishops who approved the final text of *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, on December 7, 1965, during the hurried last days of the council, recognized that it was an imperfect document needing further development as an expression of the church's relationship to the world. There needed to be an integration of the church's social teaching with its mission of evangelization, along with greater consideration given to the forces in the world opposing the Gospel.

Crucial in that post-conciliar development were two biblical concepts proclaimed by Pope John XXIII and underpinning the composition of *Gaudium et Spes*: the signs of the times and human solidarity. Here, we focus on human solidarity — its origin from Pope John XXIII, its application to *Gaudium et Spes*, and its influence in the post-conciliar development of the church's social teaching, including the call of Pope Francis for "a pastoral conversion" in his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* and "an ecological conversion" in his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*.

### Human Solidarity — Papal Origin

When *Time* magazine chose Pope John XXIII as Man of the Year in 1962, its editors justified their decision by saying he "wanted to communicate a sense of our oneness as a human family," and to set in motion ideas and forces which were releasing hope throughout the world. This had been conveyed in his radio message on September 11, 1962, when he urged all people in the world, and especially Christians, to *solidarity* with one another, because the forthcoming council was to cooperate

in the triumph of peace on earth, whereby our earthly existence would be “more noble, more just, and more deserving for all.”

A month later in his opening address at the council, Pope John said the purpose of the council was “bringing together the church’s best energies and striving to have men welcome more favorably the good tidings of salvation,” in order to prepare and consolidate “the path toward the unity of mankind which is required as a necessary foundation, in order that the earthly city may be brought to the resemblance of that heavenly city where truth reigns, charity is the law, and whose extent is eternity.”

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

*Gaudium et Spes* highlighted the concept of human solidarity by saying the council “offers to mankind the honest assistance of the church in fostering the brotherhood of all” (3) during these changing times when the “destiny of the human community has become all of a piece, where once the various groups of men had a kind of history of their own” (5), and when even on the individual level, “a man’s ties with his fellows are constantly being multiplied” (6). It says, “Christian revelation contributes greatly to this communion between persons” (23), since “God, who has fatherly concern for everyone, has willed that all men should constitute one family and treat one another in a spirit of brotherhood” (24). It adds: “Every social group must take account of the needs and legitimate aspirations of other groups and even the general welfare of the entire human family” (26).

Accordingly, “In our times a special obligation binds us to make ourselves the neighbor of absolutely every person, and of actively helping him when he comes across our path . . . (for) the basic equality of all must receive increasingly great recognition” (27, 29). We are reminded that Jesus Christ “commanded his apostles to preach to all peoples the gospel message so that the human race might become the family of God, in which the fullness of the law would be love” (32). Since this is God’s plan, our “effort to establish a universal brotherhood is not a hopeless one” (38).

### **Post-conciliar Development**

A major development of *Gaudium et Spes* after the council regarding the guiding concept of human solidarity is seen in Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Populorum Progressio* (On the Development of Peoples), issued March 26, 1967, which more than 40 years later would be



acclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2009 social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, 8, as “the *Rerum Novarum* of the present age” through its “shedding light upon humanity’s journey toward unity.”

In *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul says: “We must all recognize that the social question has become worldwide” (3), and accordingly should focus on “the development of those peoples who are striving to escape from hunger, misery, endemic diseases, and ignorance, . . . those looking for a wider share in the benefits of civilization and a more active improvement of their human qualities, (and) . . . those who are aiming purposefully at their complete fulfillment (1). By reason of the church sharing “the noblest aspirations of man,” when she sees them not satisfied she “wishes to help them attain their full flowering, and offers men what she possesses as her characteristic attitude: a global vision of man and of the human race” (13).

*Gaudium et Spes* highlighted the concept of human solidarity by saying the council “offers to mankind the honest assistance of the church in fostering the brotherhood of all.”

Human development, Pope Paul says, “cannot be limited to mere economic growth,” but in order to be complete, “it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man.” Since “every man is called upon to develop and fulfill himself,” the pope sees him “responsible for his fulfillment as he is for his salvation.” This involves “enhancing his personal worth and becoming more a person” (15), while recognizing that human solidarity is fundamental to the attainment of this human fulfillment. He adds: “There can be no progress toward the complete development without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity,” and accordingly “we must also begin to work together to build a common future of the human race” (43). This requires “building a world where every man, no matter what his race, religion, or nationality, can live a fully human life, freed from servitude imposed on him by other men or by natural forces over which he has not sufficient control, a world where freedom is not an empty word and where the poor man Lazarus can sit down at the same table with the rich man” (47).

*Populorum Progressio* concludes with the pope calling for “the resolute commitment of each individual . . . to the struggle against underdevelopment, . . . to discover the causes of poverty, to find the



means to combat it, (and) to overcome it resolutely" (75). "No one," he says, "can remain indifferent to the lot of his brothers (in the world) who are still buried in wretchedness, and the victims of insecurity." He says that as the church we need to identify with Christ who said, "I have compassion on the multitude" (74).

Pope John Paul II commemorated in 1987 the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio* by issuing his encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On the Social Concern of the Church). He emphasizes that the social concern of the church binds the Catholic conscience in responsibility for the universal common good, which *Populorum Progressio* had termed "the duty of solidarity" (9.8), and which Pope John Paul calls a moral responsibility for "the full development of the whole individual and of all people" (38.3).

*The evangelizing mission of the church implies a social dimension because "to evangelize is to make the kingdom of God present in our world."*

He says this moral responsibility of social concern is "not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far, (but) a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the . . . good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all" by reason of the gospel mandate "to lose oneself" for the sake of serving the good of one's neighbor (38.6). This constitutes living by the virtue of solidarity that involves "a change of behavior or mentality or mode of existence" through "the positive and moral value of the growing awareness of interdependence among individuals and nations" (38.4f).

### **Pope Francis and the New Evangelization**

This entire post-conciliar development to integrate the social teaching of the church with its evangelizing mission through the biblical concepts of the signs of the times and human solidarity forms a context for understanding the thrust of the New Evangelization as promoted by Pope Francis in his 2013 apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*. The Holy Father says that the evangelizing mission of the church implies a social dimension because "to evangelize is to make the kingdom of God present in our world" (176), for "God, in Christ, redeems not only the individual person, but also the social relations



existing between human persons (177). This redemption of social relations is to be seen as the liberating action of the Holy Spirit for “loosening the knots of human affairs,” and the church on earth is to cooperate in this work of divine mercy by our desiring, seeking, and protecting the good of others (178f). To the extent that God reigns within us “the life of society will be a setting for universal fraternity, justice, peace, and dignity” (180).

Pope Francis says we are not to restrict religion to the private sphere as though its purpose is only to prepare souls for heaven, for in his reign over the world “God wants his children to be happy in this world too, even though they are called to fulfilment in eternity” (182). Consequently, authentic faith “always involves a deep desire to change the world, to transmit values, to leave this earth somehow better than we found it” (183), and this requires in the church “a pastoral conversion” so that its pastoral practice reflects to the world the authentic face of Jesus Christ.

### **Ecological Conversion**

In his 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis calls for an “ecological conversion” through which the effects of our encounter with the risen Christ as the Lord of creation will become evident in our relationship with the world around us (217). This requires a radical change of heart, since we now “lack an awareness of our common origin, of our mutual belonging, and of a future to be shared with everyone” (202). We have become obsessed, he says, with a consumerist lifestyle (204), but happiness “means knowing how to limit some needs which only diminish us, and being open to the many different possibilities which life can offer” (223).

It is easy for many today, he says, “to accept the idea of infinite or unlimited growth, which proves so attractive to economists, financiers, and experts in technology, (although) based on the lie that . . . an infinite supply of the earth’s goods, . . . energy and resources are available, that it is possible to renew them quickly, and that the negative effects of the exploitation of the natural order can be easily absorbed” (106). Rather than seeing nature “as something separate from ourselves or a mere setting in which we live,” there needs to be an awareness that “we are part of nature, included in it, and thus in constant interaction with it” (139).

Nature, the Holy Father reminds us, has been designed and given to us to be our common home as the human family. We need to see humanity's home on this planet as "a common good . . . belonging to all and meant for all" (23), such that each human community is to "take from the bounty of the earth whatever it needs for subsistence" while recognizing a corresponding "duty to protect the earth and to ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations" (67). We need "to speak once more of the figure of a Father who creates and who alone owns the world" (75), and calls us to cooperate with him in its care (117) to prevent "environmental degradation" (186).

The pope recognizes that for many today there is great difficulty to accept this challenge because of the "rampant individualism . . . connected with today's culture of instant gratification, . . . (and) our inability to think seriously about future generations . . . linked to our inability . . . to give consideration to those who remain excluded from development" (162). He says that "as long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment; businesses profit by calculating and paying only a fraction of the costs involved" (195). This is due to a mindset that "lacks concern for the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society" because of "its emphasis on success and self-reliance" rather than to make "efforts to help the slow, the weak, or the less talented to find opportunities in life" (196).

*A change of heart is needed in order to become capable of understanding the unity of all creation and acting to protect it as God desires.*

Many today, the pope says, are lacking a sense of awe and wonder, and tend to consider all of nature simply as a resource for our possession and use, rather than appreciating each organism "as a creature of God . . . good and admirable in itself" (140). We need "a loving awareness that we are not disconnected from the rest of creatures, but join in a splendid universal communion," and as believers "we do not look at the world from without but from within, conscious of the bonds with which the Father has linked us to all beings" (220).


There needs to be the recognition that "God created the world, writing into it an order and a dynamism that human beings have no right to ignore, (and that) Christ has taken unto himself this material world and now, risen, is intimately present to each being, surrounding it with



his affection and penetrating it with his light" (221). A change of heart must occur in order to become capable of a deeper understanding of life, such that we can say, "Nature is filled with words of love" (225), and that encountering God "does not mean fleeing from this world or turning our back on nature" (239).

### Conclusion

Pope Francis has touched the hearts of multitudes by framing this ecological conversion in terms of earth being the common home of the entire human family. By this, not only has Pope Francis brought forward the biblical concept of human solidarity, but also that of the signs of the times made evident by an increasingly global consciousness of humanity coming to see that we are all responsible together for the care of the world, which divine revelation recognizes as a loving gift of God to the human species on earth.

We must not simply be as children exploring a world having riches to be discovered, but attain an adult consciousness of our responsibility to use our knowledge and energy in caring for our common heritage, that it may not lose its ability to sustain life for future generations. 

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## EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# Theology of Mercy and Love: Insights from Saint Luke and Saint John

by Owen F. Cummings

*The faith and eucharistic practice of early Christian communities reveal much about how our own life and worship can embody God's merciful love.*

"It is the gospel reading that is the most decisive element in reminding the congregation that the fundamental purpose of the Eucharist is to encounter again the presence of the risen Christ in the midst of the church and to remind us of our Christian identity as the body of Christ. . . . The nature of the Gospels as narrative and their central role in the Liturgy of the Word . . . is to deepen our passion for God, to move us to a more profound and vibrant relationship with the Jesus who comes to us in the Eucharist, whose very being is entwined with us in communion, and whose grace can sustain us" (Donald Senior, CP<sup>1</sup>).

Deacon Owen F. Cummings is the academic dean and Regents' Professor of Theology at Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Oregon.

### **Introduction: Eucharist and Gospels**

As scholarship continues to probe how the earliest Christians, the Aramaic-speaking Christians, thought of Jesus and related to him, one thing seems certain: they loved Jesus. Their love for and devotion to Jesus found expression in how they titled him, "Lord Jesus," giving to Jesus the title they gave to the Lord God. Patterns of belief and devotion acknowledging Jesus as divine were in place before the writings of Paul, that is, "between the execution of Jesus and the date of the (Pauline) epistles, a scant twenty years. . . ." <sup>2</sup> In the fine phrase of Paul in the Letter to the Philippians, Jesus was "in the form of God" (2:5-11).

In a theologically undefined but devotionally certain sense, Jesus embodied God for them. Historically, that embodiment had taken place in the past. Jesus had come among them: he had walked, talked, healed among them, and he had died and been raised from the dead. In Aramaic, *maran atha*, "our Lord has come." Eschatologically, or in terms of hope, that embodiment had yet to reach its plenary point: they



expected him to come again in glory to bring creation and the world order to its consummation. In Aramaic, *marana tha*, "Our Lord, come!" The earliest Christians lived, as all Christians live, between these two poles of incarnation and parousia. In between these two poles lay the regular rhythm of the celebration of the Eucharist. That Aramaic prayer-phrase is also capable of being rendered in a decidedly eucharistic fashion meaning "Our Lord has come and is now here, is present."<sup>3</sup>

As the earliest Christians gathered for the Eucharist in the decades of the first century, the Scriptures they shared were the Old Testament Scriptures. They themselves were becoming in their eucharistic assemblies the New Testament Scriptures. As they gathered in those early days, they shared memories of Jesus: his words, especially his most memorable words in The Lord's Prayer and at the Last Supper; his actions, especially reaching out to heal others and to bring those on the peripheries into his inclusive circle of fellowship; the memory of his horrendous death including the memory of their earliest leaders' failure to remain with him in that hour; and, finally, his being gloriously raised from the dead.

Memories were passed in conversation from one person to another, what scholarship calls "oral tradition." Gradually, these memories became more fixed, in catechetical summaries for teachers such as the collection of parables in Matthew 13 or the Sermon on the Mount in the same Gospel (chapters 5-7). Eventually, these memories were put into narrative form by the authors of the four Gospels which we name (in probable order of writing) Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John. These narratives of Jesus were crafted in response to the pastoral needs and circumstances of the communities in which their authors lived. Necessarily, then, these "Gospels," emerging out of eucharistic assemblies, reflect both the primary theological interests of the evangelists and the primary pastoral needs of their communities. New Testament scholars give their lives to researching these realities, and we benefit so much from their labors. This is not the place to rehearse those benefits even in summary form, but what we can do briefly in this reflection is explore some insights from two of the evangelists, Luke and John, that reflect mercy and love in Pope Francis' Year of Mercy.

### **Gospel of Saint Luke: The Parable of the Good Samaritan**

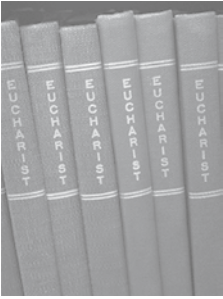
Luke is a master craftsman when it comes to storytelling. The parable of

the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37) finds its context in these words: "And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'" (10:25-28). Jesus was being tested by the "opposition." Historically, the lawyer is asking Jesus the question about inheriting eternal life, but pastorally and existentially Luke and his community are posing the same question. The final response of Jesus to the question is the parable of the Good Samaritan, unique to Luke.

*The Gospels, emerging out of eucharistic assemblies, reflect both the primary theological interests of the evangelists and the primary pastoral needs of their communities.*

There are many classical studies of the parables of Jesus available to the interested reader. The fifth volume of John P. Meier's magisterial study of the historical Jesus is devoted to the parables, and what he has to say is enlightening. The probable source of this parable, either for the historical Jesus or the theological Luke, is the narrative found in 2 Chronicles 28:8-15. There, we are told that some northern Israelites from the city of Samaria (8) took pity on prisoners who had been carried off from Judah and Jerusalem (10) by the Israelite army. These "Samaritans" clothed the naked among them, gave them food and drink, anointed them, put the weak on donkeys, and brought them to Jericho to be cared for by their fellow Judeans (15). "This passage," says Meier, "may well have supplied Luke the artist with the basic material for his literary masterpiece, a type of midrash on an Old Testament narrative. . . ." <sup>4</sup> Whether it is a Lucan creation or goes back to the historical Jesus is not especially important because the message it provides is entirely consonant with all we know of Jesus' teaching.

The parable is intended to provoke awareness of the non-tribal dimension of Jesus' teaching, and so of the non-tribal attitudes of Jesus' *ekklesia*. There is the obvious shock of the horrendous violence done to the traveling Judean, who is left half-dead on the road. The New Testament scholar Luke Timothy Johnson invites us to appreciate this shock further: "A deeper level of shock is the recognition that Jews esteemed for their place in the people and dedicated to holiness before the Lord would allow considerations of personal safety or even concern for ritual purity (a corpse defiled) to justify their not even crossing the road to look. . . . It is the hated enemy who is the hero with



a human heart. . . The point, we learn, is not who deserves to be cared for, but rather the demand to become a person who treats everyone encountered — however frightening, alien, naked, or defenseless — with compassion: ‘You go and do the same.’<sup>5</sup> Those final words — “You go and do the same” — are spoken not only to Jesus’ historic audience, but to his contemporary body, the church, assembled for Eucharist. They must go and do the same. They are to be people of love for others, people of mercy for all.

### **Luke 15 and Three Other Parables of Mercy**

Notice the introduction in Luke 15:1-2: “Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, ‘This man receives sinners and eats with them.’” The Pharisees had set the meticulous observance of the Torah as the way of standing right with God. Those who did not know the Torah or keep it were “sinners,” strangers to the way of righteousness. Think of what the Pharisees say in John 7:49, “But this crowd which does not know the law — they are accursed.” Jesus is not tribal, but consistently moves beyond conventionally imposed boundaries. He refused to categorize people. No one was an outcast.

The Pharisees could not bear that Jesus welcomed sinners and even ate with them (see Lk 5:30; 7:34). To eat with someone is to share the hand of fellowship with that person, in some fashion to identify with that person. The situation of the “sinners” and “outcasts” is documented in Luke 18:10-24, the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. The tax collectors and sinners are portrayed in the Gospel as open to Jesus and to conversion. The Pharisees are portrayed as closed to Jesus and to conversion. In Luke 18:11, we read literally in Greek: “The Pharisee prayed these things to himself. . . .” That phrase needs to be repeated to oneself if one is to grasp something of the possible meaning. “The Pharisee prayed these things to himself.” Was he praying quietly to himself, giving the phrase a positive meaning, or was he praying to himself, a negative meaning? It could go either way. What is clear is that he contrasts himself positively with regard to other people whom he dismisses as thieves, rogues, adulterers, tax-collectors, basically the mess that is humankind, all of us in some fashion.

Notice the tax-collector who stands “far off,” keeps his eyes lowered, beats his breast as a sign of repentance, cries out for mercy. “The parable is one that invites internalization by every reader because it



speaks to something deep within the heart of every human. The love of God can so easily turn into an idolatrous self-love. . . .<sup>6</sup> That was the message to be heard by the original hearers of the parable in the eucharistic assembly, and that is the message to be heard by us today in our eucharistic assembly. Notice with equal care, however, that while Jesus condemns Pharisaism in this stereotypical Pharisee, he does not condemn anyone by name. The eucharistic assembly does not condemn people.

Not only does the eucharistic assembly refuse to condemn people, although it will judge actions that simply do not make for flourishing in Jesus' holy body, but Jesus, and so also his holy body, the church, insists that no one needs to be considered lost. This insistence is what comes to the fore in these three parables in Luke 15: verses 4-7 (the Parable of the Lost Sheep), verses 8-10 (the Lost Coin), and verses 11-32 (the Lost Son). Each parable merits consideration in itself, but here attention will be given to the third, the Lost Son. Is the Lost Son, unique to Luke, his own creation to illustrate the teaching of Jesus, or did it have its origin in Jesus himself? John Meier convincingly considers it a creation of Luke, but, if so, it is utterly consistent with everything we know of Jesus.<sup>7</sup> There are three major characters in the parable: the father, the younger son, and the older son.

*The point of the parable of the Good Samaritan is not who deserves to be cared for, but rather the demand to become a person who treats everyone with compassion.*

*The Father:* In his excellent commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Luke Timothy Johnson says this of the father in our parable: "... the structure of the story demands our perception of the father as the main figure. . . . It is the father whose mercy and openness to both children stands as the emblem of Jesus' prophetic mission from God to restore the people with an open invitation to all."<sup>8</sup> The father in the parable is an icon of God the Father.

*The Younger Son:* The younger son is not orthodox by Jewish standards. He is not keeping the traditional commandment of the Torah, "Honor your father and your mother." Nonetheless, the father accedes to his request for his legacy, even as he watches his son go off to a far country to explore his freedom. At the same time, the father is waiting and



hoping in love for the return of the younger son, and, when he sees him returning in the distance, the father does not remain in place until the son makes his act of contrition, as it were. He runs out to welcome and embrace him and initiates a celebration of the homecoming.

There is a quite marvelous passage from the late Henri Nouwen (1932-1996) on the interiority of the younger son. The younger son, in Nouwen's passage, thinks to himself: "I am not sure any more that I have a safe home, and I observe other people who seem to be better off than I. I wonder how I can get to where they are. I try hard to please, to achieve success, to be recognized. When I fail, I feel jealous or resentful of these others. When I succeed, I worry that these others will be jealous or resentful of me. I become suspicious or defensive and increasingly afraid that I won't get what I so much desire or will lose what I already have. Caught in this tangle of needs and wants, I no longer know my own motivations. I feel victimized by my surroundings and distrustful of what others are doing or saying. Always on my guard, I lose my inner freedom and start dividing the world into those who are for me and those who are against me. I wonder if anyone really cares. I start looking for validations of my distrust. And wherever I go, I see them, and I say: 'No one can be trusted.' And then I wonder whether *anyone* ever really loved me. The world around me becomes dark. My heart grows heavy. My body is filled with sorrows. My life loses meaning. I have become a lost soul."<sup>9</sup>

Nouwen's unique and gifted blend of theology and pastoral-psychological insight invites us to think about the younger son in ways that are deeply and personally applicable. There is something of this younger son in each of us.

*The Older Son:* The older son is alienated from the father, as well as his younger brother. Listen to the way he speaks to his father: "I have been working like a slave for you. . . ." "Working like a slave for you" is not the language one uses to a loving parent. It is resentful language. Perhaps feeling obligated to remain with his father working the property, and perhaps feeling entitled because of his commitment of labor and life to the father, he seethes with resentment.

One contemporary author describes resentment in the most compellingly accurate terms. "To the resentful eye, everything is begrudged. People who have allowed the canker of resentment into their vision can never enjoy who they are or what they have. They are

always looking out towards others with resentment. Perhaps they are resentful because they see others as more beautiful, more gifted, or richer than themselves. The resentful eye lives out of its poverty and forgets its own inner harvest.”<sup>10</sup> The canker of resentment has prevented the older brother from seeing how richly gifted he is. He is living out of his self-imposed “poverty” of vision.

It is interesting to look carefully at what happens when his younger brother returns. The first thing we notice is resentment — he resents his father’s joy at his brother’s return. He resents the festive celebration on that occasion and refuses to join in. That refusal of the older brother to participate in the joy of his younger brother’s return home does not dictate any resentment on his father’s part toward him. No, the father comes out to meet the older son in the same way that he went out to meet the errant younger son returning home. In the difficult conversation that ensues notice that there is no mention of prostitutes in the story until the older brother brings it up! It is true that the younger son has wasted his part of the legacy, but nowhere does the narrative tell us that he wasted it on prostitutes. The prostitutes are in the mind of the older brother.

The latter part of the first century witnessed the opening up of the original Jewish, Aramaic-speaking community of Christians to the Greek-speaking Gentiles. Humanly speaking, it was inevitable that there would be conflict and tension as a result of this development. We see something of that conflict and tension peppered throughout the letters of Paul, leading him to affirm that there is “neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:28). Perhaps we hear an echo of this conflict and tension in our parable of the Lost Son. Is the older brother symbolic of the people of Israel and the Jewish-Christian community, and the younger brother symbolic of the errant (as traditionally understood by the Jews) Gentile-Christian community?

Whether that is the original case and set of circumstances or not, the hearers in Luke’s eucharistic assembly are being reminded of the utterly generous nature of God, and of the need to avoid the canker of resentment, and so are we. God’s magnanimity, merciful, loving, and generous open-heartedness, calls into question our constant temptation toward pusillanimity, small-mindedness, and poverty of vision.



## Gospel of Saint John: Jesus as the Incarnation of the Love that God Is

In his recent book on the Gospel of John, the New Testament scholar Richard Bauckham has a fine passage in which he summarizes the mystical ambience of the Gospel and some of its consequences for Christian living: "It has often been noticed that there is a resemblance between what is said of the Beloved Disciple's closeness to Jesus (he reclined 'on the breast,' *en to kolpo*, of Jesus (13:23) and what is said of the Son's closeness to the Father (he is 'on the breast,' *eis ton kolpon*, of the Father (1:18). This resemblance is matched by the parallel use of 'in-one-another' language: Jesus is in the believer and the believer is in Jesus (6:56; 15:5), while Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him (10:38; 14:10; 17:21). . . . The love between the Father and the Son, their unsurpassable intimacy, is the source from which relationship between God and humans derives. The one-to-one relationship in the divine life is reflected especially in the Beloved Disciple's closeness to Jesus and in every believer's 'personal coinherence' with Jesus. In neither case does the one-to-one relationship exclude others: the kind of love this Gospel describes cannot be confined to any one relationship but always overflows."<sup>11</sup> The passage is very rich indeed and brims with meaning for our theme of the mercy and love of God, especially the last clause. The kind of love this Gospel describes cannot be confined to any one relationship, but always overflows.

To parse more fully Richard Bauckham's meaning in this passage, think of the Gospel of John and the letters of John together, as a whole, similar to the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles. The First Letter of Saint John and its great metaphor that "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16) in relation to the Gospel of John teaches two truths. It provides us with the finest statement of God's nature and identity in the Christian tradition, that God is love. At the same time, it shows us what "God is love" looks like in the gospel narrative of Jesus. The second truth is this: Christians are those commanded to love because God is love, and as that is shown/incarnated in the story of Jesus.<sup>12</sup> This is the overflowing love of which Richard Bauckham speaks.

The density and frequency of the love-language in John demonstrates this overflowing love. Be aware of the number of times that the noun "love" (*agape*) and the verb "to love" (*agapao*) are found throughout the Johannine literature. The word love/*agape/agapao* appears in John more than 60 times. To say the very least, "love" is absolutely

central to the theology of John.

Now go to John 13:1: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end." "To the end" is in Greek the phrase *eis telos*. Now go to John 19:30: "When Jesus had received the wine he said, 'It is ended.'" "It is ended" is in Greek the word *tetelestai*. *Eis telos* and *tetelestai* are related. "In the Greek text, this word (*tetelestai*) points back to the very beginning of the passion narrative, to the episode of the washing of the feet, which the evangelist introduces by observing that Jesus loved his own 'to the end (*telos*)' (13:1). This 'end,' this *ne plus ultra* of loving, is now attained in the moment of death. He has truly gone right to the end, to the very limit and beyond that limit. He has accomplished the utter fullness of love — he has given himself."<sup>13</sup> Now go to 1 John 4:12: "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us." The word "perfected" is another version of this same root word to do with "end," in terms of "purpose." The Greek word here is *teteleiomene*, "is perfected (or "ended") in us."

*Love is that which nothing greater can be thought or experienced.*


Let us stand back for a moment and ask the question, "Why does John have this permeative emphasis on love and on God as love, on overflowing love?" What I present here are some musings on the beginning of an answer to this in some ways unanswerable question. The first thing to say is that *love is that which nothing greater can be thought/experienced*, to paraphrase Anselm of God in his *Proslogion*. It is the greatest thing, the most fulfilling reality that human beings know. Next is to acknowledge that love is gift, gift of self to another. Applied to God, and, using Richard Bauckham's insights above to ourselves, love is diffusive of itself. In that sense, love is the motive for creation. Love cannot remain closed in upon itself without negating and contradicting, so to speak, its own very existence. Perhaps that is why John's Gospel so emphatically begins with creation (implicitly out of love) — "All things were made through him (the Logos), and without him was not anything made that was made" (Jn 1:3) — and in Chapter 21 ends with the threefold question to Peter: "Do you love me?" (Jn 21:15-17).

John is saturated with the notion that God is love. John's eucharistic assembly back in the first century needed to hear this message, and so do we.



## Conclusion

Let us return by way of conclusion to the words of Donald Senior that opened this meditation: “The nature of the Gospels as narrative and their central role in the Liturgy of the Word . . . is to deepen our passion for God, to move us to a more profound and vibrant relationship with the Jesus who comes to us in the Eucharist, whose very being is entwined with us in communion, and whose grace can sustain us.”

Reading Luke’s parables of mercy or John’s love-saturated theology when we gather for the Eucharist is about deepening our passion for God and bonding more fully our relationship with the eucharistic Jesus, and with everyone. It is about praying with our earliest forebears *Maran atha*, this love has come into us in the incarnation, into our midst in the Eucharist, and *Marana tha*, letting this love come to its plenary and final fruition in us. As Love is God’s best name, and it looks like Jesus, so Luke and John offer us portraits of Jesus and ideals for his holy body, the church, ourselves, made and sustained through the Eucharist. 

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Donald Senior, CP, “The Gospels and the Eucharist,” in Vivian Boland and Thomas McCarthy, ed., *The Word Is Flesh and Blood: The Eucharist and Sacred Scripture* (Dublin: Dominican Publications, 2012), 86-87.
- <sup>2</sup> For details, see Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), with his summary on 153.
- <sup>3</sup> See Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology*, second edition (London: Epworth Press, 1978), 68-70.
- <sup>4</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew, Vol. V, Probing the Authenticity of the Parables* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016), 207. Meier is convinced that Luke is the author of this beautiful parable.
- <sup>5</sup> Luke T. Johnson, *The Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 175.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 174.
- <sup>7</sup> John P. Meier, *op. cit.*, 226.
- <sup>8</sup> Luke T. Johnson, *op. cit.*, 240-241.
- <sup>9</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 47.
- <sup>10</sup> John O’Donohue, *Anam Chara* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997), 57.
- <sup>11</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2015), 19.
- <sup>12</sup> David Tracy, “God is Love: The Central Christian Metaphor,” <http://www.pulpit.org/articles/godislove.asp>, 2.
- <sup>13</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth, Part 2* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 223.



## EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

# Ronald Knox on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

*Ronald Knox's teaching on the Eucharist was informed by his own personal journey of faith and rooted in his deep respect for the authority of the apostolic tradition.*

Ronald Knox (1888-1957) was one of the most influential Catholic priests in the English-speaking world during the first half of the twentieth century. Born into an low church Anglican family (his father was an Anglican bishop), he was educated at Eton, moved to the Anglo-Catholic branch of the Church of England at the age of 16, studied classics at Oxford, became an Anglican priest in 1912, served in army intelligence during the First World War, converted to Catholicism in 1917, and was ordained a Catholic priest in 1918. He tells the story of his conversion to Catholicism in his autobiography *A Spiritual Aeneid* (1918).

A man of many talents — preacher, broadcaster, journalist, novelist, scholar, Bible translator — he was assigned to Saint Edmund's College from 1919-1926 and was chaplain to the Catholic undergraduates at Oxford from 1926-1939. He became a Monsignor in 1936 and was offered the presidency of Saint Edmund's College, Oxford, in 1939, a position he refused thinking he was not a good administrator and that he could serve the church in better ways.

In 1939, Knox resigned his university position to become the private chaplain to Lord and Lady Acton and devote his time to writing, preaching, and lecturing. At this point, he started working on a new English translation of the Latin Vulgate, a task that would be one of his principal concerns for the remaining years of his life. A friend to other prominent Catholic literary figures (Maurice Baring, G. K. Chesterton, Evelyn Waugh, and Hilaire Belloc), his literary corpus covered a wide range of genres: autobiography, essays, sermons, apologetics, translations, detective novels, literary criticism, satire, popular and academic theology, and others.

Redemptorist Father Dennis J. Billy has authored or edited more than 30 books and 300 articles in a variety of scholarly and popular journals, including *Emmanuel*. Having taught in Rome and most recently in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, he is very active in retreat work and the ministry of spiritual direction.



In addition to his translation of the Latin Vulgate, he is most remembered for his radio broadcasts during the Second World War, his codification of the rules of detective fiction, and such works as *Some Loose Stones* (1913), *Reunion All Round* (1914), *A Spiritual Aeneid* (1918), *The Belief of Catholics* (1927), *Caliban in Grub Street* (1930), *Heaven and Charing Cross* (1935), *Let Dons Delight* (1939), *Captive Flames* (1940), *Mass in Slow Motion* (1948), *The Creed in Slow Motion* (1949), *The Gospel in Slow Motion* (1950), *Enthusiasm* (1950), *Stimuli* (1951), and *The Window in the Wall* (1956). His teaching on the Eucharist appears primarily in his works on religious themes, especially in his sermons and retreat conferences.<sup>1</sup>

### **Knox's Theological Outlook**

Knox's theological outlook was shaped by a variety of internal and external influences: his training in the classics, his diverse interests, his conversion to Catholicism from Anglicanism, and his friendships with a slew of like-minded Catholic intellectuals, etc. Although he wrote across literary genres and conducted his priestly ministry in a number of different contexts (e.g., university chaplain, apologist, lecturer, radio broadcaster, newspaper journalist, retreat master, novelist, preacher), everything he did was motivated by a devotion to Catholic orthodoxy and a desire to defend its truth, promulgate its message, and make it accessible to as wide an audience as possible, Catholic and non-Catholic alike. His radio broadcasts during the Second World War, his detective novels, his English translation of the Latin Vulgate, his religious essays, sermons, retreat conferences, and many popular works of Catholic theology and spirituality point to his deep desire to serve God by means of the skill of the pen and the power of the spoken word.<sup>2</sup>

Knox did not have an extensive theological education and deferred to the opinion of qualified experts. He did possess a deep love for Scripture, a keen literary eye, and a resolute passion for the truth. His sermons and religious conferences display a unique talent for going to the essential truth of an issue and dealing with it in a way that persuaded both mind and heart. He was a master at employing images and metaphors that ignited the imagination to lead his readers and listeners into a deeper encounter with the truths of the faith and, ultimately, the Truth of the faith himself, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.



Knox had an intense fervor for the Catholic faith that was typical of someone who converted at no small personal cost. He also brought to his newfound faith many of the sensitivities of his Protestant upbringing, including his love for Scripture, his Christocentric focus, and his dedication to the ministry of the word. The loss of many in his close circle of friends to the ravages of the First World War led him to take stock of his life and to look more deeply at previously unexamined aspects of his childhood faith. His journey to Catholicism was fueled by his passion for the truth and a desire to follow his conscience in matters of faith, regardless of the consequences. He displayed a breadth of interests comparable to that of G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936), his older contemporary whose writings and friendship had a profound influence on his life.<sup>3</sup>

*For Knox, the Mass is the place where God restores his ancient mercies, where Christ whispers words of love to those who believe in him and love him.*

Along with C. S. Lewis, Knox was one of the most popular and sought-after popular writers of his day. Although the two authors were not close friends and met only on rare occasions, they shared a mutual respect for each other and wrote on similar topics, ranging from apologetics, to the person of Jesus Christ, the evidence for miracles, the nature of evil and suffering, the church, prayer, and the last things. Lewis once described Knox as “possibly the wittiest man in Europe.”<sup>4</sup> Although Lewis concentrated on what he termed “mere Christianity” and focused more on themes common to all Christians, Knox wrote primarily within the Catholic tradition and tried to deepen his fellow Catholics’ appreciation of the faith and help those outside the tradition understand its significance and relevance for their lives. His writings on the Eucharist flow from his staunch Catholic viewpoint and deeply-held belief in the centrality of the sacrament for the Christian life.

### **Knox on the Eucharist**

Knox’s teaching on the Eucharist appears in his many of his sermons, which were written throughout the course of his career for various liturgical celebrations and popular devotions such as Forty Hours Devotion and the feast of Corpus Christi, and in such popular works as *Heaven and Charing Cross* (1936), *Mass in Slow Motion* (1948), and *The Window in the Wall: Reflections on the Holy Eucharist* (1956).



Although he wrote on a wide variety of themes, he generally focused on the doctrine of the real presence, the sacrifice of the Mass, and the Eucharist and the church. According to Milton Wash, “The Eucharist was at the center of Knox’s life both as a Catholic and a priest; far from being tormented by the question “What is this?” he rejoiced in exploring the significance of the body and blood of Christ. . . . Knox’s sermons on the Eucharist present the profound doctrinal teaching of the church in an imaginative, biblical way.”<sup>5</sup>

This imaginative presentation of the Eucharist is seen very clearly in Knox’s *The Mass in Slow Motion*, where he tries “to analyze . . . the inwardness of my own Mass; talk about the odd bells that ring in my mind, the odd vistas that open up to my own view, to close again at once, in the hope that they may have some value for other people.”

In this book, Knox offers twelve sermons that focus on the different parts of the Mass, from the prayers at the foot of the altar to the *Ite Missa est*. His purpose in going through the Mass in this way was to give his audience — schoolgirls at the convent school of the Assumption sisters — a clear understanding of what happens at Mass, especially at its most solemn moment. Of the consecration, Knox writes: “I ask that the bread and wine may be blessed; that they shall form a reasonable sacrifice, and therefore an acceptable sacrifice. We do not under the Christian dispensation offer to God dumb animals or lifeless things, but it will be all right about the bread and wine, because, once consecrated, they will be built into the human body of our Lord Jesus Christ. And, finally, I ask that they may be accepted. Then, with two more signs of the cross, I ask God to perform this miracle of transubstantiation.”<sup>6</sup>

The Mass, for Knox, is a kind of sacred dance, a religious drama that captures the central features of the Catholic faith. Of course, he is explaining the Mass as it was celebrated in its pre-Vatican II form, which cultivated a mysterious, sacred aura, as the priest whispered Latin quietly with his back to the people. By going through it step-by-step, Knox seeks to convey the meaning of the deep symbolism of the Mass in a way that even schoolchildren could understand. In an earlier passage, he claims that adults can enjoy it only “by pretending to be a child. *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli*.”<sup>7</sup>

In *The Window in the Wall*, Knox presents the Eucharist as “the thing that matters”; the Mass is the place where God restores his ancient mercies: “For us the immediate, dazzling truth is that here and all

over the word Christ, in the person of the Christ, is offering Christ under the forms of bread and wine in perfect sacrifice to the eternal Father. If I am worthy, if I am willing, he gives himself for me, as for all mankind, his brothers; on earth, as in heaven, he is our High Priest and representative.”<sup>8</sup> “And we Catholics,” he further notes, “have the assurance that this is being done, whenever we go into a church and find a priest saying Mass.”<sup>9</sup>

*The Mass extends Christ’s offer of the fullness of life to all people of every time and place. It is the most universal of the sacraments and the most catholic.*

In the Eucharist, Knox indicates that the priest celebrates *in persona Christi* and that this takes place by virtue of his priestly ordination, regardless of his personal holiness or what we think about him personally. Through the priest, the community of the faithful stretches out our hands and offers God gifts of bread and wine. God, in turn, accepts these gifts and transforms them into the body and blood of Christ. If we offer the direction of our lives to God, Knox assures us that we will come to know what it means to lead an ordered life, one in which our minds and hearts become whole, and we are made to live in holy communion with him.<sup>10</sup>

## Observations

Although this brief exposition of Knox’s teaching on the Eucharist does not do justice to the breadth of his knowledge or the span of his imagination, it conveys his profound loyalty to the truths of the Catholic faith and his deep desire to convey them in a fresh, new way to as wide an audience as possible. The following remarks seek to tease out some of the implications of Knox’s teaching and highlight their relevance for today.

1. To begin with, Knox’s conversion to Catholicism had much to do with the question of authority and doubts he entertained about the validity of Anglican orders. As he writes in *A Spiritual Aeneid*, “. . . authority played a large part in my belief, and I could not now find that any certain source of authority was available outside the pale of the Catholic Church.”<sup>11</sup> It was divine authority that, for him, validated the Catholic priesthood and the celebration of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. Knox’s faith rests in the apostolic authority of the Catholic Church and the authenticity of its sacramental order.



Since he sees the priesthood and the Eucharist as inextricably linked, it follows that the validity of one depends on the validity of the other. When seen in this light, Knox's faith in the Eucharist is preeminently apostolic. It flows from Christ's institution of the priesthood at the Last Supper and remains authentic through an unbroken line of apostolic succession. His conversion to Catholicism has much to do with his understanding of the nature of the church and the sacramental economy of salvation.

2. Knox also makes great use of the imagination to convey his eucharistic teaching. His training in the great works of Western civilization gave him a deep appreciation for the stories and dramas that shape our lives to this day. He thinks of the Mass as a sacrament that immerses believers in the great drama of their salvation, and he uses images and metaphors that give his readers and listeners a deeper appreciation of what they are celebrating. The Eucharist, for him, is God's re-imagining of humanity, a creation disfigured by the ravages of sin and in drastic need of inner healing and transformation. By immersing the faithful into the great narrative of Christ's passion, death, and resurrection, it gives meaning to their lives and helps them make sense of their daily activity. He used the powers of the imagination to spread the gospel message. The images and metaphors he employed were carefully chosen to attract attention (even curiosity) so as to impress upon the Catholic imagination the great significance of the church's teaching.

3. The title of one of Knox's collection of sermons, *The Window in the Wall*, gives an apt description of how he viewed the sacrament's importance for his spiritual life. The phrase comes from the Song of Songs and refers to a lover whispering through a window in a wall to his true love saying, "Rise up, rise up quickly, dear heart, so gentle, so beautiful, rise up and come with me" (Sg 2:10).<sup>12</sup> The Eucharist, for Knox, was just that, a window in the wall where Christ whispers words of love to those who believe in him and love him. In this sense, it is a portal, a window to eternity, a place in time and space that opens up to the eternal. The sacrament helps the believer listen to the words of Christ and respond to them with the heart of a lover. One falls in love with Christ by drawing ever closer to that window and listening to that voice and to its warm, endearing words. The Eucharist, for Knox, is closely linked to the voice of Christ. After all, Christ himself speaks through the priest every time he pronounces the words of institution. The Eucharist mediates the love of Christ to each member of the

faithful. It does so for the believing community as a whole, as well as for each individual member.

4. Another of Knox's books, *The Mass in Slow Motion*, goes through the drama of the eucharistic liturgy step-by-step. Using the analogy of a slow motion movie, he shares his own thought processes with his reading audience in the hope of giving them a more intimate sense of what takes place both in the external ritual of the Mass and within the priest himself as he celebrates the sacrament *in persona Christi*. By analyzing the inwardness of his own Mass, he hopes to bring the worshipper closer to the mind of the priest and, through him, to the mind of Christ himself. He does so not to draw attention to himself, for he is fully aware of his own human weaknesses and inadequacies, but to highlight the wonder of the Mass and the drama of Christ's paschal mystery that it makes present. The image of the Mass "in slow motion" has a twofold purpose: it connects the Eucharist to the movie technology of his day, making the sacrament more palatable to the sensitivities of people; it also says something very profound about the relationship between historical time (*chronos*) and sacred time (*kairos*). For Knox, time and eternity touch during the drama of the Mass. We need to examine it "in slow motion" to grasp its deep inner meaning and relevance for our lives.

*Christ is not only present in the person of the priest, but also in the very food that is shared.*

5. In keeping with the sacramental realism of the Catholic tradition, however, Knox sees the Eucharist not merely as a narrative representation of Christ's paschal mystery, but an actual presence of that timeless mystery in the here-and-now. He understands that Christ's passion, death, and resurrection happen both in time and out of time, and that the Mass is the sacrament instituted by Christ to put the faithful in touch with the culminating events of the history of salvation. The Mass is much more than a drama; it is salvation itself. It brings Christ's paschal mystery into the present moment and enables those who partake in it to wash themselves clean in the blood of the Lamb. The Eucharist is Christ's saving mystery made present in the form of bread and wine. It extends Christ's offer of the fullness of life to all people, of every time, and in every place. It is the most universal of the sacraments and the most catholic.

6. Knox sees the Eucharist as a banquet, a presence, and a




sacrifice. It is the memorial of the Last Supper and a foretaste of the heavenly banquet. He also sees it as a sacred meal in which those present participate and of which they partake. This meal is celebrated by the priest *in persona Christi*, and indicates that more is happening than meets the eye. When seen through the eyes of faith, Christ himself is the principal celebrant who sits at the head of the table sharing food with his disciples. What is more, he is not only present in the person of the priest, but also in the very food that is shared. This real presence of Christ in the sacrament comes out more clearly when we see that the Eucharist is also a sacrifice and Christ its sacrificial victim. When the priest says, "Take and eat, for this is my body" and "Take and drink, for this is my blood," Christ himself offers himself as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world. For Knox, the events of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday are inextricably linked, and the Eucharist is the sacrament in which all of the events of this single mystery inhere.

7. Knox's view of the Eucharist is also intimately tied to the church. As the body of the Christ, the sacrament embodies the whole of the risen and glorified Christ, who continues to live in history through the members of his mystical body. The Eucharist is the sacrament of Christ's body and blood. It is the food that binds its members together and gives them the spiritual and moral strength of followers of Christ. The Eucharist is a sacrament of the church just as the church is a sacrament of Christ. The church exists for the Eucharist, and vice versa. Knox has a very keen sense of the sacrament's institution by Christ for his apostles and the community of believers. He recognizes that the Eucharist exists within the church and for the church. The sacrament makes sense only when seen through the eyes of faith, and it is the church, the body of believers, that recognizes its true worth. The body of Christ, in other words, recognizes the body of Christ.

## Conclusion

Ronald Knox was one of the most prominent Roman Catholic priests of the twentieth century. Trained in Oxford's course in the classics (the so-called Greats), he was a man of many talents who used them to further the cause of the faith both within the church and outside of it. Although his background was more in classical literature than in the nuances of theological reasoning, he wrote on a variety of religious issues to great effect, usually in the context of his preaching and retreat conferences.

Knox was a great communicator and employed his writing skills in a variety of literary genres that sought to engage the Catholic imagination and make it attractive to his readers and listeners. He used images and metaphors as a way of engaging both mind and heart to lead his audience to a deeper awareness of the sacred lurking in the ordinary circumstances of everyday life. His impact on the Catholicism of his day went beyond Great Britain to the rest of the English-speaking world, and beyond. He had a deep love for the church, a fondness for Scripture, a profound sense of the drama of the Mass, an unwavering belief in the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, and a finely tuned awareness of the priest celebrating the sacrament *in persona Christi*.

In the final analysis, Knox's teaching on the Eucharist was informed by his own personal journey of faith and rooted in his deep respect for the authority of the apostolic tradition. It was traditional, easy to follow, imaginative, and comprehensive. To this day, his writings are read, his teachings inspire, and his legacy endures. His impact on the Catholic imagination will likely continue for some time to come. 

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The biographical information in this section comes from "The Ronald Knox Society of North America," <http://www.ronaldknoxsociety.com> (accessed January 5, 2015). See this website also for a complete bibliography of Knox's writings. For an audio file of some of Knox's eucharistic sermons, see *A Month of Sunday Sermons with Monsignor Knox* at [ignatius.com](http://ignatius.com).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Hooper, "Foreword," in Milton Walsh, *Second Friends: C. S. Lewis and Ronald Knox in Conversation* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 9.

<sup>5</sup> Walsh, *Second Friends*, 247-48.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., vii.

<sup>8</sup> Ronald Knox, *The Window in the Wall* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956), 76, 78.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 77.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>11</sup> Ronald Knox, *A Spiritual Aeneid*, 2d ed. (London: Burns and Oates, 1950), 212.

<sup>12</sup> Knox, *The Window in the Wall*, 1.



## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# From Abiding Presence to Mission

by Anthony Schueller, SSS

*Mission and ministry flow from the abiding, transforming presence of Christ.*

Father Anthony Schueller is the editor of *Emmanuel* and provincial superior of the Province of Saint Ann of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament.

Earlier this year, in March, Pope Francis announced that Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, better known as Mother Teresa of Calcutta, would be canonized on September 4 along with several other *beati*. Mother Teresa is widely regarded as a tireless champion of the dying and the destitute and a model of Christian charity.

Mother Teresa's life has touched many with her call to compassion and concern for the poor. Among them was Malcolm Muggeridge, the late British journalist, author, media personality, and satirist who penned a biography of her in 1971 entitled *Something Beautiful for God*. Muggeridge credits his conversion to Christianity (and later to Catholicism) to her example. Cardinal Telesphore Toppo, the archbishop of Ranchi, India, has said: "Mother Teresa's life was driven by a passion to build lives through forgiveness, healing, giving them respect, and through making them true human beings in the image and likeness of God."

I had the pleasure of hearing Mother Teresa speak to a national gathering of Catholic educators many years ago in Chicago, and afterward encountered her in the exhibit hall as she talked with passersby near her order's display. To this day, I cherish the memory of that experience and the lasting impression she made on me.

In 1950, shortly after leaving the Sisters of Loreto, this diminutive Albanian nun founded the Missionaries of Charity, whose members today serve in more than 130 countries, including the United States. They operate hospices and homes for people with leprosy, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, soup kitchens, dispensaries, clinics, and counseling centers for children and families. Their days are long and tiring, filled with hard work and menial tasks attending to the needs of others.



What many may not realize is that the sisters' day begins long before the light of dawn, when they gather for community Mass followed by an hour of quiet prayer in the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. "Our lives," Mother Teresa insistently reminded the sisters and often stated publicly, "are woven with Jesus in the Eucharist. In Holy Communion, we have Christ under the appearance of bread; in our work, we find him under the appearance of flesh and blood. It is the same Christ. 'I was hungry, I was naked, I was sick, I was homeless.'"

As a woman of eucharistic contemplation and Christian service, Mother Teresa can teach us much, I believe, about *the movement from the abiding presence of Christ under signs of bread and wine in the Eucharist to mission in his name and Spirit.*

### **Abiding Presence**

The Eucharist is at the center of our life as Catholics. This is something we know from experience and others, even nonbelievers, recognize as well.

A seminary professor once said something that has stayed with me throughout the years: "The Eucharist isn't simply about Christ's presence to us; it is also about our presence to one another." In times of missionary fervor and expansion and in periods of intense suffering and persecution, Christ has been present to us in word and in sacrament, and thus has kept us, the members of his body, together and present to one another as church. In the exquisite phrasing of Carmelite nun Mary Grace Melcher, "His presence has passed into the sacraments for our consolation and joy" (*Intercessions for Mass*, Liturgical Press, 2013, 88).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "The Lord, having loved those who were his own, loved them to the end. Knowing that the hour had come to leave this world and return to the Father, in the course of a meal he washed their feet and gave them the commandment of love. In order to leave them a pledge of this love, in order never to depart from his own and to make them sharers in his Passover, he instituted the Eucharist as the memorial of his death and resurrection, and commanded his apostles to celebrate it until his return . . ." (1337).

And in number 1341: "The command of Jesus to repeat his actions and words 'until he comes' does not only ask us to remember Jesus and what he did." It calls us to *imitate* his love, to die to self and to give our lives away in loving service, as Jesus did. Thus, we offer the true



worship the Father seeks.”

Throughout its history, the church has faithfully proclaimed the true presence of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist, believing that it is the risen Lord who gathers his followers, shares God’s word with them, and feeds them with his body and blood in Holy Communion. The Eucharist is a privileged place of encounter with him. It is where we meet the heart of God in his Son.

### **A Transforming Presence**

The presence of Christ in the Eucharist, however, is not a static presence, like an object. As Susan K. Wood, SCL, writes in her article “*Vinculum Caritatis: Bond of Love*” in the November/December 2015 issue of *Emmanuel*, the French theologian, Louis-Marie Chauvet, distinguishes between the Eucharist as *esse* and *adesse*, that is, *being in itself* and *being for*, being for us. Chauvet notes that Christ is in the liturgy in the assembly, the Scriptures, and the Eucharist, “not here like a thing,” but in the gift of his life *for us*.

The Eucharist does not exist for Christ to be present sacramentally for himself, as an end in itself, but that we might be united with him and each other in a “bond of charity,” in the hallowed words of Augustine of Hippo, and be transformed into his living presence in the world.

Presence demands communication; it entails self-giving. It is more than mere proximity. In the Eucharist, the risen Christ is present to us in a new and highly expressive manner — *sacramentally*. He is no longer here, as he was long ago in Palestine in a physical body like ours, but is in our midst sacramentally, under signs of bread and wine. And he continues to communicate to us and give himself to us in this way. The teacher and Lord who once gathered, taught, encouraged, healed, forgave, loved, and fed his followers continues to gather, teach, encourage, heal, forgive, love, and feed the community of his disciples with his body and blood through the ages.

### **A Power for Mission**

The New Testament scholar Donald Senior, CP, in his classic work *Jesus, A Gospel Portrait*, describes the relationship between Jesus and his followers as one of the most tender and distinctive features of his ministry.

Senior points out that the master-disciple relationship did not originate with Jesus nor was it unique to him. Greek philosophers had schools of disciples around them intent on learning the master's approach to wisdom. Jewish prophets had disciples, for example, Elijah and his successor Elisha. In the ancient world, distinguished rabbis had disciples. Shortly after the death of Jesus, Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul, the apostle of the Gentiles, came to Jerusalem to study the Torah under the guidance of the respected rabbi Gamaliel. Saul became his disciple.

Though similar, discipleship for the Christian was markedly different from its secular and Jewish antecedents. *It is discipleship on Jesus' terms.* We do not choose him; he chooses us (see Jn 15:16). It is not a matter of our willing it, but of a divine call. It involves more than learning Jesus' teachings or his approach to the wisdom and discipline of kingdom living; it means submitting to his authority and allowing ourselves to be changed by him.

*Mother Teresa can teach us much about the movement from Christ's abiding presence under signs of bread and wine to mission in his name and Spirit.*

Consider Jesus' interaction with his followers as reflected in the Gospels: the power of his call; the gentle way he taught them and corrected them; how he led them to a fuller understanding of himself and of his saving mission; the moments of intimacy in his company; the times he prayed with them, especially at table; and the trust he showed in sending them forth on mission.

The trust he showed in sending them forth! *Discipleship on Jesus' terms is sealed with a share in his mission.* Intimacy and formation on the word of God and on the living word of Jesus' actions lead to mission and ministry. In sending his disciples out on mission, Jesus tells them: "The gift you have received, give as a gift." Recognizing the hungers of the masses that came to him to hear God's word and to be fed, Jesus said to his disciples, and he says to us: "There is no need to send them away; you give them something to eat." Serve them with the bread of your lives!

The risen Lord, who reveals his presence to us in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup in the Eucharist, reveals himself, too, in the brokenness of his body, the church, and of all humanity to



whom he has been eternally joined in the mystery of the incarnation and redemption.

Let me repeat the words of Mother Teresa quoted earlier: *“Our lives are woven with Jesus in the Eucharist. In Holy Communion, we have Christ under the appearance of bread; in our work, we find him under the appearance of flesh and blood. It is the same Christ. ‘I was hungry, I was naked, I was sick, I was homeless.’”*

*The eucharistic body of Christ brings us to the mystical body of Christ in all people, especially the poor, the neglected, and the outcast.*

One day, Mother Teresa took in a woman off the streets of Calcutta. Her body was a mass of open sores infested with bugs. Mother Teresa patiently bathed her, cleaned, and dressed her wounds. As she did so, the woman never stopped shouting insults and threats at her. Mother Teresa only smiled.

*The eucharistic body of Christ brings us to the mystical body of Christ in all people.*

Finally, the woman snarled, “Sister, why are you doing this? Not everyone behaves like you. Who taught you?” Mother Teresa replied simply, “My God taught me.” When the woman asked her who this god was, she kissed her forehead gently and said, “You know my God. My God is called love.”

### **The Example of Another Saint**


Peter Julian Eymard, a French priest and the founder of the Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament 160 years ago, was captivated by the presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Naturally drawn to contemplation, he loved celebrating Mass and praying quietly in the presence of Christ in the sacrament. He spent many hours in the sanctuary, because he believed as he frequently said, “Jesus is there! Everyone to him.”

Saint Peter Julian Eymard moved comfortably *from the sanctuary into the streets*. He would wander the teeming city streets of Paris in search of the destitute, the forgotten, and the disillusioned. He ministered to those whom no one else in the church wanted anything to do with.

At the lowest rung of French society after the revolution and the beginning of the age of industrialization were the ragpickers, roaming bands of kids and youth who would eke out an existence selling pieces of cloth. They were the first to whom he went. He wrote:

“Tomorrow begins the retreat for the little ragpickers. God gave us the gift of the ultimate work of charity. They are the dregs of society. We teach them about God and about themselves. . . . What a ministry! I would not trade it for worthier causes. They are the little princes of the Eucharist whom we have sought out of the gutter.”

Christ is in the bread broken and the cup shared, and he abides in all humanity. See, and respond to their needs in faith.

A dynamic eucharistic spirituality encompasses three aspects: celebration, contemplation, and service. It starts at the table of God’s word and sacrament, is deepened in prayer in the presence of the risen Lord, and fulfilled in service to others, imitating the self-giving of the Lord Jesus, who washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them, and us, to do the same. 

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## 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 R, S, T, and U are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during September and October.



## EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

# For the Universal Prayers in the Jubilee Year of Mercy

by Mary Grace Melcher, OCD

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. The following intercessions and a concluding prayer on the themes of mercy and the Eucharist are written for each Sunday during the Jubilee of Mercy.

### **Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time — September 4**

That God's people, whose deliberations are timid and whose plans are unsure, may experience how merciful is God's counsel and how powerful his wisdom for their guidance and care

That, as we receive this Eucharist, we may be given the strength to accept the Lord's challenging conditions for becoming his disciples

#### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, you have been our refuge in every age. We entrust all our prayers to your mercy, knowing the depth of your compassion and love. We pray in Jesus' name.

### **Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time — September 11**

That Christ Jesus, who came into this world to save sinners, may bring back to the flock all his wandering sheep, welcoming home the lost sons and daughters for whom we pray

That this Eucharist may be a feast of reconciliation, both for the prodigals who have come home repentant and for the faithful who still need to understand the Father's compassionate love

#### **Concluding Prayer**

O God, yours is the heart of a most tender Father. Receive with kindness the prayers we bring you today, especially for those who are most in need of your mercy. Grant us what we ask through Christ our Lord.

## **Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time — September 18**

That we may be prudent in appealing for God's mercy while we still have time to repent, and use our wealth to accomplish our own deeds of mercy for his people

That we may work with the treasure of this Eucharist to gain our salvation, wise and diligent in the sight of our good Master

### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, you want all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. Accept our prayers and mercifully grant that we may live in devotion and dignity, humble and responsible before you. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

## **Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time — September 25**

That God's merciful reversal of the lot of the poor may find us taking their part, showing them solidarity and compassion during the days of our earthly life

That we who feast at the banquet of this Eucharist may offer a celebration of pure loving-kindness to those who are spiritually undernourished

### **Concluding Prayer**

Father, you are just in all your judgments and right in all your ways. May your mercy embrace all our needs and those of the poorest in our midst. We make our prayer through Jesus our Lord.

## **Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time — October 2**

That we who faithfully do what we are obliged to do may have the grace to see ourselves humbly as unprofitable servants, always in need of the Lord's mercy for the gift of salvation

For all of us sharing this Eucharist, that we may stir into flame the gift of God, allowing the Spirit to empower us with love and self-control and confidence in our Christian witness



### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, we ask that we may be given faith strong enough to uproot every obstacle blocking a life of complete dedication to Jesus. Please answer all our prayers, which we offer in his holy name.

### **Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time — October 9**

That by God's mercy, we may be given eyes to see and appreciate his grace and care that surrounds us, healing our miseries and restoring the joy of our youth

For all of us sharing this Eucharist, the sacrifice of thanksgiving, that we may be the first to return and give thanks to God for each of his blessings in our lives

### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, we thank you for remaining faithful and mercifully answering our needs. We ask for the grace to remain faithful to you who have been so good to us. Grant all our prayers in Jesus' name.

### **Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time — October 16**

That our hands may reach out confidently to God's mercy, steadfast in prayer for all the battles of justice, truth, life, and morality being waged in our day

For all of us sharing this Eucharist, that as Jesus comes into our hearts he may find living faith, as we honor him with our conviction in the efficacy of prayer

### **Concluding Prayer**

God our Father, renew in our hearts the humility and confidence that make our prayer pleasing to you, and grant a gracious answer to all the petitions we bring you today, for we pray in the name of Jesus.

### **Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time — October 23**

That we may cultivate a sincere stance of humility before the face of God, so that his mercy may be moved to justify us and answer our



prayers

That we who share this Eucharist may compete well in the arena of life, finishing the race and keeping the faith through the strength we gain from living contact with Jesus

**Concluding Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you humble the exalted and exalt the humble. May our reverence gain us a hearing as we bring you our needs and those of our dear ones. We ask everything through Christ our Lord.

**Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time — October 30**

That the merciful Savior, who came to seek and to save what was lost, may look with compassion on our loved ones who have gone astray, and invite himself to stay at their homes for their redemption

That God may make us who share this Eucharist worthy of our calling, and bring to fulfillment every good purpose and effort of faith that he inspires in us

**Concluding Prayer**

Lord God, your imperishable Spirit is in all things, and you love all that you have made. Hear the prayers we offer, and grant us your mercy through Jesus our Savior.





## PASTORAL LITURGY

# Breaking News! Order for Celebrating Matrimony Finally Here

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

*The long-awaited Order for Celebrating Matrimony has been finalized and will be available soon.*

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

Those who are familiar with this column over the years and the various platforms that I have been writing for will notice the humor in this headline. We have been waiting for the *Order for Celebrating Matrimony* (OCM) since 1991; its publication is promised for August 22, with implementation between September 8 and December 8. Until we have the OCM in our hands, let's review this second edition.

Many new items are included in the revised *Roman Missal*, such as the collects, prefaces, nuptial blessings, and final blessings. It is interesting to note that these have been there, but now one ritual book will contain everything so presiders can lead the rites from one place. I recently attended a workshop sponsored by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat for Divine Worship and the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions (FDLC). Here are summary points highlighting certain aspects of the new OCM.

- Expanded Introduction (*Praenotanda*), from 18 to 44 paragraphs. In the Introduction, the following topics are stressed:
  - o Importance and dignity of the sacrament of matrimony (paragraphs 7-11), which will help couples understand the theology of this sacrament;
  - o Duties and ministries illustrated (16);
  - o Celebration of Matrimony (5);
  - o Rite to be used (6);
  - o Purposely uses the terms "matrimony" and "order" — for these are exact translations from the Latin and highlight the Catholic Church's view of marriage as a sacrament.

- The Introductory Rites
  - Two forms for the Greeting and Entrance
    - More detailed as to how it is to flow;
    - Procession “in the customary manner,” as the Order of Mass states;
    - Change from current *Rite of Marriage*, 20, where it stated how to do the procession with the couple processing in together.
  - Entrance Chant — word, song, or hymn is what we normally use in our culture as a participatory element to unite the congregation.
  - Introductory Address
    - Samples now scripted in “these or similar words.”
  - Penitential Act is omitted
    - This was a question in the past; a lacuna as to what to do since there was no instruction. Now it is clear: as with the *Order of Christian Funerals* and the *Rite of Infant Baptism during Mass*, the Penitential Act is omitted.
  - Gloria sung (as always in ritual Masses)
  - Collects
    - Expanded or retranslated orations that have been in the *Roman Missal*, from four to six.
  
- Liturgy of the Word
  - Expanded set of scripture readings;
  - OCM, 55: One reading must mention and be about matrimony. There will be an asterisk in the ritual book so that people know this is one of the readings “about matrimony”;
  - Old Testament readings (from eight to nine); during the Easter Season, a reading from Revelation must be done;
  - New Testament readings (from ten to 14);
  - Psalm (same seven selections);
  - Gospel Acclamation verses (still four);
  - Gospels (same ten selections in the *Lectionary*, volume 4).
  
- Celebration of Matrimony
  - Address to the Bride and Groom;
  - Questions before the Consent;
  - Consent (two forms, two methods);

- o Reception of Consent;
- o All standing (OCM, 58).
- o Acclamation — “Thanks be to God” (new), at the end of the consent;
  - Works easiest when chanted by the presider so that everyone will know to respond. Helpful if printed in the program and the cantor assists. The response underscores that the entire assembly participates in witnessing the marriage.
- o Blessing and Giving of the Rings;
- o Blessing and Giving of the *Arras*: new option
  - This was in the Spanish edition, but can now be in English as an option too. Note that there is still no Unity Candle. For pastoral reasons, this might be done either at the rehearsal dinner or the reception after the ceremony;
  - Still no “kiss” as part of the rite.
- o Hymn or Canticle of Praise (optional);
- o Creed (e.g., All Saints Day wedding);
- o Universal Prayer (Prayers of the Faithful)
  - Samples found in the Appendix to guide the preparation of these.
- Liturgy of the Eucharist
  - o Prayer over the Offerings (still three)
  - o Preface (still three)
  - o Commemoration of the Couple for Eucharistic Prayers I, II, III
  - o The Lord’s Prayer
  - o Blessing and Placing of the *Lasso* or Veil
    - New cultural adaptation that is revised in Spanish and English texts and placed at this point before the Nuptial Blessing.
  - o Nuptial Blessing — needed for validity since the revised *Roman Missal*
    - Still three, but very revised texts;
    - New chant notations in OCM, 205-209.
  - o Sign of Peace
    - The prayer “Lord Jesus Christ” is still omitted;
    - “The Peace of the Lord” is said immediately.
  - o Holy Communion — under both species
    - New is that the parents, witnesses, and

- o relatives may receive.
  - o Solemn Blessings
    - There were four, with one specific for the United States, but not in the new OCM. Three remain.
  - o Song/Recessional
    - Instrumental or hymn not mentioned in the OCM; still optional as before.
  - o Signing of the Marriage Record
    - “In the vesting room or in the presence of the people, but not on the altar” OCM, 78; clarified in the 2016 version.
- Appendix
    - o Examples of the Universal Prayers
    - o Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple
    - o Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage
      - These last two pieces are nicely arranged for during marriage preparation and later in life; there is no “renewing” or “restating” of vows ever in the church, just blessing those already married. The outline for these rituals is below.

Here are some other items that you will notice as you review the OCM ritual book:

- New terms, e.g. “Blessing and Giving of the Rings”;
- Posture and place of the couple for the Nuptial Blessing (new);
- Rubrics regarding the Signing of the Marriage Record (new);
- User friendly book in “sense lines”;
- Clarification and expansion of rubrics;
- Translation that better reflects Catholic theology of marriage;
- Inclusivity and equality of the persons in the covenant relationship reflected in the texts;
- Pastoral sensitivity (see OCM, 13, 23);
- Intended to adapt to situations and cultures;
- Priest who prepares is the one to preach and prepare the couple;
- For the celebration of matrimony outside of Mass, the vesture for the presider is the cope.

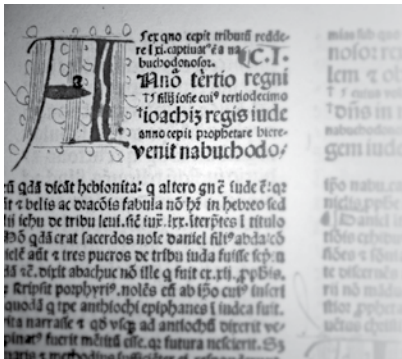
It is clear in two chapters, one for use with one Catholic and Christian (Chapter/Rite 2) and Catholic and non-Christian (Chapter/Rite 3) have

been revised with more cultural sensitivity. Both are not within Mass unless permission is granted. Chapter 4 of OCM is various ritual texts but let's highlight the two new orders:

- Order of Blessing an Engaged Couple
  - o OCM, 218-221;
  - o Honorable betrothal of Christians is a special occasion;
  - o Parents may preside, if a priest or deacon is not present;
  - o Order here may be used by parents, priest, deacon, or other lay person with adaptation;
  - o May also be used when engaged couples come together for catechetical preparation;
  - o Never combined with Mass
    - Sign of Promise;
    - Prayer of Blessing (two options);
    - Conclusion of the Rite;
    - Concluding Blessing;
    - Suitable chant is "a praiseworthy practice."
  
- Order of Blessing a Married Couple within Mass on the Anniversary of Marriage
  - o Introduction (OCM, 237-239)
  - o Address to the Couple (240);
  - o Takes place after the homily:
    - Renewal of Commitment (quietly or publicly);
    - Blessing of the Rings (OCM, 243 or of new rings OCM, 244);
    - Incensation (optional);
    - Universal Prayer (Sample text OCM, 245);
    - The Lord's Prayer ("Deliver us . . ." omitted)
    - Prayer of Blessing (OCM, 248);
    - Sign of Peace (OCM 249).

Use this column with your new *Order for Celebrating Matrimony*, and enjoy studying as you prepare couples and yourself to bless and celebrate in this "long awaited" ritual. In the November/December *Emmanuel*, we will return to the *Order of Christian Funerals* and our review of this pastoral liturgy.





## BREAKING THE WORD

# HOMILETICS - Ordinary Time

by Anthony J. Marshall, SSS

### God's Mercy Endures Forever

Read again (I presume it is *again!*) this brief passage concerning the church's mission vis-à-vis the mercy of God from the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year of Mercy by Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus*:

The church is commissioned to announce the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel, which in its own way must penetrate the heart and mind of every person. . . . The church's first truth is the love of Christ. The church makes herself a servant of this love and mediates it to all people: a love that forgives and expresses itself in the gift of oneself. Consequently, wherever the church is present, the mercy of the Father must be evident. In our parishes, communities, associations and movements, in a word, wherever there are Christians, everyone should find an oasis of mercy (12).

The liturgical readings for these autumn months are conducive to preaching "the mercy of God, the beating heart of the Gospel." Both the Old Testament reading, as well as the Lucan text of the Gospel, bring home the message of God's tenderness and mercy. They invite us to imitate God's mercy, which endures forever.

We recognize the importance of being merciful like the Father "because it was we who first received mercy from God. . . . Jesus asks us also to *forgive* and to *give*, to be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God; to be generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity" (MV, 14). May our eucharistic celebrations nurture within us a capacity for divine generosity.

Blessed Sacrament  
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## Twenty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time September 4, 2016

*The Wisdom of the Most High*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Wisdom 9:13-18b**

The first reading is part of a prayer attributed to Solomon, who seeks divine wisdom. In this pericope, God's omniscience is pondered in contrast to the limited wisdom of mere mortal beings.

#### **Philemon 9-10, 12-17**

This text is from a beautiful letter of an elderly Paul pleading on behalf of Onesimus, a Christian runaway slave for whom Paul takes personal responsibility and finds delight in his company. In point of fact, Paul is asking that, in sending Onesimus back to his master, he might be released from slavery and treated as an equal, a brother Christian, just as Paul himself would be received. The letter serves as testimony to the power of Christian morality in the ancient world influencing disciples.

#### **Luke 14:25-33**

Continuing along his journey to Jerusalem, Jesus speaks to those who accompany him about the cost of discipleship, namely, carrying one's own cross and following Christ unreservedly.

### *Sharing the Word*

Remember back in school "pulling all-nighters," writing a research paper or "cramming" for an exam for which you did not prepare? Since my ministry finds me working in particular with young adults and college students, I can assure you that this still happens in school as young people work to acquire the discipline of time management. "Burning the midnight oil" comes more often than not from a lack of planning and execution, although there are clear exceptions such as a crisis of one sort or another. Time management is a skillset which



must be put into practice early in one's career lest all-nighters become a regular feature in life rather than a rarity.

The readings teach us not the discipline of time management but rather *the discipline of discipleship*. Just as the college students with whom I am privileged to work must discover how to manage their time well, balancing work, leisure, and study in order to succeed in school, so we must learn how to follow Jesus Christ and to willingly accept the cost of discipleship.

In the Gospel, Jesus is heading to Jerusalem (see Lk 9:51) where he will endure his passion and suffer death on a cross. He was not only prepared for his journey and passion (see Lk 9:31), but he was also preparing would-be disciples as to what their discipleship would entail. It is far better to know the cost of following Christ and to freely choose to be his disciple, undertaking the sacrifices committed discipleship entails, than to be surprised and disappointed when one's expectations are not met and the cross becomes an obstacle rather than the gateway to Easter joy.

In the second reading, Paul offers a glimpse of the cost of discipleship. He knows that by sending Onesimus back to his master, there would be the expected punishment for the crime Onesimus committed in fleeing. By pleading as he does with Philemon, Paul underscores that Christians must answer to a higher norm, that of God's mercy, rather than punitive justice.

We must be prepared to follow Christ as his disciples, knowing full well the standard Jesus set in taking up his cross. There are implications in bearing the name "Christian." With Solomon, we ask for the wisdom of the Most High to be ours as we renew our commitment to follow Christ unreservedly.

### *Praying the Word*

God of our ancestors and Lord of mercy,  
send us wisdom, the attendant at your throne,  
and reject us not as your own children,  
for we need your wisdom to be with us and to work with us  
so that we might be pleasing in your sight  
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

*(Adapted from Wisdom 9:1, 4, 10)*

## Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 11, 2016

*Merciful Like the Father*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Exodus 32:7-11, 13-14**

God threatens to destroy the Hebrews for their idol worship. In reply, Moses implores God to temper his justified anger with his abundant mercy, remembering the covenant made with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (Jacob).

#### **1 Timothy 1:12-17**

Paul recounts for his young protégé Timothy how although he was once a persecutor of the church, God, in his mercy, forgave him and called him to follow Christ Jesus, who “came into this world to save sinners” (15).

#### **Luke 15:1-32 or 15:1-10**

The longer passage, worthy of proclamation in this Jubilee Year of Mercy, conveys three beloved parables on mercy unique to Luke: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son. The shorter pericope eliminates the parable of the prodigal son, while retaining the other two.

### *Sharing the Word*

The three Lucan parables of God’s infinite mercy no doubt have tugged at the souls of devout Christians for centuries. Because each parable is densely packed with beauty and waiting to be broken open for God’s people in our hearing and in the Sunday homily, allow me to choose the parable of the lost coin for our reflection.

First, note that the woman who loses one of her ten coins throws a feast that likely would have cost a small fortune, certainly more than the value of the one coin she lost. It was worth everything to her to recover that coin; price was of no concern. How valuable in

her eyes must those ten coins have been that to lose just one meant turning the house upside down and searching frantically for it until it was found! Then she throws a feast. Would any of us do that? Of course not. The woman in the parable is foolish, extravagant. Yes, and so is the mercy of God beyond our human understanding. It seems foolish.

If people sin against us, we might find it very difficult to forgive. I am humbled and edified by the victims of horrific crimes who, by God's grace, find it in their hearts to forgive the perpetrators. The hymn, "They'll Know We are Christians by Our Love," comes to mind when stories of such mercy are recounted.

Like the woman in today's Gospel, our merciful God finds each one of us worthy of his mercy; the Father of Mercies searches frantically for us when we are lost. In God's eyes, we are worth everything, even to the point of sending his Son, Jesus Christ, who "came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tm 1:15). And what a banquet feast God throws upon finding us repentant sinners! The Eucharist we celebrate is the foretaste of that great banquet feast of heaven.

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father,  
you never tire of forgiving our sins  
and, in fact, you search us out and invite us  
to rejoice when one of our lost brothers or sisters  
repents and is converted.  
Liberate us from our sinful pride  
and enable us to be merciful like you.  
This we pray in the name of Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 18, 2016

*Serving God Alone*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Amos 8:4-7**

The prophet Amos, who was a shepherd from Tekoa before receiving his calling to the prophetic ministry (Am 1:1), warns the wealthy and the powerful of God's judgment upon those who harm the poor.

#### **1 Timothy 2:1-8**

Paul reminds Timothy of the importance of prayer, especially for those who govern. He tells him further that God wills salvation for everyone in Christ Jesus "who gave himself as a ransom for all" (6). Prayer is the fruit of one who acknowledges the gift of salvation.

#### **Luke 16:1-13 or 16:10-13**

The shortened version of the Gospel eliminates the parable about the dishonest steward, to which Jesus refers: "You cannot serve both God and mammon [μαμωνα = wealth or property]" (13).

### *Sharing the Word*

With the presidential election season nearing its conclusion, we've been hearing the candidates talk a lot about the economy. As we are told of an ever-widening gap between the poor and the rich in this country, the famous question that the late President Ronald Reagan asked in 1980, "Are you better off now than you were four years ago?" still resonates with today's electorate. Financial well-being is obviously a major concern for voters and all people in our society as it was in ancient times, as evidenced in today's readings.

The word μαμωνα, which can be rendered in English as "wealth" or "property," found at the end of today's Gospel, is personified in its usage in contrast to the person of God: "You cannot serve both God and mammon" (Lk 16:13). Jesus' point here, I believe, is prescient for all

generations: either we serve God alone or we turn wealth into a god and serve it.

Pope Francis has consistently warned us, in continuity with the teaching of popes of the past, about the dangers of serving the idols of wealth and security: "The worship of the ancient golden calf (cf. Ex 32:1-35) has returned in a new and ruthless guise in the idolatry of money and the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose. . . .Man is reduced to one of his needs alone: consumption" (apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 55).

The prophet Amos, who was a shepherd before entering the Lord's service, similarly warns the merchant class and the affluent of his day to not mistreat the poor, because God will remember their thirst for wealth and their disregard of the poor on the coming day of judgment, and it will not go well for them. Again, Pope Francis, speaking a prophetic word like that of Amos, says: "Today, everything comes under the laws of competition and the survival of the fittest, where the powerful feed upon the powerless. As a consequence, masses of people find themselves excluded and marginalized: without work, without possibilities, without any means of escape. . . . We have created a 'disposable' culture which is now spreading" (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 53).

All of this reminds us, especially as we will soon head to the ballot box to cast our vote for the next president and other political leaders of our nation, about using our financial resources and power wisely, and not letting them become, instead, the false god of mammon.

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty and ever-living God,  
"you have made us for yourselves  
and our hearts are restless  
until they rest in you" (Saint Augustine).  
Do not allow our restlessness  
to deter us from serving you alone,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 25, 2016

### *Laying Hold of Eternal Life*

#### *Breaking the Word*

##### **Amos 6:1a, 4-7**

We continue reading from the prophet Amos, although this Sunday we skip back two chapters in the text. Here, Amos admonishes those whom he calls complacent, that is, the rich who care only about their own comfort and needs while ignoring the poor and hungry, whose food they even claim as their own. Such arrogance will not go without consequence.

##### **1 Timothy 6:11-16**

Paul encourages the young Timothy to pursue righteousness and to be busy about the things of God, worrying about gaining eternal life, which is the goal of faith.

##### **Luke 16:19-31**

Jesus tells some of the Pharisees, “who loved money” (14), a parable about a rich man and his poor neighbor Lazarus and their condition in this life and their eternal status in the life to come.

#### *Sharing the Word*

We know that, in and of itself, money is neither good nor bad, but rather a tool to be used to navigate our way through life. I mention this at the very beginning because our readings last Sunday and this week might make those who have wealth uncomfortable or ashamed of their success, and it might make some among us resentful. Being successful in worldly matters and accumulating wealth is not in itself sinful, but what one does with wealth can make all the difference. The question before us again this week is whether wealth and security have become mammon, false idols, in our lives.

Jesus addressed the parable of the rich man, whom tradition

has named Dives, and the poor man Lazarus to those Pharisees whom the evangelist described as being lovers of money: “The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all these things and sneered at him” (Lk 16:14). I believe that this line — unfortunately not included in our passage this Sunday — is a hermeneutical key to understanding Jesus’ message. He is not admonishing the rich for being rich, but he is challenging those who *love* money and not God and their neighbor; hence the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Pope Francis puts it this way: “Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor” (apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, 2). The rich man in the Gospel did not even take notice of desperate Lazarus; only the dogs cared enough to lick his sores. Dives had *no place for the poor in his heart*, the same charge Amos levels against the self-absorbed lovers of money in the first reading.

Having a place in one’s heart for something or someone means, metaphorically, loving that object or person. Our readings this Sunday challenge us to make room in our hearts for God and for one another, and to leave money and affluence outside of our heart. Instead, we are to use our financial resources to care for our own needs and those of our sisters and brothers, especially the poor.

### *Praying the Word*

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

## Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time October 2, 2016

### *The Obedience of Faith*

#### *Breaking the Word*

##### **Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4**

Seeing danger all around him and experiencing despair, the prophet Habakkuk questions God's concern for and his presence in Judah. To this complaint, God invites Habakkuk to realize that divine judgment will indeed come upon those who lack integrity of faith and who perpetuate violence and strife.

##### **2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14**

Paul encourages Timothy to live out faithfully and courageously the grace he received when he was called to serve God's people. As a trustworthy minister of the church, Timothy is to teach and to trust in the power of the faith Paul preached.

##### **Luke 17:5-10**

In this gospel passage, the disciples ask the Lord Jesus to increase their faith, to which Jesus replies with a parable about the mustard seed and a parable about faithful servants who do only what is expected of them. Both touch on the gift of faith.

#### *Sharing the Word*

A brother priest and I enjoy watching reruns of *Seinfeld*. So many wonderful laughs are shared watching the "show about nothing," as it was commonly known. One episode I remember watching recently has the character George fall in love with a woman who is an Orthodox Christian. George wants to convert to her faith in order to maintain their relationship. George is given a number of large textbooks about the faith and is expected to pass an exam before being baptized. As one might expect, knowing George's reputation, he doesn't take the conversion process seriously and tries to cheat by



writing answers on his hands and arms, like crib notes. Needless to say, the amorous relationship ends abruptly and so does his experiment in Christianity.

This little vignette illustrates the point of our readings: faith is not “head work” but “heart work!” Faith in Jesus Christ and his church is not something that can be studied and known, like taking classes in meteorology. That is because “faith is first of all a personal adherence of man to God. At the same time, and inseparably, it is a *free assent to the whole truth that God has revealed*” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 150). Although we have catechetical classes and expect our children and adults in the RCIA to know the basic tenets of the faith, nevertheless those classes cannot teach faith. Rather, as Christians, we aspire to respond to God’s self-revelation, and this response is faith: “*By faith*, man completely submits his intellect and his will to God. With his whole being, man gives his assent to God the revealer. Sacred Scripture calls this human response to God, the author of revelation, ‘the obedience of faith’” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 143).

To the disciples’ request, “Increase our faith,” Jesus illustrates for them what the “obedience of faith” looks like: the obedient servants who do their master’s will and nothing more. This cannot be taught in a classroom, but must be lived, for it presupposes a transforming relationship. Faith is precious, and we must “guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us” (2 Tm 1:14).

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty and ever living God,  
the purity and faith of the Virgin Mary  
is like the bush burning but not consumed  
that Moses encountered.  
May your Holy Spirit enkindle our hearts  
so that, like the Virgin Mary, our faith in you  
might always burn brightly in our hearts  
in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 9, 2016

*Persevering in Thanks and Praise*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **2 Kings 5:14-17**

Today's reading is the intriguing story of Naaman, the army official from Aram (see 2 Kgs 5:1), who is afflicted with leprosy and seeks a cure from Elisha in Israel. The full biblical text is a wonderful piece for *lectio divina*, but our lectionary offers us a small morsel on which we are invited to feast relating the conversion of Naaman to the faith of Israel following his miraculous healing.

#### **2 Timothy 2:8-13**

Paul quotes a small creedal statement with which presumably Timothy would have been familiar. It is an exhortation to the gift of oneself in communion with the passion of Christ, who is ever faithful.

#### **Luke 17:11-19**

The Gospel for today is the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers, of which only one, a Samaritan, returns to render thankful praise. Jesus declares that his faith has become his salvation.

### *Sharing the Word*

In the *Roman Missal*, the prefaces to the Eucharistic Prayer usually contain an introductory phrase following the priest-people dialogue that includes these or similar words: "It is truly right and just, our duty and our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks, Lord, holy Father, almighty and eternal God, through Christ our Lord." That's a lot of theology packed into one complete sentence, but it conveys perfectly the sentiment expressed in our readings this Sunday.

Giving God thanks and praise through Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit is at the heart of what it means to be a

Christian. The eucharistic sacrifice we offer and celebrate is the source and summit of our thankful praise to the Father for our salvation in Christ. Not to spoil the ending of a movie, but the 2013 film *Gravity*, starring Sandra Bullock and George Clooney as astronauts, ends on a eucharistic note when Bullock's character, Dr. Ryan Stone, says "thank you" upon emerging onto dry land after her harrowing journey through outer space and back. I can't help but think it was uttered to God in thanksgiving for her safe return. Each day, we can think of countless experiences, relationships, and things for which we can say "thank you" to the Father.

It can be said that Jesus' entire life and ministry was one sacrifice of thankful praise offered to the Father, and that the Gospel thus reveals to us how we are to offer our own daily "eucharists" in imitation of him who died and rose for our salvation. The self-denial Paul mentions in the second reading is the beginning of a eucharistic life, one which is lived in thankful praise. Through the lens of the sacred liturgy — *lex orandi, lex credendi* — we discover that giving God thanks and praise at Mass, where we make the offering of our very lives with Christ, is a privileged duty imposed upon us and one which leads to our salvation in Christ Jesus.

### *Praying the Word*

Good and gracious God,  
in Christ Jesus, we offer you thankful praise  
for the gift of your Holy Spirit  
and manifold blessings in our lives.  
May we offer you our very selves in communion  
with the eucharistic sacrifice of Jesus your Son,  
who is Lord for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Twenty-ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 16, 2016

*Our Help is in the Name of the Lord*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Exodus 17:8-13**

Following Moses' bringing forth of water from the rock at Meribah and Massah, Amalek engages the Hebrews in battle. Moses selects his young apprentice Joshua to prosecute the war, while Moses intercedes with God on their behalf; Hur and Moses' brother, Aaron, lift up Moses' hands in prayer for a victorious battle.

#### **2 Timothy 3:14 – 4:2**

Paul summons his protégé Timothy to fidelity to the doctrine of the faith that he handed on to him, assuring him of the inherent value of Sacred Scripture. Timothy is to proclaim the Gospel tirelessly, heedless of the dangers fidelity to the preaching task might entail.

#### **Luke 18:1-8**

Journeying to Jerusalem, Jesus teaches his disciples about the necessity of prayer. He tells them a parable about a persistent widow who seeks justice from a dishonest judge.

### *Sharing the Word*

As we heard last Sunday, the Samaritan leper whom Jesus healed of his leprosy and returned to give thanks, was privileged to hear Jesus' words, "Stand up and go; your faith has saved you" (Lk 17:19). Today we see that faith which saves in prayerful action.

In the first reading, Moses realizes his pastoral role among the Hebrews as one who intercedes on their behalf. Whether it is asking God for water in the desert (see Ex 17:4) or praying for victory over Amalek, Moses realizes the importance of intercessory prayer. He has faith that God will provide for his people and bring about the victory over their enemies. His prayer, therefore, is an act of faith in

the power of the Most High. Likewise, in today's Gospel, Jesus tells his disciples that it will be necessary for them, like Moses, to shepherd the people of God by praying "always without becoming weary" (Lk 18:1). The disciples' faith is nurtured through and expressed in assiduous prayer.

This reminds me of something that the Jesuit Karl Rahner once wrote: "It simply is the case that the highest and most comprehensive form of thought is adoration. Prayer is the most decisive word that a man can say. There are some highly articulate scholars who are yet in an ultimate sense deaf-mutes: they do not listen to the word of God, and have nothing to say to God" ("The Scholar," in *Mission and Grace: Essays in Pastoral Theology*, vol. 2, New York: Sheed and Ward, 1964, 108).

Rooted in our faith, and as an expression thereof, we are invited to offer prayers of adoration to almighty God, prayers asking God for pardon and peace, prayers of thankful praise, and prayers interceding on behalf of one another, all of which culminate in the greatest prayer, the eucharistic sacrifice of the Mass.

### *Praying the Word*

Merciful Father,  
our help is in your most holy name.  
May we be persistent in our prayer  
and in the proclamation of your Word,  
Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord for ever and ever.  
Amen.

## Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time October 23, 2016

*Beloved Sons and Daughters of the Father*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Sirach 35:12-14, 16-18**

These four verses convey a lot of truth about the impartiality of God, who hears the cries of the lowly and the poor and saves them. God knows no favorites.

#### **2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18**

Paul concludes his epistle to Timothy with some personal updates on his condition and conveys a sense of hope and trust in the Lord even amid his own tribulations.

#### **Luke 18:9-14**

In a the continuation of last Sunday's reading, the Gospel presents the next in series of parables about discipleship; this parable is about a proud Pharisee in contrast to a humble tax collector and the type of prayers each one offers. "Jesus addressed this parable to those who were convinced of their own righteousness and despised everyone else" (9).

### *Sharing the Word*

What is usually the first question you ask someone when you meet him or her, besides "What's your name?" For most of us, our first question is "What do you do for a living?" or something similar. We are most interested in what people *do* rather than who they *are*. Rarely does someone ask another the question, "Who are you?" and expect the reply, "I am a beloved son/daughter of God." And yet, it seems to me that identifying *who we are* is what our readings are inviting us to do.

The self-righteous person to whom Jesus addressed the parable in today's Gospel identifies himself before God by what he

does. The tax collector, on the other hand, simply identifies himself as a sinner, one in need of God's forgiveness and love. Only someone who appreciates who he or she is vis-à-vis God, i.e., a beloved son or daughter made wondrously in the divine image and likeness, can recognize that sin has marred this God-given dignity, and acknowledge that he or she is a "sinner." The Pharisee could not; he simply told God what he did and did not do.

In our own time, society values us for what we do and what we produce, rather than for who we are. As Pope Saint John Paul II aptly reminded us, "Human persons are willed by God; they are imprinted with God's image. Their dignity does not come from the work they do, but from the persons they are" (*Centesimus Annus*, 1991, 11). Perhaps the next time someone asks, "What do you do for a living?" we might consider replying, "I am a beloved son/daughter of God, made wonderfully and beautifully in God's image and likeness." Imagine the conversation starter that would be!

### *Praying the Word*

Almighty God,  
you have marvelously created each of us  
in your divine image  
and you redeemed us through the precious blood  
of your beloved Son, Jesus Christ.  
In his holy name, we ask you for the grace this week  
to help recognize our dignity as your children  
that we might see the face of Christ in one another.  
We make our prayer through the same Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

## Thirty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time October 30, 2016

*God the Lover of Souls*

### *Breaking the Word*

#### **Wisdom 11:22 – 12:2**

The sacred author describes God's omnipotence as best expressed in his mercy toward sinners, for God is the lover of souls and he invites sinners to repentance. "It is proper to God to exercise mercy, and he manifests his omnipotence particularly in this way" (Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, II-II, q. 30, a. 4).

#### **2 Thessalonians 1:11 – 2:2**

Paul begins the Second Letter to the Thessalonians by sharing with them his prayerful solicitude for their well-being in Christ Jesus. He warns them to not be alarmed by the false zeal of some who would even write to them in his name.

#### **Luke 19:1-10**

Arriving in the great city of Jericho, Jesus encounters a tax collector named Zacchaeus, who is desirous of seeing him. By staying in Zacchaeus' home, Jesus restores this sinner to his dignity as a beloved son of God and declares that he "has come to seek and to save what was lost" (10).

### *Sharing the Word*

Luke 19:1-10 is the story of a curious (and short-statured) chief tax collector eager to meet Jesus. Its message is that salvation is offered to everyone who encounters Jesus as Lord. This encounter, now with the risen Lord, is efficaciously symbolized in the church's acts of mercy on behalf of all people. Just as Jesus mercifully encountered Zacchaeus without considering his sinful status or any other descriptor, so we are to imitate him and willingly embrace all as beloved sons and daughters of God.



We would do well to ask how many people are marginalized and condemned, like Zacchaeus, because of their behaviors or sins. Saint Augustine once wrote that Christians are called to love the sinner (i.e., the human being as a human being) and to hate the sin (the evil committed). This does not mean that one neglects charity and thereby fails to invite the sinner to repentance. In fact, as Pope Francis reminds us, "Mercy is the very foundation of the church's life. All of her pastoral activity should be caught up in the tenderness she makes present to believers; nothing in her preaching and in her witness to the world can be lacking in mercy. The church's very credibility is seen in how she shows merciful and compassionate love" (*Misericordiae Vultus*, 10). Calling another to repentance is an act of mercy; condemning another human being because of his or her sins is an act of hatred. Did not the father love his son without questioning his past deeds when he returned home, ashamed, hungry, and hopeless in the parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32)? The point of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus was that he might seek and save one who was lost. God's unconditional love is expressed precisely in the forgiveness of sins.

### *Praying the Word*

God our Father  
you show your mighty power in many ways,  
but most especially through your infinite mercy.  
May your Holy Spirit empower us  
to welcome all your beloved daughters and sons  
in the holy name of Jesus Christ,  
who is Lord forever and ever.  
Amen.





## EUCHARIST & CULTURE

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### Art Review



RETURN OF THE  
PRODIGAL SON  
Rembrandt van Rijn  
Oil on Canvas,  
1669

John Christman,  
SSS

When Catholics think of mercy, the biblical parable of the prodigal son likely comes to mind, that riveting story of forgiveness and transformation where a parent's mercy seems to know no bounds. And perhaps the most memorable painting of this subject is Rembrandt van Rijn's masterpiece, *The Return of the Prodigal Son*.

In this iconic image, we see the prodigal son on his knees, unkempt and dressed in rags, tattered shoes barely covering his feet. The poor man has dropped to his knees to beg forgiveness from his father for abandoning him and squandering his inheritance on a life of debauchery. Now he returns, simply hoping to find a place to work so that he no longer has to starve. He buries his head in his father's chest and surprisingly finds himself surrounded by his father's loving embrace.

The painting, like so many of Rembrandt's, utilizes a technique called chiaroscuro, which heightens the emotional impact of the image by creating strong contrasts of light and dark. The prodigal son and his father are surrounded by darkness, but warmly illuminated by a golden light that helps the viewer feel the joy and reconciliation in their embrace. Cleverly, Rembrandt largely hides the facial features of the prodigal son, so that we might all imagine ourselves in that embrace, saying to ourselves, "That could be me."

Beautifully, Pope Francis uses the figure of the father in this parable to illustrate God's mercy. He writes in *The Name of God is Mercy*: "His father was waiting for him, he had been staring out at the horizon waiting for his son's return, and he approached his son even before the man could say anything; before he even confessed his sins, the man's father hugged him. This is the love of God. This is his overabundant mercy."<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the acknowledgment that we all need mercy in our lives, the painting and parable may stir us to thinking how we could emulate

the father. Are there people who need mercy and forgiveness from us? Can we help others know God's "overabundant mercy?" This is an invitation the Year of Mercy makes immediate.

God's gracious and warm golden light can shine upon our acts of mercy, just as profoundly as it does in Rembrandt's painting.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *The Name of God is Mercy*. Trans. Oonagh Stransky (New York: Random House, 2016), 45.

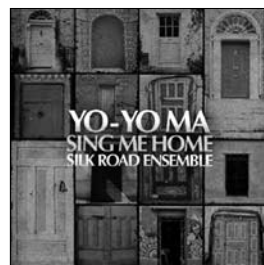
## Music Review

Early this year, Pope Francis waded into political waters in one of his attention-getting airplane interviews. The point he made was that Christians are people who should build bridges and not walls. In describing the musical vision of the Silk Road Ensemble, the internationally renowned cellist and composer Yo-Yo Ma powerfully echoed Pope Francis' statement saying, "All around the world, people constantly meet the unfamiliar through change. Rapid or dramatic change can feel threatening, tempting us to build walls to defend against the unknown. At Silk Road, we build bridges. In the face of change and difference, we find ways to integrate and synthesize, to forge relationships, and to create joy and meaning."

Creating "joy and meaning" and, importantly, beauty has been the practice of the Silk Road Ensemble from their very first album *Silk Road Ensemble: When Strangers Meet*. Named after the ancient Silk Road trade route that stretched throughout Asia and the Mediterranean, Yo-Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble explore the exchange of music and culture in a spirit of true dialogue.

What's impressive beyond their exemplary musicianship is the respectful musical exchange itself. These musicians and composers are not simply dabbling in world music. Instead, they are sharing cultural identities, values, and stories through the music they create.

Their recent album *Sing Me Home* exemplifies this dialogue. Each musical piece has a story and is rooted in a particular culture and tradition. From "Shingashi Song," that respectfully re-interprets a traditional Japanese folk tune, to original compositions like "Wedding," that envisions the joyous celebration of a Syrian village wedding, each piece serves as a reminder and an encouragement to grow and persevere in changing and sometimes challenging times.



Yo-Yo Ma and the  
Silk Road Ensemble  
*SING ME HOME*  
Sony Masterworks,  
2016

John Christman,  
SSS

In not only sharing these stories but also allowing other musicians to participate in the creative storytelling, relationships are built. Strangers become accompanists. Commonalities are discovered. Communion is nurtured. This “bridge building” is in fact documented in a recent film about the Silk Road Ensemble entitled *The Music of Strangers*, of which *Sing Me Home* is the companion album.

But the music is the key. If the music were not captivating, beautiful, and thought-provoking, the Silk Road Ensemble would remain simply an intriguing idea. Thankfully, they are so much more, and well worth discovering.

## Poetry

### Star of the Sea *A Prayer to the Virgin*

At the end of the Western World,  
where Left and Right  
no longer adequately describe  
the cultural alternatives,

the winds rage  
and the sea rises,  
and black clouds  
occlude the ordinary  
source of light;

shine for us,  
O, Star of the Sea,  
and bring us home  
where we admittedly  
have never been;  
our New Home  
which is the *only*  
cultural alternative;

which we have dreamed on incessantly,  
but never 'til now

have adequately conceived.  
Amen.

Jared Barkan

## Book Reviews

Over a roughly 15 year span, the faculties of the Diocese of Cleveland's major and minor seminaries contributed pastorally focused articles to the diocesan newspaper, *The Universe Bulletin*. Each edition of the paper featured an article under the title "Theologically Speaking." The current volume is a collection of some of these articles.

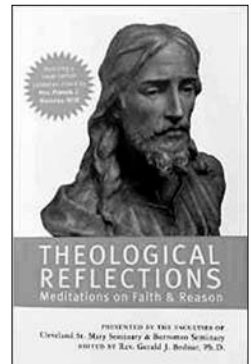
The editor invited the contributors to once again contribute: this time, two or three of the articles that each writer felt represented work worthy of publication. The editor has arranged these "greatest hits" in thematic categories, seven in all. There is wide diversity in the topics addressed by this collection of articles. Yet, there is a singular unity of focus in the goal of making Catholic theological thinking accessible to the entire population of the Diocese of Cleveland. This is a volume for all Catholics.

The collection's first section, "Biblical Matters," offers solid biblical scholarship on questions relevant to Catholics of the twenty-first century. The writers blend the best of biblical research with a gentle pastoral approach. The articles invite and engage the reader's attention.

The next group of articles is entitled "The Splendor of the Human." Here, the reader finds articles with an emphasis on various issues relating to the current debate regarding science and religion. As the section heading implies, there is a strong focus on incarnational theology. The splendor of creation, treated more explicitly in Pope Francis' recent encyclical *Laudato Si*, here takes a back seat to the specific splendor of the human.

The third section, "The Summertime of the Soul," presents the reader with a selection of materials that are simultaneously theologically instructive and personally inspiring. Here, one finds engaging reflections on the importance of leisure, the Sabbath, and the joyful witnessing of one's faith through one's daily actions.

Six articles on "Spirituality" follow. Readers are gently invited into the riches of Christian spiritual theology as a means of deepening their personal spiritual lives of faith and discipleship. Quite seamlessly, the text next narrows its focus on spirituality to a consideration of "Liturgical Life." The articles in this section respond to pragmatic



**THEOLOGICAL  
REFLECTIONS:  
MEDITATIONS  
ON FAITH &  
REASON**  
Gerald J. Bednar,  
PhD, ed.  
Wickliffe, Ohio:  
SMS Publications,  
2014

questions such as “Why Is Mass So Boring?” as well as offering insights into the mystical reflection of Saint Thérèse of Lisieux that “I am a Living Monstrance!”

Issues in moral theology are explored in the sixth section, “Life, Death, and Morals along the Way.” Here, the Catholic intellectual tradition’s balanced integration of faith and reason is clearly brought to bear on controversial issues. The article on stem cell research carefully distinguishes between the use of embryonic stem cells (which the Catholic Church opposes) and research which employs adult stem cells (which it supports). Similarly, medical treatment options at the end of life are explored from the church’s perspective, which always expresses deep concern that the dignity of the human person be respected at all times, even in its most vulnerable final months, weeks, and days of life.

The final section is entitled “Hearing the Call: Vocations.” Articles in this section seek to encourage people of the diocese to in turn encourage young women and men to consider vocations to the religious life and to the priesthood. It is clear that vocations to the ordained ministry and the consecrated life grow from and are nourished by the Catholic culture of the diocese. Families, parishes, and Catholic schools all play important roles in the cultivation of vocations to the priesthood and religious life.

Together, the articles in this volume constitute a cornucopia of theological reflections that serve as a source for the pastorally focused education of the reader. While this volume is a significant theological resource in its own right, on another level this collection serves as a living commemoration of the faithful service rendered by the seminary faculty members to the diocese over the 15 years reflected. The practice of writing articles for the diocesan newspaper has been a consistent and pastorally beneficial effort since its inception. However, this practice will need to find a new vehicle of expression if it is to continue: in the past year, *The Universe Bulletin* has ceased print publication. In its place is a magazine format publication.

*Theological Reflections* intentionally honors both the major and minor seminaries of the Diocese of Cleveland for their ongoing faithful service to the diocese: Saint Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology on its 165th anniversary and Borromeo Seminary of Ohio on its 60th anniversary. In addition to their primary work of the spiritual formation of candidates for the priesthood, the faculties of

both seminaries are to be applauded for their dedicated service in researching and composing the articles of *Theologically Reflections* by which the people of the diocese were spiritually nourished as they read their *Catholic Universe Bulletin*.

George S. Matejka, PhD  
Chair, Philosophy Department  
Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, Ohio

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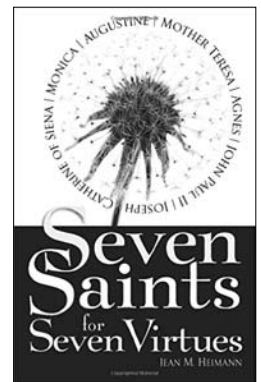
Seeking to challenge the view that men and women who have been officially declared “blessed” or “saint” are far above ordinary Christians like ourselves, Jean M. Heimann proposes that the lives of Saints Joseph, Monica, and her son Augustine, Catherine of Sienna, Agnes, Mother Teresa, and John Paul II reveal human faults and failings with which they struggled and overcame, making them models for the virtues of charity, chastity, diligence, humility, kindness, patience, and temperance.

Within each chapter, focusing on a particular holy person, are modern examples of ordinary people who exemplify these virtues in their daily lives. For example, we are introduced to Peggy, a nurse, who assisted the author during a painful procedure with kindness shown by such simple actions as wrapping her in a warm blanket. In addition, each chapter gives practical suggestions for how to prayerfully reflect on the virtues as well as actions that can be taken by thoughtful people, and ends with a prayer written by the saint or to the saint asking for the grace to understand and practice the particular virtue.

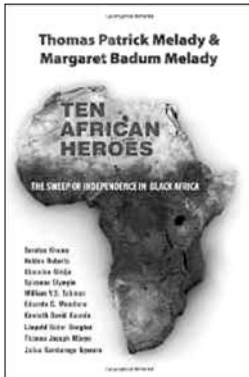
The final chapter, “Saints in the Making,” offers the challenge to the reader to realize that the saints were as human as we are, struggling with difficult upbringings, crises of faith during their lives, but willing to be open to God’s grace. The bibliography contains additional books about the seven saints featured and on the virtues as well as on prayer. This book might well serve as a basis for personal prayer and reflection as well as for parish programs for young adults or older adults by bringing small groups together for discussion on deepening their personal and communal spiritual life.

Mary Denis Maher, CSA, PhD  
Professor Emerita  
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**SEVEN SAINTS  
FOR SEVEN  
VIRTUES**  
Jean M. Heimann  
Cincinnati, Ohio:  
Servants Books,  
2014  
125 pp., \$13.99



**TEN AFRICAN  
HEROES:  
THE SWEEP OF  
INDEPENDENCE  
IN BLACK  
AFRICA**

Thomas P. Melady  
and Margaret  
Badum Melady  
Maryknoll, New  
York: Orbis Books,  
2011  
240 pp., \$25.00

The author, Karen Von Blixen-Finecke, who wrote *Out of Africa*, never suspected that her title would be the same expression now used to describe modern humans' original migration out of Africa some 250,000 years ago.

Now fast forward to our present time. The authors of *Ten African Heroes*, a husband-wife team with some 25 years' experience as ambassadors to Africa, take their experience and their faith focus as a magnifying glass to describe the lives of ten African leaders who were instrumental in the birth of their African countries. These leaders relied not only on their political and cultural acumen, but on their faith experiences as well. All are internationally known because they had a profound influence on the birth of their nations during one crucial era, the 1960s.

These founding fathers are: Léopold Sédar Senghor of Senegal; Julius Kambarage Nyerere of Tanzania; Kenneth David Kaunda of Zambia; Seretse Khama of Botswana; Thomas Joseph Mboya of Kenya; Holden Álvaro Roberto of Angola; Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane of Mozambique; William V. S. Tubman of Liberia; Sylvanus Olympio of Togo; and Ahmadou Ahidjo of Cameroon.

If you like big things, then Africa will please you because it is the second largest and second most populated continent in the world. Winston Churchill called it the sleeping giant. There are over a billion people living on the continent. The median age is 19 years-old. Sub-Sahara Africa is now predominantly Christian. Have you noticed when you go to church on Sunday, you are likely to see that the priest presider is from Africa?

So much for the background and the context. What about the focus? The Meladys knew each of these heroes personally, socially, and professionally over a quarter-century. They were invited into their homes and tables. Table talk always turned to the spiritual, which is not surprising as Africans talk about God as if he were the breath in their lungs. What impressed the Meladys most was how personally each was committed to his Catholic faith in political, cultural, and social discussions.

It is an impossible task to deal with all ten individuals, so I will focus on the founding father of Tanzania, Julius Nyerere. I first met President Nyerere in 1969 when I arrived in Tanzania.



Tanzania was a newborn nation. Nyerere was the leader of his political party. He was brought up Catholic and early on became a catechist and later went through a three-or-four-year course on the faith. Julius was very bright. He received a scholarship to Oxford. All the while, weekly and often daily, the Eucharist was the center of his life.

I met him frequently because he traveled throughout the country. He chose as his prime minister a Maasai elder who was also Catholic. Nyerere focused on the country's resources for all the people regardless of tribal affiliation. (Pope Francis would have admired him.) Finally, because of his faith-filled life, the Catholic community has submitted Julius Nyerere for canonization. What a joyous ending from such a humble beginning!

This review started with identifying the ten heroes. It will end with a note about the three appendices. The second one by Sengha is an insightful look at a universal culture for mankind. The third appendix is Tarna's extraordinary experience of racial reconciliation, which is as valuable today as the day on which it was written.

Dennis Ruane, SSS, MA, PhD  
Former African Missionary  
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament  
Cleveland, Ohio



## *EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS*

Susan Work  
Associate of the Blessed Sacrament

### **My Experiences of Eucharist**

The Eucharist is multi-faceted for me. It is contemplative and active; private and communal; noun and verb.

I experience Eucharist as a contemplative experience when I spend quiet time in adoration before the Most Blessed Sacrament. I often meditate on Psalm 46:11, *"Be still and know that I am God."*

An overwhelming feeling comes over me while sitting quietly and contemplating on how Jesus is with me in and through the perpetual gift of the Eucharist. I am at peace resting in his presence. It is during adoration that I feel liberated as I offer my praise and thanksgiving, and place my fears and sorrows in Christ's hands.

I experience Eucharist as communal or actively at the celebration of Mass. I come forward with others to receive Christ, and I am provided with the nourishment and grace to share my life in service to others. I am incomplete without the Eucharist.

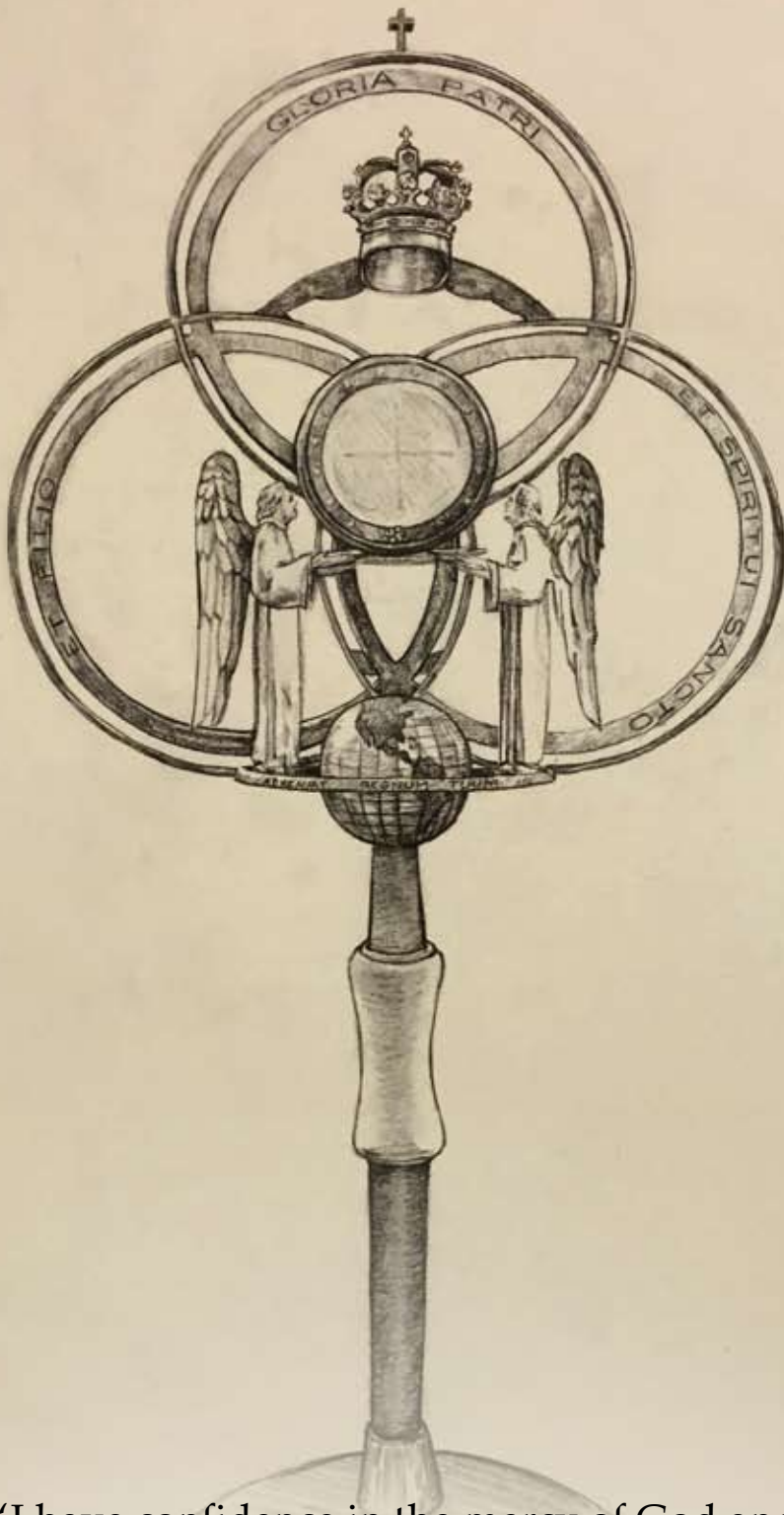
Each time I receive the Eucharist at Mass, I experience Christ's presence freely given. I receive the grace to continue to live my life centered on the Eucharist. I often reflect on my view that Jesus never belonged to any one person while he was on this earth. He belonged to his Father and to all humanity. However, in the Eucharist, Jesus gives himself and dwells in each of us who welcome him and receive him with a sincere heart.

Then, Jesus asks me to not keep him to myself. He promised that he is always with me, and he beckons me to go forth and share his love for others through my life.

The Eucharist creates a perpetual cycle of giving and receiving. Living an authentic eucharistic life by giving of myself to others comes natural to me through the grace of receiving Jesus in the Eucharist.

I approach the Eucharist and receive with joy, and at times in sorrow and pain. I receive with a longing for the nourishment, healing, and strength to go out into the world to live the life I am called to live, in and through the Eucharist.





"I have confidence in the mercy of God and  
in the baptism of grace."

*Eymard*  
1875

Saint Peter Julian Eymard, First Retreat of Rome

Andrea Torielli: “What are the most important things that a believer should do during the Holy Year of Mercy?”

Pope Francis: “He should open up to the Mercy of God, open up his heart and himself, and allow Jesus to come toward him by approaching the confessional with faith. And he should try and be merciful with others.”

*Pope Francis, The Name of God is Mercy*