

Emmanuel

Eucharistic Spirituality



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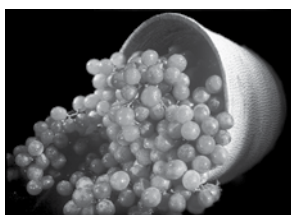
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Emmanuel Magazine

Seeing all of reality in the light of the Eucharist

Volume 123 Number 3



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FROM THE EDITOR

The first months of the Trump era have been “interesting.” Political rumblings emanate almost daily from Washington as the new national leadership attempts to define and implement a very different vision and priorities for the country. Among the things we have learned about the 45th President — apart from his penchant for “tweetstorms,” governance by decree, and recourse to “alternative facts” — is that he is apparently a workaholic. Reports have revealed that he sleeps only four or five hours a night. In this, at least, he seems to mirror the nation as a whole.

“Americans are definitely workaholics,” Cullen Murphy, the editor-at-large of *Vanity Fair*, has said in an interview. “Maybe the overall message of this . . . is that there is a kind of bedrock faith in the idea that working hard pays off” (*Business Insider*, July 7, 2015).

Statistics show that Americans work more hours per week than their European counterparts, take fewer vacation days, and often let professional responsibilities impinge on their leisure time and relationships. It may in the short term “pay off,” but at what cost to the overall sense of personal health, well-being, and perspective? I am reminded of the adage attributed to the late Senator Paul Tsongas: “Nobody on their deathbed has ever said, ‘I wish I had spent more time at the office.’”

Here we stand at the start of May and June and summer. The rhythm of parish life slows; school and religious education classes in most places are dismissed; church organizations take a break from their usual activities; and parishioners and families go away on vacation.

This issue of *Emmanuel* is an appeal for balance in life, especially in the lives of those who serve in the ordained ministry and in other roles of pastoral and spiritual leadership. We must not neglect ourselves. We mustn’t succumb to the societal pull of “workaholism” and its

debilitating effects.

In reading and editing the copy for this issue, I was struck by the German philosopher Josef Pieper's preoccupation with the "relationship between work and play . . . how festivity involves the whole of existence, and . . . affirmation is at the very heart of all Christian worship." Redemptorist Dennis Billy says in his article on Pieper: "He saw the Eucharist, first and foremost, as a time for rejoicing in the love of Christ and thus a festive celebration."

Jesuit Peter Schineller encourages us to see the spirituality inherent in the seasons of summer and fall, summarized in the following sentences from his reflection: "Summer invites us to a more contemplative approach to ordinary things"; "Tis easier to find God in the summer"; and "Even as we delight in autumn's beauty, we also feel a sense of impending loss. Perhaps there is a sense of beauty even in letting go."

Some years ago, I heard a psychologist urge an assembly of priests and deacons he was addressing at a diocesan convocation to strive for balance in their lives: ministry, prayer, study, exercise, meals, loving relationships, and rest.

Jesus, who was supremely devoted to the proclamation of the kingdom and to his ministry of availability to others, especially to those in need, nevertheless found time for prayerful communion with the Father in the cool of the day, for table fellowship and rest in the home of his friends Martha and Mary and Lazarus in Bethany, for sharing with his disciples as they journeyed along the roadsides, and for pausing to appreciate the beauty of God's created world. Ought we not to do the same?



Anthony Schueller, SSS



EUCHARIST: LIVING & EVANGELIZING

Spirituality of the Seasons - Summer and Autumn

by Peter Schineller, SJ

The turn of the seasons is ever with us. What can we learn from them to enrich our inner life and our spiritual journey?

Father Peter Schineller, a native of New York City, has taught theology in Chicago, Illinois, and Cambridge, Massachusetts, and served in administrative and teaching posts at the Catholic Institute of West Africa in Abuja, Nigeria, and Hekima College in Nairobi, Kenya. He is currently assigned to The Jesuit Center in Amman, Jordan. The first part of this reflection appeared in the January/February 2017 issue.

Summer: “. . . a summer, so that the fruit might ripen into an abundant harvest”

IN SUMMER, THE WORLD BLOSSOMS IN EVERY IMAGINABLE COLOR. IT IS TIME TO GO outdoors and stay outdoors enjoying the warmth and light of the sun. This could mean a beach, a park, or simply our own backyard, a swim, a hike, or a long walk. If we prefer to be spectators, we go to a park or stadium for a ball game and root for “the boys of summer.”

Summer is the time for holidays from school and vacations from work. How children look forward to and enjoy summer! And in the summer with family, friends, and schoolmates, how much they learn that no school or classroom can teach them!

In the Church calendar, summer is “Ordinary Time.” In summer, it is okay to be lazy, to waste time, to appreciate the warmth and power of the sun. Summer invites us to a more contemplative approach to ordinary things — the feel and taste of food, the scent of flowers and plants. Streets, cities, gardens are vibrant with light, color, warmth, and cooling breezes.

Summer is the time for optimism, to try new things, new places, and new activities. It is a time to broaden our horizons, to revisit, explore, and expand our dreams.

Summer begins with the longest day of the year, the summer solstice around June 20-21. We experience the plentifulness of creation. Birds provide the music; trees and plants flower and fruit in a way that can almost seem criminally wasteful. Yes, it can be nasty, hot and humid,

with thunderstorms and heavy rain, but also magnificent rainbows.

We know that the hot sun will return so again we can feel the warmth and light of God — the warmth of the Spirit of God. Indeed, as someone remarked, “Tis easier to find God in the summer.”

The popular song “Summertime” serenades us with the pleasant, relaxed mood of summer:

Summertime and the livin’ is easy
Fish are jumpin’ and the cotton is high
Oh, your daddy’s rich and your ma is good-lookin’
So hush little baby, don’t you cry
One of these mornings you’re gonna rise up singing
And you’ll spread your wings and you’ll take to the sky
But ‘til that morning, there ain’t nothin’ can harm you
With daddy and mammy standin’ by.

And recall *Sonnet 18* of William Shakespeare:

Shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate.
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer’s lease hath all too short a date.
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance, or nature’s changing course, untrimmed;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow’st,
Nor shall death brag thou wand’rest in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow’st.
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

And finally, the description of summer by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*:

Spring flew swiftly by, and summer came; and if the village had been beautiful at first, it was now in the full glow and luxuriance of its richness. The great trees, which had looked shrunken and bare in the earlier months, had now burst into strong life and health; and stretching forth their green arms over the thirsty ground, converted open and naked spots into



choice nooks, where was a deep and pleasant shade from which to look upon the wide prospect, steeped in sunshine, which lay stretched out beyond. The earth had donned her mantle of brightest green and shed her richest perfumes abroad. It was the prime and vigor of the year; all things were glad and flourishing.

Reflection

Do I take the time to enjoy the light, warmth, and long days of summer sunlight? Do I thank God for God's seemingly reckless generosity with light, bugs, flowers — all in abundance? Do I appreciate the brightness, the length of the daylight that encourages us to go out and to reach out? Saint Ignatius constantly asked of his companions when they went out on mission, "What fruits are you reaping?" Have I sown good deeds, good relationships, and a life of prayer so that I, too, will produce good fruits — an abundant harvest?

More practically, has the summer outdoors helped me to get in shape, physically (and spiritually), so I will be ready for autumn and, even beyond that, for the rigors of winter?

Autumn: ". . . an autumn, so that the ripe fruit might be picked and gathered into the divine barns for safekeeping, lest any of it be lost"

Autumn begins with the balance of light and darkness, the autumnal equinox on or around September 20. It is a mix of day and night, light and dark, but quietly the daylight continues to grow shorter. Autumn is above all a season of great beauty — golden leaves, shortening days, misty mornings.

It has its own fragrance, with piles of leaves and cool, fresh mornings. Indeed, it brings forth "the year's last, loveliest smile." Autumn lets loose a flourish of colors, red and gold, "so many shades of gold" with dazzling beauty. It is the time when nature scatters the seeds for new growth in the spring.

It is a season of decline, of slowing down after the activities of summer. Even as we delight in the great beauty, we also feel a sense of impending loss. Perhaps there is a sense of beauty even in letting go. We must let go so that new powers, new seeds can eventually grow.

We cling to our belief and hope that dying is a prelude to new life.

Autumn is the time to reap the harvest, to gather and share the fruit, to take care that nothing is lost. Autumn reminds us of the fleeting nature of things, even beauty. The dying of nature and our daily dyings are a necessary precursor to new life. It is a good time to listen to older folk, wisdom figures, for they all have a story to tell.

Summer invites us to a more contemplative approach to ordinary things. "Tis easier to find God in the summer."

Two poems and one song will fill in the picture of autumn: first, an autumn day, then autumn in the city, and finally, autumn and human life.

Autumn Day by Rainer Maria Rilke:

Lord, it's time. The summer overwhelmed us.
Allow your shadow fall on the sundials
and let the winds roam all over the fields.
Command the last fruits: they should fully ripen,
and give them two more southern sunny days,
to reach perfection gathering
the last nectar into the heavy grapes.
Who hasn't built his home yet, he will never build it.
Who may be alone now, by himself he will be
without sleep, and reading, on long letters musing,
and aimlessly walking on paths nowhere leading
when in withered gardens the dead leaves are dancing.

The city, too, comes alive with theater and music.

Autumn in New York, why does it seem so inviting?
Autumn in New York, it spells the thrill of first nighting
Glittering crowds and shimmering clouds in canyons of steel
They're making me feel, I'm home.
It's autumn in New York that brings the promise of new love
Autumn in New York is often mingled with pain
Dreamers with empty hands may sigh for exotic lands
It's autumn in New York, it's good to live it again.



The cycle of life and death, of leaves springing and falling, affects each of us, old or young.

Spring and Fall: To a Young Child by Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)

Margaret, are you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leaves, like the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Ah! as the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you will weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sorrow's springs are the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What heart heard of, ghost guessed:
It is the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Even as we delight in autumn's beauty, we also feel a sense of impending loss. Perhaps there is a sense of beauty even in letting go.

Reflection

Autumn is a time to look back, as Saint Peter Favre explains, time to gather the fruits of our labors. Have we counted the summer blessings and thanked the Lord for the good times of summer? There may be wintry, leaner times ahead, so we should be prepared.

Even in the spiritual life, there is an ebb and flow. It is not all highs, not all the beauty of autumn colors. We must let go, look back with gratitude, and look ahead even to the cold and darkness of winter.

Have we shared the fruit of our labors? Have we taken care that nothing is lost, that I am living up to the best of my ability?

Conclusion

We have seen how the rhythm and change of the seasons have inspired poets, artists, and musicians. We have turned to them for insight into the richness of the seasons. There is a beauty in each — if we take the time to look for it. We can miss the seasons, or trivialize them. Or we can go, grow, and flow with them, let them carry and instruct us.

This varies greatly if we live in Alaska or live in Africa, yet the seasons in both locales affect and shape us. No one season is sufficient for us. We enjoy, need, and are challenged by the change of seasons. As the world of nature needs the change, so does the world of humanity, our human nature.

No one season is sufficient for us. We enjoy, need, and are challenged by the change of seasons.

Reflection on the four seasons is also a way to help reflect on world events, on our Church and our parish, on our family and our profession. Where are we now, and where are we heading? Are we in springtime or in wintertime? And, more importantly, where are we heading? Are we moving ahead to Easter and new life, or back toward the darkness and suffering of Good Friday?

Might we dare ask? Will there be seasons in heaven, in the eternity of heaven? Who knows! Yet, as the late Anthony deMello loved to say, heaven must be as good as, indeed better, more beautiful, and more magnificent than anything we can imagine or experience on earth. So seasons, yes, in abundance, and with beauty we cannot dream of or imagine.

There is the Latin phrase “*Carpe diem*.” Pluck the day, get the most out of the day. Make it a good one. We are suggesting here that we expand that more broadly to the four seasons of the year. We say here, with Peter Favre, “Pluck the season.” This applies surely to the liturgical seasons of the year — Advent, Lent, and Paschal Time. As these seasons of the Church’s year intersect with the God-given seasons of nature, may they reveal to us new opportunities, new virtues, and new fruits. For ultimately, the four seasons, as they arise from the creative hand of God, point back to different aspects of the Creator. True, God is the Lord of all time, and God’s time is the best time, as we love to say in Africa.



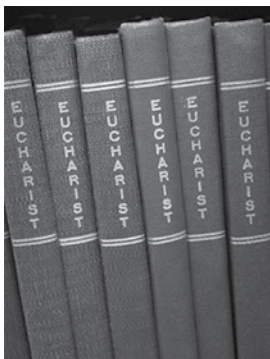
But somehow he is forming and teaching us through the variety, the richness, the changing of the seasons. God, too, intersects with the seasons, creating, giving light, laboring, watching patiently, and guiding us through the cycle of life, death, and resurrection, the cycle we see most clearly in the paschal mystery of Jesus Christ.

Saint Thomas More is characterized as the “man for all seasons” in the play of the same name written by Robert Bolt, and later made into a movie. More was able to adapt and to adjust, and yet remain deeply and fully Christian, true to his conscience and his principles in all seasons and in all circumstances. This becomes the challenge for us, first, to recognize the influence of the times and the seasons on us and our ways of thinking, and, then, rooted in Christian faith, to live in tune with the seasons.

With Saint Peter Favre as our example and guide, we might examine ourselves and look at the shape and direction of our lives with the four seasons in mind. Are we, in the words of Saint Ignatius, fruitful laborers in the Lord’s vineyard? Are we in tune with creation, the four seasons, letting their spirit, tone, mood, and movement influence and guide us? To put it positively, the challenge is to seek, to serve, to love, even to find God in all things, including the four seasons of the year.

Like Thomas More, we are all called to be saints and should be men and women for all seasons, giving witness and bearing fruit in each and every season.





EUCCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

Josef Pieper on the Eucharist

by Dennis J. Billy, CSsR

Through study of leisure, festivity, and the sacred, Josef Pieper enriched the Catholic tradition and influenced a generation of Catholics on levels that affected both academia and popular practice and devotion.

JOSEF PIEPER (1904-1997) WAS ONE OF THE GREAT CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHERS of the twentieth century. He was born in Elte, Germany, moved to Münster with his family in 1912, graduated from the gymnasium there in 1923, studied philosophy, law, and sociology at the universities of Münster and Berlin from 1926-1927, and received his PhD from Münster in 1928. From 1928-1932, he was a professorial assistant at Münster and did freelance literary work from 1932-1940. Pieper served in the psychology section of the German army during World War II and later as a civilian helper at the central welfare office of Westphalia, during which time he examined the aptitude of soldiers with severe battlefield injuries. Conscripted into the German air force in 1944, he served in a military hospital, was imprisoned for a few months at the war's end, and afterward returned to his work at the central welfare office.

Pieper began his post-doctoral habilitation in 1945 with the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Münster, was appointed a lecturer in philosophy at the Pedagogical Academy of Essen in 1946, and gave his inaugural lecture the same year. He became a member of the German Academy for Language and Literature in 1949, was promoted to extraordinary (associate) professor at Münster in 1950, then to full professor in 1959, and finally emeritus professor in 1972.

Pieper continued lecturing and writing after his retirement and gave his last lecture in 1996, a year before his death. The author of numerous books and monographs, he is probably most remembered for his works on leisure, festivity, and the virtues. His teaching on the Eucharist flows from his deep Catholic faith and his love of the

Redemptorist Father Dennis J. Billy has authored or edited more than 30 books and 300 articles in a number of scholarly and popular journals and taught in Rome and at the archdiocesan seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He is a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*.



philosophy and theology of Saint Thomas Aquinas.¹

Pieper's Philosophical and Theological Outlook

Pieper was deeply rooted in the philosophical and theological outlook of Thomas Aquinas. When he was in his late teens, a teacher of his, who was also a priest, convinced him to delve into Aquinas' writings. This led to a lifetime dedicated to exploring the works of the Angelic Doctor, one that would make his thought more accessible to the sensitivities of a twentieth-century audience without sacrificing any of its substance or accuracy. Pieper's *Guide to Thomas Aquinas* (1962) remains to this day one of the best (and most readable) introductions to the life and work of this seminal Catholic thinker. His treatises on the moral virtues, *The Four Cardinal Virtues* (1966), and the theological virtues, *Faith, Hope, and Love* (1986), touch the heart of Aquinas' theological and spiritual outlook and are widely used in Catholic colleges and seminaries even today.

More than a mere popularizer of Aquinas' thought, Pieper was a probing thinker in his own right and used Thomistic philosophy to delve deeply into some of the most fascinating yet elusive and seldom discussed elements of Western culture. In *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1948), he shows that leisure forms the very foundation of Western culture since it gives man the energy and the time to turn away from matters relating to mere survival and to explore the deeper questions of human existence. In it, he asserts that philosophy begins in wonder and that man's fascination with the world leads him to construe innovative ways of explaining his place in the universe and means of interacting with it.

In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity (1963) explores the relationship between work and play, shows how festivity involves the whole of existence, and sees affirmation at the very heart of all Christian worship. *In Search of the Sacred: Contributions to an Answer* (1988) looks into the meaning of the sacred as it relates to time and space, Christian worship, church architecture, and the meaning of the priesthood. In it, Pieper affirms that, while God alone is "holy," the term *sacred* is typically used to refer to more tangible earthly realities (time, space, people, and actions) in their orientation toward the holy and the threshold of the divine.²

Pieper's Catholic faith permeates his writings, and for this reason,

they are remarkably cohesive in their philosophical and theological outlook. He is a “Catholic philosopher” in the best sense of the term, someone who understands the depths of human reason (and its limitations), yet is not afraid to explore its interface with the realm of faith. His deep love for the thought of Aquinas opened up for him a way of philosophizing about some of the most fundamental questions of human existence. He did so in a manner that was respectful of his Catholic heritage, open to human experience, and appreciative of the dialogue between faith and reason. His teaching on the Eucharist appears in a number of his works, but shines through most clearly in *In Search of the Sacred*.

Pieper’s Teaching on the Eucharist

Perhaps the best way of introducing Pieper’s teaching on the Eucharist is to examine a passage from his work on festivity: “The inner structure of real festivity has been stated in the clearest and tersest possible fashion by Chrysostom”: *‘Ubi caritas gaudet, ibi est festivitas,’* ‘Where love rejoices, there is festivity.’”³ Pieper published this work at the time of the Second Vatican Council and recognized its reaffirmation of the Eucharist as “‘the summit’ of the Church’s activity and the ‘fount from which all her powers flow.’”⁴

If philosophy begins in wonder, worship begins with awe and a deep desire to render thanks to God for his manifold gifts.

He saw the Eucharist, first and foremost, as a time for rejoicing in the love of Christ and thus a festive celebration. Catholics attend Mass on Sunday, their day of rest and a time when they put aside the ordinary demands of life in order to place their lives in perspective and thank God for the many gifts he has bestowed on them. According to Pieper, “The Mass is called and is *eucharistia*. Whatever the specific content of this thanksgiving may be, the ‘occasion’ for which it is performed and which it comports with is nothing other than the salvation of the world and of life as a whole.”⁵ While he recognizes that everything depends on whether we believe Christ can transform us and the world around us, Pieper sees Christian worship “. . . as an act of affirmation that expresses itself in praise, glorification, thanksgiving for the whole of reality and existence.”⁶

Pieper further points out that when a priest celebrates Mass, he acts



"in persona Christi." The priesthood is tied to the Eucharist — and vice versa. At ordination, the Church bestows upon the priest *potestas sacra* (sacred power) to celebrate the Eucharist in the person of Christ for the universal Church. He is given authority in the service of the Church "to make God's incarnate Logos, in sacramental signs, present among men."⁷

For Pieper, the social and sociological context of the priesthood does not obscure this fundamental reality, for it operates on an entirely different level. During the Eucharistic Prayer, when the priest says, "This is my body" and "This is my blood," he is not merely quoting Christ's words, but speaking and acting as Christ himself. When he says them, these words are not merely recited as a professor might quote them at a lecture, or as a group gathered in a room might recite them for Bible study, or even a lector or the priest himself might proclaim them during the Liturgy of the Word. When the priest says them at the appropriate time during the Eucharistic Prayer, Christ himself speaks. For Pieper, "It is rather Christ himself who effects this identity, he who 'in the sacrifice of the Mass . . . is present in the person of the priest.'"⁸

As might be expected, Pieper's teaching on the Eucharist is deeply rooted in the thought of Thomas Aquinas, who understood the sacraments as "the means by which the incarnation of the divine Logos is sustained and perpetuated throughout history."⁹ Aquinas, Pieper points out, considers the Eucharist "the most prominent of all the sacraments, comparable to bread, the most prominent of all foods."¹⁰ For this reason, it constitutes and perfects all the other sacraments.

Pieper also points out that, except for the Eucharist, the priest speaks for himself when he presides at all the other sacraments and says, for example, "I baptize you . . ." or "I absolve you . . ."¹¹ Only in the Eucharist does he act *in persona Christi* and pronounce the words of institution as if Christ himself were speaking.¹² Pieper points out that, while all believers are members of the priesthood of the faithful, the sacrament of orders consecrates priests and gives them "the authority to celebrate for the entire church the Eucharist *in persona Christi*" and that "this authority can 'in no wise' be claimed by the laity."¹³

Using Thomas' distinction between "a human act" (e.g., a deliberated action of reason and will) and "an act of man" (e.g., a beating heart, a reflex), Pieper draws an analogous distinction between "priestly actions" and "actions that simply happen to be performed by priests,"

with the former being those actions performed by virtue of the authority received through sacred orders and the latter those that are not.¹⁴ He further points out that both Aquinas and the fathers of the Second Vatican Council identify the celebration of the Eucharist as the primary area of priestly action and that “he [Thomas] explicitly sees the ‘sacrament of Christ’s body’ also as the sacrament of love and peace, and above all as the sacrament of church unity, by whose power ‘the many are united in Christ’”¹⁵

Pieper is not only concerned with sacred time, but also sacred space, believing that “a Christian church, in essence, is a sacred space.”¹⁶ It is consecrated in order to become an *aedes sacra*, a sacred space or sacred building.¹⁷ What takes place there brings those gathered for the celebration of the sacred mysteries. Churches, in his mind, are built not to surround a book, but an altar.¹⁸ For Catholics, this points to “the celebration of the eucharistic mystery and . . . the actualization of the unique sacrifice of Christ himself.”¹⁹

Pieper here draws a sharp distinction between the “sacred mysteries” and the “proclamation of the word.”²⁰ If this distinction is not maintained, the believing community runs “the risk of a demonstrative informality and familiarity in speech and comportment, devastating to the character of the ‘sacred action;’ or the risk of an aberrant idolizing of the ‘word.’”²¹ Sacred space, in his mind, should be set apart from the realm of ordinary use and explicitly dedicated to liturgical worship. To accomplish this task, he suggests that a boundary line be drawn in the form of a lobby or courtyard that would shut out the ordinary workaday world and that the entire structure be reserved exclusively for divine worship.²² The primary event of Catholic worship is the mystery of the incarnation and Christ’s self-sacrifice on Calvary. The Eucharist makes Christ’s saving mystery tangible. “The sacrament of the altar” is also “the sacrament of bread” and “the sacrament of Christ’s presence.” All three are cherished and celebrated in sacred time and space.

Observations

Although much more can be said about Pieper’s teaching on the Eucharist, these insights capture its main points and provide a good point of departure for further discussion. The observations that follow bring some of the implications of his teaching and look to their continued relevance.



1. Pieper's insightful works on leisure and festivity provide us with an important context with which to view the Church's eucharistic celebration. If philosophy begins in wonder, worship begins with awe and a deep desire to render thanks to God for his manifold gifts. The Mass is a festival of thanksgiving that places our ordinary lives in proper perspective. It gives us the opportunity to pause for a time and to allow our hearts and minds to rise to the threshold of the sacred and honor the source of all that is. Rather than treating Sunday as just any other day, or simply a time to recharge our batteries so that we might do our work better and more efficiently, we need to set time aside to relish creation, the gift of life, and all that God has given us through the incarnation and paschal mystery of his Son. When seen in this light, the Eucharist is not simply another action that we add to our already very full and busy lives, but the center of our lives and the source from which everything flows. Care should be taken, therefore, to celebrate the Eucharist with reverence for God, respect for each other, gratitude for life, and a deep sense of the sacred.

2. Pieper reminds us that the Church celebrates the Eucharist both to receive Christ's saving mysteries and to affirm the whole of reality and existence through acts of glory, praise, and thanksgiving. In this respect, the sacrament embodies both God's gift to humanity and humanity's grateful and loving response to God. When celebrating this sacrament, God transforms not only time and space into sacred vessels of his loving presence, but also the empty and lonely corridors of the human heart. By participating in the Mass with reverence and devotion, we render thanks to God for his transforming presence in our lives. As the gift of God and the response of the body of the faithful, the Eucharist represents the very center of the Church's life and worship. As an action of Christ and his body, the church, it represents, at one and the same time, both a human and divine action. We respond to God's gift of Christ's saving mysteries with open hearts and hymns of praise and thanksgiving; God, in turn, blesses and receives us in Christ as adopted sons and daughters.

3. If, as Pieper maintains, the primary event of Catholic worship is the mystery of the incarnation and Christ's self-sacrifice on Calvary, then the Eucharist as the "sacrament of sacraments" embodies these mysteries in a preeminent way. God becomes bread and wine so that he might divinize us and make us one with his flesh. Those celebrating the sacrament, moreover, are immersed in Christ's paschal mystery and incorporated more deeply into his passion, death, and resurrection.

The Eucharist is the means by which God continues the mystery of his incarnation and his sacrificial death on Calvary through time. It is a bridge between time and eternity, life and death, God and humanity. It is central to the Church's life and worship because it is an action of Christ's self-emptying made present in a concrete, visible way so that the members of the faithful might share in it themselves and thus be incorporated into his saving mysteries. The Eucharist represents the way Christ nourishes the members of his glorified body, the church, and continues his salvific mission in time.

The primary event of Catholic worship is the mystery of the incarnation and Christ's self-sacrifice on Calvary.

4. Although Pieper refers to Aquinas often and uses his categories to draw key distinctions in his own teaching on the Eucharist, he does so in a way that remains faithful to this great scholastic master yet is responsive to the needs of his time in creative and innovative ways. By embracing Thomas' sacramental realism, he points out the true depths of the eucharistic mystery and highlights its central importance in the life of the Church and, indeed, in the life of every believer. Pieper has a unique way of seeing connections between the teachings of the masters and the current teaching of the Church. More than a mere popularizer, he cites important connections between the thought of Thomas and the teaching of the Second Vatican Council that point to the continuity of the tradition and affirm the sacrament's central position as "the source and summit of the Christian life."²³ Pieper incorporates elements both old and new into his teaching and ends up with a synthesis that is not only sound philosophically and theologically, but thoroughly Catholic.

5. Discussing the relationship between the Eucharist and the priesthood, Pieper points out that the priest is ordained, first and foremost, to celebrate the Eucharist. The celebration of this sacrament is the *raison d'être* of this sacred order. The priesthood was established for the Eucharist, and the Eucharist cannot exist without the priesthood. When a priest celebrates this sacrament and says the words of consecration, he acts not in his own name but "in the person of Christ" (*in persona Christi*), who is head of his mystical body, the church. When at Eucharist, Christ acts in and through the person of the priest, whose priestly action becomes the action of Christ himself. When seen in this light, a priest's celebration of the Eucharist is a



divine and human action and the means by which the faithful are both immersed in Christ's saving mysteries and divinized by receiving his body and blood. The dignity of the priesthood is thus intimately related to the dignity of the Eucharist. For Pieper, "It is difficult to understand the thinking of those who consider the priesthood to be a 'part-time' occupation or even a 'hobby,' not a full-time job."²⁴

6. For Pieper, churches are built around an altar, not the book of the word. The altar is the focal point of sacred space and should be prominent in any building erected for the purpose of Christian worship. Although the word is related to the altar, it is ancillary to it in that it prepares the heart for the proper reception of the sacrament. Although Christ is present in both the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the fullness of his presence is found at the sacrifice celebrated at the altar by the priest and the community of the faithful. Pieper does not wish to place word and sacrament in opposition with each other, but merely highlight the centrality of Christ's sacrificial offering for Catholic worship, and to underscore the importance that the Mass be a harmonious (and carefully coordinated) meeting of sacred time, space, and action. His insights into what makes a church a church are closely related to those on what makes a priest a priest. Since the Eucharist lies at the very heart of Catholic life and worship, every aspect of the Church's celebration should embody this underlying truth.

At Eucharist, Christ acts in and through the person of the priest, whose priestly action becomes the action of Christ himself.

7. Finally, related to the above insight is Pieper's concern that a certain boundary line or border in the form of a narthex or lobby be created to separate the sacred from the secular, the place of worship from our ordinary, workaday world. Preserving a sacred space and setting it aside for nothing but worship says much about the relationship between the human and the divine in Catholic worship. The purpose of the Eucharist is to immerse the faithful in the saving mysteries of Christ and, through them, to radiate outward into the world around them — and not vice versa. While that is not to say that a place of Catholic worship should never be used for some other appropriate form of cultural activity, care must be taken that the boundary between the sacred and the secular should be preserved at all times and that the place of worship not be cheapened in any way or, worse yet, secularized

to the point where the harmonious balance of sacred time, space, and action is disrupted and possibly even disfigured. The Eucharist, for Pieper, is the most prominent of the sacraments just as bread is the most prominent of foods. It deserves a special dwelling place to mark its centrality to our lives and to recognize that our outer spaces of worship help to shape the inner spaces of the human heart.

These observations in no way exhaust the riches of Pieper's teaching on the Eucharist, but highlight its centrality in his thought and demonstrate his desire to explain the profound truths of the faith in a way that is, at one and the same time, creative, Catholic, and unabashedly orthodox. The impact of his thought on Catholic theology was calming, steady, inspiring, and profound. His works are widely read to this day in learned as well as popular circles, and his legacy as one of the most profound Catholic writers of his day is clear and uncontested.

Conclusion

Josef Pieper could probe profound questions, uncover creative new insights about them, and express his findings in ways that were both easy to follow and in sync with his Catholic faith. He was a student of Aquinas in the best sense, someone who did not slavishly adhere to the conclusions of scholastic philosophy, but who was willing to explore new areas of inquiry, pose questions to the tradition, and integrate new learning into the body of Catholic knowledge.

Through his study of such areas as leisure, festivity, and the sacred, Pieper enriched the Catholic tradition and influenced a generation of Catholics in ways that affected both the highest levels of academy and the popular practice and devotion of the faithful. He placed his philosophical learning at the service of the Church and, in doing so, unleashed a wealth of new insights into the perennial truths of the faith. His writings are not considered dated or "time-bound," but have a freshness and relevance about them that speak to the perennial questions of the human situation.

Pieper's teaching on the Eucharist reflects his deep love for the Church and its worship. He considers this "sacrament of sacraments" central to the Church's life and its primary way of giving glory, praise, and thanksgiving to God. He sees the mysteries of the incarnation and Christ's paschal mystery at the very heart of the celebration of the Mass and firmly believes that this action should be immersed in an



atmosphere of the sacred. He emphasizes the intimate relationship between the Eucharist and the priest and believes that the altar should be the central focus of the Church's sacred space.

Everything about the sacrament says something about God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying love. This "bread from heaven," he believed, was given to mortal men and women to heal them of their wounds, provide them with daily spiritual sustenance, transform their lives, and even divinize them, so that they might one day cross the threshold of the sacred, enter into the presence of the divine, and behold the very face of God himself.



Notes

¹ This information on Pieper's life and work comes from "Josef Pieper Arbeitsstelle," <http://josef-pieper-arbeitsstelle.de/index.php?id=33&L=1>; Josef Pieper: Philosopher of Virtue, <http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/authors/josefpieper.asp> (accessed January 5, 2015).

² The publication dates are those of the English translations. For a complete bibliography of Pieper's original works in German, see "Josef Pieper Arbeitsstelle," <http://josef-pieper-arbeitsstelle.de/index.php?id=49&L=1>.

³ Josef Pieper, *In Tune with the World: A Theory of Festivity*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (South Bend, IN: Saint Augustine's Press, 1999), 23.

⁴ Pieper, *In Search of the Sacred*, 46; Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), 10, "The Holy See," http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html (accessed January 5, 2015).

⁵ Pieper, *In Tune with the World*, 38.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Josef Pieper, *In Search of the Sacred: Contributions to an Answer*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 64.

⁸ Ibid., 68; Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation), 7, "The Holy See," http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651118_dei-verbum_en.html (accessed January 5, 2015).

⁹ Pieper, *In Search of the Sacred*, 70.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 71.

¹² Ibid., 70.

¹³ Ibid., 75.

¹⁴ Ibid., 75.

¹⁵ Ibid., 76.

¹⁶ Ibid., 85.

¹⁷ Ibid., 99.

¹⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹ Ibid., 105.

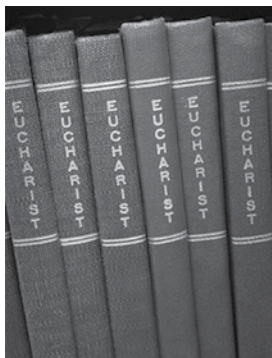
²⁰ Ibid., 109-110.

²¹ Ibid., 110.

²² Ibid., 114.

²³ Second Vatican Council, *Lumen Gentium* (Dogmatic Constitution on the Church), 11, "The Holy See," http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html (accessed January 5, 2015).

²⁴ Pieper, *In Search of the Sacred*, 78.



EUCHARISTIC TEACHINGS

A Trio of Ecumenical Theologians on the Eucharist

by Owen F. Cummings

Many theologians from all Christian traditions continue to write about the Eucharist in our times.

Writing in 1957, theologian Karl Rahner, SJ, had this to say in an essay on the Eucharist: "I am concerned to say, right from the start, that I do not consider it the task and the duty of a Catholic theologian to act as if everything worked perfectly clear, as if the firmness of his assent to the doctrine of his Church depended on his having the answers to all questions."¹ Needless to say, Rahner is not avoiding the proper and legitimate quest for clarity in doctrinal issues. Rather, he is explicitly acknowledging the insight of the First Vatican Council that "if reason illuminated by faith inquires in an earnest, pious, and sober manner, it attains by God's grace a *certain* understanding of the mysteries. . . ."²

A certain understanding is not a complete understanding. Indeed, to maintain that one had a complete understanding of the mysteries/doctrines of the faith would seem to be blasphemous. This essay is trying to promote a certain understanding of eucharistic faith and doctrine and by no means attempts to be comprehensive.

Publication on the theology of the Eucharist has continued to grow especially in the last 50 years or so. There are many different reasons for this growth, but among them we can count participation in ecumenism. The entry into ecumenism by the Catholic Church in Vatican II's *Decree on Ecumenism* has brought the Church into conversation with many Christian traditions on topics that have traditionally been thought of as conflicted or opposed to what Catholics believe. Allied to this ecumenical participation is the great range of research that has taken place and continues to occur with regard to ecclesiology, liturgical theology, and eucharistic theology.

In this little essay, I want to pick up three fairly recent articles on

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different aspects of the theology of the Eucharist from three quite different contributors. The first one comes from the Irish Augustinian theologian Gabriel Daly, “How Can This Man Give Us His Flesh to Eat?”³ Daly has been a consistent contributor to the ecumenical cause in Ireland both in his teaching at the Irish School of Ecumenics — in which he was a founding member — and later at the University of Dublin, Trinity College (1975-2002).

The second essayist is Susan K. Wood, a Sister of Charity of Leavenworth, Kansas, and Professor of Theology at Marquette University, much of whose work has been in the field of ecclesiology and sacramental theology.⁴ Her doctoral work at Marquette University was on the theology of Henri de Lubac, SJ.⁵ Her article is entitled “The Ecclesial Meaning of the Eucharist.”

Finally is Paul Nimmo, a Reformed theologian and King’s Chair of Systematic Theology (1620) at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland. His title is “The Eucharist in Reformed Perspective.”⁶ Nimmo’s doctoral work at the University of Edinburgh was on the great twentieth-century Reformed theologian Karl Barth, and so he is supremely well placed to describe Reformed approaches to the Eucharist.⁷

Gabriel Daly

Daly’s ecumenical commitment and perspective are expressed immediately at the beginning of his essay: “In the quest for Christian unity, no topic clamors for agreement more than the Eucharist. Division over the Eucharist is especially deplorable because the Eucharist is designed to be a celebration of love, unity, and reconciliation with God and with our fellow human beings” (181). He recognizes the great strides that have been made in ecumenical understanding but, at the same time, laments the ungenerous approach in the Catholic Church to celebrating the Eucharist with other fellow Christians. Indeed, he avers that “there is no convincing theological support today for institutional negativity about sharing the Eucharist” (182).

Daly puts his finger on a key central issue that seems to be in place for many Catholics when it comes to ecumenism. It is this: “We are still acting as if ecumenism means finding out how far other churches measure up to *our* requirements, even when those requirements are themselves in need of far-reaching change” (183). Indeed, he thinks that Catholics especially, though it is by no means confined to

Catholics, defined themselves by differences that divide rather than by beliefs that unite.

That kind of approach to self-definition tends to regard theological unity as theological uniformity and leads Daly to say: "Christianity is a big enough religion to welcome the sort of diversity that enriches rather than threatens its unity. To put it bluntly, I would not want to belong to a united Church that did not welcome legitimate diversity" (184).

A central concern for Catholics when it comes to the Eucharist has been a certain fear of symbolism, as though an emphasis on symbolism "amounted to a watering down of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist" (185). Daly's doctoral work at the University of Hull in the United Kingdom was on the Modernist crisis in Catholicism at the beginning of the twentieth century and that leads him to suggest that "suspicion of symbolism has been a pronounced feature of official Roman theology since the condemnation of Modernism in the first decade of the twentieth century" (185).⁸ Although he does not develop the point at any great length, Daly seems to suggest, and correctly, that a more adequate epistemological understanding of symbolism would not see it as necessarily pitted against realism.

He goes on to note that the term *transubstantiation* has been a very contentious term in Christian theology. For many Christians, the term "was disturbingly physical and lacked a spiritual and biblical dimension" (185). He provides a paragraph of carefully crafted sentiments about the term *transubstantiation*:

"Today (transubstantiation) is bandied about as if its meaning is self-evident, which it most certainly is not. One cannot 'believe in' transubstantiation, which is a philosophical term. You can't 'believe' in philosophical positions; you either accept them, modify them, or reject them. They do not belong to the substance of faith; they are ways of giving cultural relevance to what Christians believe; and when cultures change, they may become obsolete and even misleading. The Catholic Church has said that it is not competent to impose any philosophical system in the name of faith; though it can say that a particular philosophy 'fittingly' or 'aptly' expresses a doctrine, as the Council of Trent did with the philosophical notion of transubstantiation. Trent does not say that Catholics must use the term, only that its use was 'apt and proper' in the sixteenth century. After all, the Church got on without the term for over one thousand



years . . ." (186).

That paragraph is particularly fine theologically, although it may well challenge some of the presuppositions that some Catholics entertain. I want to emphasize, although perhaps there is no real need to do so, that Daly is not denying the real eucharistic presence of Christ in speaking of transubstantiation in this way. However, he is pointing out the need for a more nuanced understanding of symbolism with regard to the "real." "Real presence is an essential element in Catholic doctrine, though it begs the philosophical question of what the words 'real' and 'presence' actually mean. We need to recognize that symbolic presence can be real presence" (186).

This leads Daly to conclude that it is not necessary, though it is indeed permissible for those who wish to do so, for an orthodox Catholic to use the term *transubstantiation* as an expression of eucharistic faith. He thinks that the term in our modern times suggests things that are not especially helpful in respect to eucharistic faith. "It is possible to be a perfectly orthodox Catholic and never use the term 'transubstantiation.' In fact, it has become culturally unwise to use it today, since people today normally think in terms of physics and chemistry rather than of substance and accidents. Transubstantiation, which is a strictly metaphysical term, often seems to be given a physical meaning" (188).

In a humorous aside, Daly takes to task the atheist author Richard Dawkins who in a lecture in Dublin made the remark, "If they don't believe in transubstantiation, then they are not Roman Catholics."⁹ Daly writes: "So there: now you know. The atheistic magisterium, which often has a poor grasp of reputable modern Christian theology, has spoken and defined how Catholics should think about the Eucharist! The fact that an intelligent man like Dawkins can make an *ex cathedra* pronouncement of this kind is a warning of how easily popular misconceptions can become dogmas in the minds of even intelligent people like Professor Dawkins, whose desire to attack religion sometimes overpowers his understanding of it" (188-189).

To counteract such misunderstanding and to promote greater ecumenical awareness of eucharistic realism, Daly reminds us of the powerful statements found in the World Council of Churches' document, *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry*, promulgated and published in 1982. There you will find a remarkably robust understanding of the

real eucharistic presence of Christ to which Catholics can agree, even if they would wish to add more.¹⁰

Susan K. Wood

If Gabriel Daly concentrated on the notion of the eucharistic presence of Christ, Susan Wood chooses to explore the ecclesial meaning of the Eucharist, something she thinks has been largely ignored. "A retrieval of the ecclesial meaning of the Eucharist corrects an overly individualistic and privatized eucharistic spirituality. It manifests the Christological and pneumatological foundations of the church. It expresses the connections between church and sacraments" (105).

It is no surprise, then, that Wood turns her attention to the apostle Paul's ecclesial account of the Eucharist in 1 Corinthians 10-11 and to the ecclesial vision of the Eucharist in Augustine for whom "the unity of the body received at the altar is a sign and measure of the unity of the ecclesial body" so that "the eucharistic sacrament both signifies and effects the unity of the church" (106).

Entry into ecumenism has brought the Church into conversation with many Christian traditions on topics that have traditionally been thought of as conflicted or opposed to what Catholics believe.

Summarizing this ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist, we might say that Christ has three bodies and these three are one: his historical body born of the Virgin Mary, his eucharistic body, and his ecclesial body. Throughout most of the first millennium of Christianity, the emphasis was on the ecclesial body of Christ made such through the Eucharist.

Beginning in the second millennium, a growing concern shifted that emphasis to a preoccupation with the eucharistic gifts. "In the emphasis on eucharistic realism, the ecclesial realism of the Augustinian view of the *totus Christus*, the whole body of Christ comprised of Christ the head and his members complete only in the eschaton, was lost" (107). The theology of Henri de Lubac retrieved fully this lost ecclesial dimension of the Eucharist, and Wood's sacramental-eucharistic theology and ecclesiology have made his understanding more accessible. Thus, Wood can write as follows:



"Too often in eucharistic piety, people get 'stuck' at the level of (the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist), thinking that the purpose of the liturgy of the Eucharist is to make the body and blood of the Lord present so that they can receive him in Communion. Although true, this interpretation does not go far enough. The Lord does not give us his body and blood just to be adored and worshiped in the Eucharist or even that the faithful may individually receive him, but so that a greater unity, greater bond of love may be created in forming the *totus Christus*, the whole body of Christ comprised of Christ the head and his members, what we call the mystical body of Christ" (107).

In this regard, for example, she points to the epicleses in Eucharistic Prayer IV. The first epiclesis calls upon the Spirit to change the bread and wine into the body of Christ, and the second epiclesis calls upon the Spirit "to transform the assembly into the ecclesial body of Christ, so that joined to the Christ, they may be gathered up in his return to the Father" (108).

Other examples could be shown that draw together both Christology and the theology of the Holy Spirit as foundational in effecting the body of Christ. The liturgical revisions consequent upon Vatican II (1962-1965), as well as this retrieved ecclesial-eucharistic vision should, in Wood's understanding, help in moving the Catholic faithful beyond the purely individualistic sense of communion with the Lord. "The context of the Eucharist is ecclesial and its theological meaning is also ecclesial. By our communion with Christ in the Eucharist, we also enter into communion with one another" (112). Both theologically and pastorally, it is a matter of reaching toward a more balanced understanding and practice.

While Wood is writing primarily out of a Roman Catholic context, she also recognizes a certain individualism concerning the Eucharist in Protestant traditions. In that respect, she cites the Lutheran liturgical theologian Frank Senn who writes that "the sacramental body forms the ecclesial body, which is kept in union with the historical body of Christ, the head of the ecclesial body, by receiving his body and blood in the sacrament."¹¹ Wood also notes that the great father of Reformed theology, John Calvin, wished to have a frequent celebration of the Eucharist, but was vetoed in that regard by the civic authorities of Geneva. In a similar way, the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, celebrated the Eucharist four or five times a week, criticizing the infrequent celebration of the sacrament in the Church of England.¹²

Wood is aware not only of these historic examples, but she also points to contemporary liturgical revisions in other Christian traditions, revisions that develop a deeper eucharistic theology and a more communal/ecclesial understanding of the Eucharist.

Toward the end of her fine essay, Wood nicely summarizes her eucharistic-ecclesial perspective in these words: “When we commune with the sacramental body of Christ, we commune not only with the resurrected Christ but also with the church, which is also the body of Christ. The Eucharist simultaneously effects communion in Christ and communion in the church” (118).

Paul Nimmo

Paul Nimmo talks about what he calls “sacramental agnosticism” in Reformed communities. This is what he means by this intriguing term: “. . . There is far less ability to articulate a positive account (of the Eucharist) or its meaning. Perhaps the roots of this deficit lie in an increase in theological apathy, or in a lack of church catechesis, or something rather different. . . . Whatever the truth, it seems a cause for concern” (17).

We have as churches defined ourselves by differences that divide rather than by beliefs that unite.

The possible reasons given by Nimmo for this sacramental agnosticism — an increase in theological apathy, a lack of church catechesis — are by no means confined to the Reformed tradition, but may also be found among Catholics. Nimmo’s conclusion, “Whatever the truth, it seems a cause for concern,” is one with which it would be impossible to disagree.

“. . . It is significant that there is no uniformity of theological thinking: the Reformed have never had a single teaching authority such as the Magisterium or a single dominating figure such as Martin Luther to offer a guarantee of doctrinal identity or teaching authority. Correspondingly, there is no one doctrine of the sacraments in general or of the Eucharist in particular . . .” (17-18). The more one moves away from those ecclesial traditions in which sacramental theology and eucharistic theology have been prominent, for example, the Anglican



Communion, the Lutheran Church, the less concern there seems to be the sacramental/eucharistic doctrine. Nimmo points to the Marburg Colloquy of 1529 in which Luther and Zwingli failed to reach agreement on the Eucharist.

Consequent upon that colloquy, it has become convenient to recognize three Protestant alternatives to transubstantiation: Luther's consubstantiation; Calvin's spiritual feeding; and Zwingli's memorialism. Nimmo recognizes that the Reformed tradition favors Calvin and Zwingli so that from the beginning there is "an in-built possibility of multiple eucharistic trajectories within the Reformed tradition" (19).

However, it is not quite so straightforward. Take, for example, first of all Zwingli. He is usually associated with an understanding of the Eucharist as a "bare sign," with no sense of the real presence of Christ. Nimmo regards customary interpretation as somewhat unfair. To substantiate that unfairness, he brings forward some sentiments from Zwingli himself and from Zwingli specialists.

In Zwingli himself, we read: "The sacraments we esteem and honor as signs and symbols of holy things."¹³ Again: "By the signs themselves, the bread and wine, Christ himself is as it were set before our eyes, so that not merely with the ear, but with eye and palate we see and taste that Christ whom the soul bears within itself and in whom it rejoices,"¹⁴ "(The Eucharist) signifies all the divine favor bestowed upon us in Christ, and also that in thankfulness we are to embrace our brethren with the same love with which Christ has received and redeemed and saved us"¹⁵ and in the Eucharist, the body of Christ is eaten by us "sacramentally and spiritually."¹⁶ Finally, from Zwingli come such phrases as follows: the sacraments, including the Eucharist, "'augment,' 'support, and strengthen faith,' placing the human senses 'under the obedience of faith.'"¹⁷ To conclude his apparatus of support for a fairer reading of Zwingli, he cites one of the most distinguished English-speaking Zwingli scholars of the twentieth century, W. P. Stephens: "Zwingli has never denied that Christ's body is truly, sacramentally, and mysteriously present in the supper."¹⁸

Next, Nimmo takes us to John Calvin, a central figure in the Reformed tradition, but somewhat different from Zwingli when it comes to the Eucharist. Thus, Calvin writes: "(The Zwinglians) forgot to show what presence of Jesus Christ ought to be believed in the Supper, and

what communion of his body and blood is there received.”¹⁹ From Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Nimmo culls the following statements: “In his Sacred Supper, (Christ) bids me take, eat, and drink his body and blood under the symbols of bread and wine”;²⁰ the Eucharist is “a spiritual banquet, wherein Christ attests himself to be the life-giving bread, upon which our souls feed unto true and blessed immortality”;²¹ “that sacred partaking of the flesh and blood (of Christ) . . . which he also testifies and seals in the Supper — not by presenting a vain and empty sign, but by manifesting there the effectiveness of his Spirit to fulfill what he promises”;²² the eucharistic communion with the body and blood of Christ takes place as “Christ offers and sets forth the reality there signified to all who sit at that spiritual banquet.”²³

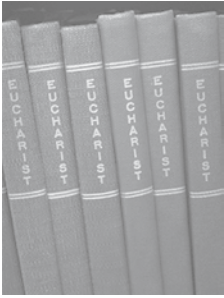
Nimmo’s conclusion from this catena of quotations from Zwingli and Calvin is this: “The eucharistic elements are thus not just a witness of or analogy to spiritual matters, but are the instrument and the implement of God’s grace and thus a means of grace” (22). In other words, and in Nimmo’s own words, there is more eucharistic realism in Reformed theology than is often thought, and lack of such awareness may be due to theological apathy or inadequate catechesis. The implication of his essay is that ecumenically committed Christians cannot be satisfied with this state of affairs.


Conclusion

Many theologians from all Christian traditions continue to write about the Eucharist in our times. My concentration on this trio — Daly, Wood, and Nimmo — has been quite deliberate not least because their work is so incisive and accessible in offering what Rahner was describing at the beginning of this essay as a “certain” understanding of eucharistic faith.

What do I think are the benefits of the points of view of the theologians described? Two in particular. First, for all Christians, a permeated ecumenical perspective is a compelling and urgent necessity, and this is especially the case when it comes to the Eucharist. Second, while there should be no diminution of a Catholic devotion to and spirituality of the Eucharist, Catholics must try to reach beyond that to a greater understanding that the Eucharist makes the church, and, therefore, toward a more ecclesial eucharistic theology.

Both these benefits should be prized because they help to build up our sense of being one body in Christ and hopefully hasten the day when all



Christians will be able to share at the eucharistic table of the Lord. 

Notes

- ¹ Karl Rahner, SJ, "The Presence of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper," *Theological Investigations*, vol. VI, (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 288.
- ² Josef Neuner and Jacques Dupuis, ed., *The Christian Faith* (London: Collins, 1983), 45.
- ³ Gabriel Daly, OSA, "How Can This Man Give Us His Flesh to Eat?" *One in Christ* 47 (2013). Page references to the three articles are provided in parentheses.
- ⁴ Susan K. Wood, "The Ecclesial Meaning of the Eucharist," in Carl E. Braaten, Alberto L. Garcia, and Susan K. Wood, ed., *Critical Issues in Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 105-119.
- ⁵ Published as Susan K. Wood, *Spiritual Exegesis and the Church in the Theology of Henri De Lubac, SJ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998).
- ⁶ Paul Nimmo, "The Eucharist in Reformed Perspective," *Doctrine and Life* 65 (2015), 16-34.
- ⁷ Published as Paul T. Nimmo, *Being in Action: The Theological Shape of Barth's Ethical Vision* (London: Bloomsbury/T. & T. Clark, 2011).
- ⁸ Gabriel Daly, OSA, *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).
- ⁹ Reported in *The Irish Times*, Thursday, June 7, 2012, 13.
- ¹⁰ I find it somewhat curious that in his treatment of transubstantiation Daly does not refer to the outstanding work of the American Reformed theologian George Hunsinger, whose work would have confirmed Daly's position. See Owen F. Cummings, "Eucharist, Ecumenism, and George Hunsinger," *Emmanuel* 119 (2013), 418-431, 434-436.
- ¹¹ Frank Senn, *The People's Work: A Social History of the Liturgy* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 168.
- ¹² See also Owen F. Cummings, *Eucharistic Doctors* (New York-Mahwah: Paulist Press, 2005), 215-223.
- ¹³ "An Exposition of the Faith," in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Library of Christian Classics volume 24) (Louisville: Westminster-John Knox Press, 2006), 247.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 248.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 249.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 257. For a consideration of Zwingli using other Zwingli specialists, especially Jacques Courvoisier, see Owen F. Cummings, "The Reformers and Eucharistic Ecclesiology," in his *Eucharistic Soundings* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 1999), 45-48.
- ¹⁷ "An Exposition of the Faith," in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, 263.
- ¹⁸ W. P. Stephens, *The Theology of Huldrych Zwingli* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986, 250).
- ¹⁹ John Calvin, *Short Treatise on the Lord's Supper*, 56.
- ²⁰ John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV.17.32.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, IV.17.1.
- ²² *Ibid.*, IV.17.10.
- ²³ *Ibid.*



EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Eight Building Blocks for a Spiritual Life

by Victor M. Parachin

Developing a deep, transformative spirituality can be greatly helped by integrating proven building blocks of the interior life into one's daily living and practice.

"THE SPIRITUAL LIFE IS LIKE LIVING WATER THAT SPRINGS UP FROM THE VERY DEPTHS of our own spiritual experience. In the spiritual life, everyone has to drink from his or her own well" (Saint Bernard of Clairvaux).

In these words, Bernard reminds us that developing a spiritual life is not something we can pass off to others. Rather, we must bear primary responsibility. This is also stated in Sacred Scripture: "Make every effort to add to your faith, goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness" (2 Pt 1:5-6), *New International Version*). Here are eight essential blocks for cultivating a spiritual life.

Victor M. Parachin writes extensively on matters of spirituality and has authored a dozen books. He is a regular contributor to *Emmanuel*.

Love

There is no authentic spiritual life without love — love for the divine and love for humanity. When Jesus was asked which of the commandments was the most important, he said: "The most important is this . . . 'Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these" (Mk 12:29-31). By this, Jesus challenges us to be certain that our belief matches our behavior and our creed corresponds to our conduct.

One of the most dramatic examples of someone who did this is the American businessman Arthur Nash. A man of deep Christian faith, Nash found himself in an awkward business situation. A factory owner who rented space from him ran a sweatshop. As a landlord, Nash didn't know much about the man's business, but when it started to fail and



the man couldn't pay the rent, Nash took it over.

When the time came to pay the employees, Nash was shocked to learn that some workers in the garment factory were paid as little as \$4 per week, a very low amount even in 1918 when the incident took place. This upset Nash, creating an ethical dilemma for him because his own business was struggling and his company had lost money the previous year. When Nash told his son that he wanted to raise the sweatshop workers' wages, the son objected, reminding his father that their own financial foundation was weakening daily.

Nevertheless, Nash decided that as long as the sweatshop operated he would pay fair wages. He called the employees together and told them: "I want you to know that brotherhood is a reality with me. You are all my brothers and sisters, children of the same great Father that I am, and entitled to all the justice and fair treatment that I want for myself. And so, as long as we run this shop . . . I am going to treat you as my brothers and sisters, and the Golden Rule is going to be our only governing law." Nash then told them he was tripling the wages of the lowest paid workers and doubling those of the highest paid. Not surprisingly, the business began to flourish.

Each of us is responsible for developing a spiritual life, in openness to and cooperation with the Spirit of God.

Reflection

Mature self-knowledge results when serious personal reflection and intentional inner work is done. Some questions which facilitate this process include: *Why am I here? What is my purpose? What do I want out of life? What kind of person do I wish to be?* This kind of reflection is especially important when one experiences troubles and trials.

A woman was distraught to learn that she had Multiple Sclerosis. Yet after deeper reflection, she came to these conclusions: "Because MS has required me to slow down, I have made the trek from a human *doing* to a human *being*. I no longer feel that my value is connected at all to what I accomplish, but rather to who I am, as all others intrinsically have value just for being here. I look to the future without apprehension, knowing that the things that seem negative may have positive outcomes."

Teacher

Developing a spiritual life means having contact with a teacher who can offer instruction, guidance, spiritual direction, and wisdom. A teacher can minimize discouragement and help avoid pitfalls on the path.

One man recalls: “Not a few students think they can make it on their own. They are merely deceiving themselves. I had a period in my own life when I fostered this mistaken view and as a consequence ran into more cul-de-sacs than I care to remember.”

In her book *Wouldn't Take Nothing for My Journey Now*, the poet Maya Angelou tells how a teacher shaped her spiritual life when he asked her to read aloud to a passage which ended with the words “God loves me.” She read the piece and closed the book, but the teacher asked her to read those three words again, which she did. He then asked to read them again and again. She describes what transpired:

There is no authentic spiritual life without love — love for the divine and love for humanity.

“After about the seventh repetition, I began to sense that there might be truth in the statement, that there was a possibility that God really did love me. Me. Maya Angelou. I suddenly began to cry at the grandness of it all. I knew that if God loved me, then I could do wonderful things, I could try great things, learn anything, achieve anything. For what could stand against me with God, since one person, any person with God, constitutes the majority?”

Practices

Engaging in spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, meditation, and Scripture study all serve to heighten spiritual consciousness. Wayne Teasdale, the author of *The Mystic Heart*, writes: “Spiritual practice . . . is the means of inner growth and change. . . . Through this disciplined habit of relating to the divine, the living, transformative power of inner reality takes hold. Without a spiritual practice of some kind, spirituality is a hollow affair; it has no substance and is reduced to the formalism



of external religiosity. . . . Spiritual practice shapes our understanding, character, will, personality, attitudes, and actions by enlarging their scope through the light of compassion and love.”

Silence

Most people pray. Fewer *listen in silence*. Prayer is speaking to God; meditation is listening to God.

The Bible is filled with references to spiritual silence. The passages usually revolve around the word “wait” on God. Some examples: Lamentations 3:24: “The Lord is my portion; therefore, I will wait for him”; Micah 7:7: “As for me, I wait for God”; and Psalm 46:10, which suggests that it is in silence where the deep knowing of God and God’s ways can be discerned: “Be still, and know that I am God.”

So important is the art of silent meditation that Mother Teresa said: “We need to find God, and he cannot be found in noise and restlessness. God is the friend of silence. See how nature — trees, flowers, and grass grow in silence; see the stars, the moon, and the sun, how they move in silence. . . . We need silence to be able to touch souls.”

Practices such as prayer, fasting, meditation, and Scripture study all serve to heighten spiritual consciousness.

Study

Pick up books and articles about a spiritual master. Study that person carefully. One woman says her first step in “embracing a deeper spirituality” was to emulate a spiritual master, a mentor in the ways of God. “I realized that studying a great life would help me see the larger view. I chose Saint Thérèse of Lisieux as my spiritual master.” She adds that Thérèse “captures my imagination, makes me want to learn more, and inspires me to be my best.”

Take time to identify your own spiritual master. Learn as much about your spiritual master as you can. Study his or her writings, read biographies, and watch documentaries. Next, ask yourself: “How can I emulate and embody the principles emphasized by my spiritual master?” Finally, follow through on what you want to incorporate from his or her life in yours.

Nature

Allow nature to nurture your spiritual growth. This is universally endorsed by mystics. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons said: "Creation reveals him who formed it." Later, Origen taught: "The parallel between nature and Scripture is so complete, we must necessarily believe that the person who is asking questions of nature and the person who is asking questions of Scripture are bound to arrive at the same conclusions."

Let me cite a contemporary example of someone permitting nature to nurture the spiritual life. Every day after school, the son of a prominent rabbi in the community would come home after school, deposit his backpack in his room, and then leave the house through the back door heading into a wooded area behind the house. After several weeks of observing this ritual, the rabbi asked: "Son, I notice that every day you leave our home to spend time in the woods. What do you do out there?" The son replied: "Father, you don't need to worry. I go into the woods every day to pray. It is in the woods that I can talk to God." Relieved, the rabbi said: "That's fine but, as the son of a rabbi, you should know that God is the same everywhere." The son replied with a wisdom beyond his years: "Yes, father, I know that God is the same everywhere. But I am not."

Prayer is speaking to God; meditation is listening to God.

Service

And lastly, spirituality and service; these go hand in hand. This is the great lesson and inspiration people across the world derive from Saint Teresa of Calcutta, a woman admired for her deep interiority and her commitment to serving those on the margins of society.

The advice Mother Teresa frequently gave her coworkers is something everyone seeking to live a profoundly spiritual life needs to follow: "To my coworkers: I would like you to concentrate more on giving wholehearted, free service to the poor in your own area. Each one of you, try to find the lonely, the unwanted, the handicapped. Maybe just a smile, a small visit, just to light the fire for someone, read for somebody. Small, yes, very small. But that will be your love of God in action. This spirit must radiate from your own heart to your family, neighbor, town, country, the world."





EUCCHARISTIC SPIRITUALITY

Pondering the Parables: The Parable of the Sower

by Bernard Camiré, SSS

Parables were integral to Jesus' teaching ministry. His stories engaged the minds and hearts of his listeners and revealed the deeper meaning of their lives and God's power at work in and around them.

Blessed Sacrament Father Bernard Camiré is the parochial vicar of Saint Jean Baptiste Church in New York City. This series on the parables of Jesus originally appeared in the parish bulletin and is being serialized in *Emmanuel*.

WE BEGIN OUR CONSIDERATION OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS WITH THE FIRST OF THE six parables found in the Gospel according to Mark, the Parable of the Sower (Mk 4:3-8). The narrative paints a rather simple and idyllic picture. In what seems a haphazard manner, a sower went out into a field and scattered seed.

The parable describes the failure of three sowings: that which fell on the path and was devoured by birds; that which landed on rocky ground and was scorched by the sun because it had no roots; and that which dropped among thorns and was eventually choked. One-fourth of the seed, however, yielded a harvest that was not only bountiful but also extraordinary, since a tenfold yield was considered a good harvest and a yield of seven-and-a-half quite average. The large harvest figures given by Jesus are meant to emphasize the prodigious character of God's kingdom still to come.

Possible Interpretations

This is a parable that lends itself to various interpretations. Some Scripture scholars maintain that its common designation, Parable of the Sower, is the least apt because the sower is simply mentioned and does not appear as a dramatic character. He does not rejoice in the bountiful harvest nor does he order it to be harvested. Neither is it a parable of the seed as such, since it is the same seed that lands on four different locations.

Concentration on different aspects of the parable has yielded some fruitful interpretations. Some commentators point out that since a

very good harvest emerged from the seed sown on rich soil, Jesus is proclaiming that *now* is the time to reap the fruit of the harvest. Others call attention to the difference between the time of sowing and that of the harvest as well as to the discrepancy between the three failures and the great harvest. So then, with this parable Jesus is assuring his disciples that what God has begun in his ministry, despite some failures, will have ultimate success.

A close examination of the movement and images of the parable yields another and perhaps more exact interpretation. The first three sowings are shown in their temporal progression. Each begins with a mention of the seed itself, then proceeds to the situation that the seed encounters (path, rocky ground, thorns), and concludes with the failure of the seed to mature in those locations.

The large harvest figures given by Jesus are meant to emphasize the prodigious character of God's kingdom.

The parable creates a dramatic effect, not by simply listing the three failures in contrast to the one great harvest, but by depicting a progression in the growth of the seed. The description of the three failures first builds up the hearer's expectation, and then shatters it. This is the rhythmic progress of nature, a fact that can lull the hearer into a sense of resignation about the way things unfold at times in the world of nature. But then, the description of the successful sowing bursts with verbs of motion; the seeds *fell*, *brought forth* grain, *grew up*, *increased*, and *yielded* thirty, sixty and a hundredfold.

An Exhilarating Affirmation

The contrast between a seventy-five percent failure and a truly extraordinary harvest suggests that there is no comparison between the *expectation* people have concerning God's kingdom and the final glorious *reality* and *effect* of that kingdom. Jesus' teaching about the kingdom and his activity on its behalf is something that overturns the way in which we feel that life normally operates and the usual patterns it follows.

We have here a parable to counter pessimism and despair. Much of our effort in spiritual matters may seem to produce little or no results. Perhaps Jesus' disciples were troubled by such a perception when they saw Jesus banished from the synagogues and looked upon with



suspicion or resentment.

With the Parable of the Sower, Jesus wished to move his listeners to open their hearts generously to the word of God and to expect wonderful things from the inbreaking of God’s kingdom — a kingdom of truth and life, holiness and grace, justice, love, and peace — into their lives and into human history. He wishes to do the same in our regard for our hearing his Parable of the Sower.



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PASTORAL LITURGY

Making Connections - The Fraction Rite and Receiving Communion at the Same Mass

by John Thomas J. Lane, SSS

Consider how Holy Communion is conducted in your liturgical assemblies. Best practices lead to a deepened awareness of the power and meaning of the Eucharist.

AS WE CONTINUE EXPLORING VARIOUS PASTORAL PRACTICES DURING THE EUCHARISTIC celebration and what we can do to enhance our participation, practice, and theological underpinnings of the Order of Mass, this column examines a common practice *not* found in the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) nor in any of the rubrics for Mass. I am writing about the muddling of the Fraction Rite and communicating from the tabernacle regularly at every celebration of the Eucharist.

I once had a Communion minister ask me to tell the musicians to have a longer song at the "Lamb of God," since it was such a far walk from her pew to go to the chapel to retrieve the ciborium from the tabernacle to bring it to the altar. She said, "The 'Lamb of God' should be longer or the music ministry should pick a longer version for this part of Mass." I found it amusing that she thought the "Lamb of God" was traveling music to retrieve a ciborium.

On further discussion with her and others over the years, I discovered that the liturgical ministers and the assembly have not grasped the meaning behind the singing of the "Lamb of God" or the purpose of the ritual. Rather than music for walking around the sanctuary and the chapel, it is the solemn litany that accompanies the breaking of the bread. (It used to be also for the pouring of the Precious Blood, but that will be a future column and issue.)

GIRM, 83 devotes two paragraphs to the Fraction Rite and its importance, reminding us that the "entire eucharistic action [has] its name [from] apostolic times [and] signifies that the many faithful are made one body receiving Communion from the one Bread of

In his 25th year of priesthood, Father John Thomas J. Lane is the pastor of Saint Paschal Baylon Church in Highland Heights, Ohio. He is one of the authors of *Sourcebook for Sundays, Seasons, and Weekdays 2017* and also wrote *Guide for Celebrating Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, both published by Liturgy Training Publications. Questions or further materials may be obtained by contacting him at jlanesss@gmail.com.

Life which is Christ." Perhaps, as Pope Benedict XVI and others have lamented, the Sign of Peace has no clear end and distracts from the Fraction. Even when the music for the "Lamb of God" begins, most of the congregation does not experience the priest "breaking the bread."

"This invocation accompanies the fraction and, for this reason, may be repeated as many times as necessary [not just three times!] until the rite has reached its conclusion, [with] the last time ending with the words 'Grant us peace.'" But for whatever reason — practicality, convenience, or other — a habit grew within the Roman Rite that ministers go to the tabernacle to retrieve the ciborium during the "Lamb of God" and use previously consecrated hosts for the present Mass.

GIRM, 85 states: "It is most desirable that the faithful, just as the priest himself is bound to do, receive the Lord's body from hosts consecrated at the same Mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they partake of the chalice (cf. number 283), so that even by means of the signs Communion will stand out more clearly as a participation in the sacrifice actually being celebrated." There is no directive about going to the tabernacle; yet the practice persists from age to age.

Let's make this year's celebration of the solemnity of the Body and Blood of Christ (June 18) an opportunity to stop this habit. It demands forethought, of course, making certain that enough hosts are available, prepared, and counted for the celebration of the Mass.

One option is to begin a process whereby people use tongs to place their own host in or on the paten as they enter. Or have the ushers count the assembly during the homily to arrive at an approximate number of hosts for those present. In any instance, look at your own situation and be creative in finding ways to stop regularly going to the tabernacle during the Fraction Rite. We do not typically go to the freezer at home to retrieve "older" foods to mix with that which has been freshly prepared. Why do we do so for the Eucharist?

This is not to infer that the body of Christ is "leftovers" and not validly the Eucharist. What the General Instruction and our theology of the Mass emphasize is that we are participating in the Order of Mass for a reason, that the sacrifice, the blessing, breaking, and sharing of the eucharistic elements, and the change both in the gifts and in us should be "in the moment," and not held over from another time. We can

undermine the power of the liturgical action itself, even unwittingly, by perpetuating certain habits and long-established practices.

If it is necessary for more hosts due to an unanticipated increase in the number of communicants, having a Communion minister available once the distribution of Communion begins to serve in bringing hosts to stations that run out is a good procedure. It is not normal to use the hosts in the tabernacle *first* rather than those actually consecrated at the Mass.

The Roman Rite reserves the Eucharist for the communion of the sick (viaticum) and for the venerable practice of prayer in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. This is why we do not consume all the hosts at the Mass. The “Mass of the Presanctified” is the only exception to the general norm that in dining with Christ at the sacrifice and meal of the Eucharist, we consume what has been taken, blessed, and shared in that very moment.

Coming up with creative ways to make sure that we eat and drink in this manner should be of the highest priority, especially as we recall the importance of the body and blood of Christ during this holy season of Easter and the solemnity that highlights this mystery. The priest offers on behalf of all, so let all receive the Eucharist from the very Mass.

Reminders for May and June

The Month of Mary

“Crowning of an Image of the Blessed Virgin Mary within Mass” may be found in *The Rites: Volume 2*, Liturgical Press, 458-463. There is also a ritual for use during Evening Prayer, allowing for some adaptations when Mass is not possible.

Good Shepherd Sunday — Sunday, May 7

The Fourth Sunday of Easter is a wonderful weekend to preach about and to pray for vocations to serve the Church.

Ascension of the Lord — Thursday, May 25, or Sunday, May 28

The Sunday observance of this solemnity falls this year during the Memorial Day weekend in the United States.

Memorial Day (United States) — Monday, May 29

In the *Book of Blessings*, Chapter 57, there is a ritual for use at the cemetery on this day as we honor those who have served the cause of peace and given their lives for it.

The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ — Sunday, June 18

Review *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* for suggestions about a procession of the Blessed Sacrament in your church, neighborhood, or city. This also a good day to install new Communion ministers for service at Mass or in bringing Holy Communion to the sick and the homebound. Lastly, if you have a program of eucharistic adoration in your parish, Corpus Christi is an optimal time to invite additional involvement in your Community at Prayer Ministry.

New Pastor?

Prepare for the installation of a new pastor in your parish this summer or fall by reviewing the *Book of Blessings*, Appendix 1.



In Christ's Peace Deceased Members

Rev. Robert Lussier, SSS
Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament

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 F, G, H, and I are asked to celebrate Mass for deceased priests during May and June.



PASTORAL LITURGY

On the Liturgy and Transformation

The Power of the Eucharist to Transform Us

EVERY CELEBRATION OF THE EUCHARIST IS AN INVITATION TO GATHER AT THE TABLE that God sets before us and to experience the transformative power of this sacrament of life.

We believe that as the bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, another important transformation is taking place in us. This relates to whatever healing and reconciliation we may be most in need of in a given moment.

The faith journey is a long slog. It is for most of us a slow, gradual process whereby God graces us with people, events, and experiences that help us grow into the persons he desires us to be. Yet there are certain moments when we need healing and God's grace in a most dramatic way.

Many of us have had the experience of a Funeral Mass that brought peace to a grieving family and community; the celebration of the sacrament of the sick that brought encouragement and a sense of community support for a person and her family to face a frightening illness; or perhaps the celebration of a marriage that brought a kind of reconciliation to a family experiencing difficulties.

The Eucharist often does this, for us as individuals, and just as importantly, for us as a family or a parish community.

Some years ago, I and others in our parish experienced the transformative power of a Eucharist led and celebrated by our parish associate, an octogenarian, "Father B" as he is affectionately known.

I happened to attend the Sunday evening 7:00 Mass that weekend.

It was less than 24 hours after a beloved member of our parish, Phil, was shot dead in his driveway late the night before. He had come back from a memorial service for a friend's son who had been killed coming to the aid of a young woman who was being mugged. How terribly ironic it was!

As I entered the church, people were speaking in hushed tones. Women and men were crying. Hearts were heavy. My own was a mix of sadness, anger, and disbelief. How could such a man — husband, father, community leader, friend to many — be senselessly killed in his own front yard?

"Father B" walked out from the sacristy and stood close to the assembled community. He looked around the church and began, "We have experienced a terrible tragedy in our community. I want to say a few words before we start the liturgy." He went on to acknowledge and name the range of emotions that he could sense in the assembly. He then said, "Whatever you are feeling, be honest with God. Don't flee from your feelings, no matter how strong they may be. I invite you this night to place them on the altar. Turn them over to Jesus."

And then in a gentle voice, "Father B" continued, as if he were reading my inmost being, "If you are feeling any hate in your heart or the urge for revenge, please know that Jesus understands. And yet, he invites each of us at this table of mercy to forgive whoever did this horrible thing."

Before he turned to head up to the altar, "Father B" said, "So, let us pray for Phil and his family. And let us also pray for the person who did this . . . and his family."

I can remember as if it were yesterday, how throughout the liturgy — the Penitential Rite, the Scripture readings, the homily, the way he recited the Eucharistic Prayer, and oh, the beautiful music sung that night — a transformative peace and healing came over me, as I assume it did for everyone gathered for that Eucharist.

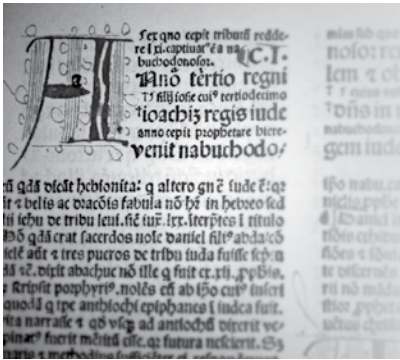
That night, "Father B" called all of us to enter into the transformation, healing, and reconciliation that the Mass offers, especially at life's most difficult times.

[Postscript: The killer was eventually apprehended and went to trial.

Buoyed by their faith and the support of family and friends, Melanie, Phil's widow, and their three children eventually made peace with the court's verdict that did not call for the death penalty. Melanie and her adult children have since helped many families going through similar tragedies.]



James Brown
Associate of the Blessed Sacrament
Director, Center for Eucharistic Evangelization



BREAKING THE WORD

HOMILETICS - Scriptural Reflections

by Barbara Shanahan

Emmanuel is very pleased to have a team of scholars associated with Catholic Theological Union in Chicago writing our scriptural reflections for 2017:

Sister Dianne Bergant, CSA, Brother John R. Barker, OFM, and Barbara Shanahan. Barbara, an alumna of CTU, has led the Buffalo, New York, Catholic Bible Studies Program since 1992.

May 7, 2017 Fourth Sunday of Easter

Acts 2:14a, 36-41; 1 Peter 2:20b-25; Psalm 23:1-6; John 10:1-10

The faith of the early church took shape gradually. Early Christians wrestled with understanding who Jesus was in ways that we do not. To find meaning, they looked to the tradition of the past. The passage from the Acts of the Apostles is the conclusion of Peter's Pentecost speech. In it, we find a simple statement of belief: "... God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified."

Appreciating the meaning of the Messiah (anointed one) is essential to our understanding. The title refers to the descendants of David who governed as kings. When the dynasty was established, God remained Israel's king. The kings who ruled did so as God's visible representative and were to be distinguished by their attentive concern for the people, especially the poor and vulnerable. Their manner of rule was to replicate the way God himself guided and protected and cared for the people. God guided them with compassion and faithfulness, ever "... gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and rich in kindness" (Ex 34:57). God's merciful compassion and covenant fidelity was the standard of kingship.

Gentleness and humility further define the king. Micah speaks of "one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins is from of old, from ancient times" (Mi 5:1). He refers to the simplicity and the gentle rule of David, the shepherd king. Here, we find the early, pristine ideals of kingship. It was expected that when such a king ruled, it would be a time of unprecedented peace and fullness of life (see Is 11:1-10; Is 35, Ps 72). Israel hoped best when the situation was the most dismal. During the Exile in Babylon, when there was no dynasty, some held onto this

hope and kept it shining.

As Christian belief takes shape, the earliest followers look back to the past and discover in the rich deposit of Israel's memory, a way to understand the mystery of Christ, the human face of God who would bring "abundant life" to all in a way that exceeds Israel's hope and expectation.

Linked to dynastic hopes, the expectation of the Messiah implied the restoration of political rule. Jesus does not stake claim to this title or role, perhaps because the way his life ends is hardly consonant with such messianic claims. Indeed, it was a stumbling block for many at that time. In Matthew's Gospel, when Peter professes Jesus to be the Messiah, it is closely followed by Jesus' prediction of the passion. It is as though his life redefines the role of the Messiah in terms borrowed from the suffering servant (Is 52-53).

The faith of the early church brings together in Jesus one who would bring the fullness of life to his people in his gentle acceptance of humiliation and death. Jesus is executed under a sign that read: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews" (Jn 19:19). But death is not the final word! God raised him up, thus vindicating Jesus as his Messiah who was to bear the burden of the people over whom he ruled.

Leadership using shepherd imagery is a thread woven throughout the readings for today. John speaks of shepherds in contrast to "thieves and robbers" who do not protect the flock. Balancing this is the kindly watchfulness of the Good Shepherd. Echoing behind these words are the costly demands falling on each of us as we exercise roles of leadership in any number of ways. Each of us exercises a role as shepherd to another or to others. How lovingly we remember those who have shepherded us! And God who shepherds us!

How can these words inform the way we exercise our role in relation to others? Perhaps the very familiar words of Psalm 23 can take us in a direction of discovery. We don't need to understand the work of a shepherd to grasp the tender meaning of what is being said here.

May 14, 2017
Fifth Sunday of Easter

Acts 6:1-7; Psalm 33:1-2, 4-5, 18-19; 1 Peter 2:4-9; John 14:1-12

"The only constant in life is change." We have heard this bit of proverbial wisdom and likely handed it on to others. Life, growth, and change are part of a cyclical process we have experienced many times in the course of living.

As exhilarating as the process can be, whether embraced by a personal decision or foisted upon us, it is not always easy. Things no longer fit into the narrow confines of our understanding, and certainty about the rightness of the move forward might elude us. We are summoned out of comfortable surroundings into a more expansive view, into an unfamiliar terrain, toward an acceptance of diversity that stretches us. We must be willing to engage the process if we would become the person God intends us to be.

In the reading from the Acts of the Apostles, the church experiences a similar process: life and growth necessitate change. Adapting to this is what keeps a body, an individual, a family, and an institution from fossilizing. The story in Acts relates the need for additional staff. Responding to this need identifies what is essential to the mission entrusted to the church: "prayer and ministering to the word." Introducing the order of deacons and allocating to this office the details of managing day to day handling of church affairs insures that prayer, preaching, and teaching not be set aside to respond to these daily needs and administrative responsibilities. Three times in the passage from Acts, we are reminded that the Spirit guides this decision. The Spirit rests with the disciples *and* with the community who select seven who are themselves filled with the Spirit. Among these seven is Stephen, a "man filled with faith and the Spirit."

As if we needed proof of the importance of handing on the word of God, the Gospel for today's liturgy sets before us words which we cannot live without. How important to life and growth is the message contained in the passage from John? "Do not let your hearts be troubled" . . . "I am the way, the truth, and the life." How very much do we need teachers and preachers to center our thoughts on such hope-filled ideas contained in these words! They offer us the freedom

necessary to embrace life as the script changes.

The advice given in the First Letter of Peter provides an image for us: “. . . and like living stones let yourselves be built into a spiritual house.” “Living stones” are not dead lumps of cold weight, but breathing, pulsing organisms, stable and committed, adapting to life and growth, acknowledging the necessity of change.

Biblical faith survives the centuries because it is willing to adapt to change while holding firmly to the ideals of the past. The Spirit fills the words of Scripture with life that makes this adaptation possible. The author of First Peter speaks eloquently of the dignity of our Christian life: “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation, a people of his own. . . .” This is a covenant passage from Exodus that speaks of the privilege that was given to Israel as God’s chosen possession. These same words now embrace the Christian community as the covenanted people of God. Something remains the same yet the implications are strikingly new.

In the beginnings of the church, preachers and teachers drew on the past to envision the future to effectively communicate meaning. The author of First Peter declares about Christ that he is the “foundation stone.” Yet the challenge Christ posed for many at that time was that of a “stumbling stone.”

How is it true that Christ is both a stumbling stone and the foundation stone? A choice is often required that expands our understanding and leads to growth. It is better to engage the questions and challenges that Christ poses lest we become complacent in our faith response. Sometimes questions are better than answers!

May 21, 2017 Sixth Sunday of Easter

Acts 8:5-8, 14-17; Psalm 66:1-7, 16; 1 Peter 3:15-18; John 14:15-21

What is it that convinces us of the truth another speaks or convinces us of the credibility and authenticity of the person’s witness? Is it that we sense a deep-seated conviction, a rightness, a passion that enlivens his or her words and actions? They really believe in what

they say! “Be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope.” Hope rests on a conviction, a certainty. It implies that something stands behind us supporting us, something unseen and intangible that allows one to go through life confidently and peacefully. Hope is what sustains faith over the long haul.

In all three readings this weekend, hope plays a key role. Hope, in the biblical tradition, rests on the belief that God is faithful and provides for his people. Covenant is the basis of Israel’s hope. It is absolute confidence that God will keep his promises. Often and perhaps intentionally, it seems as though the promises God makes to Israel are placed in jeopardy or fall apart altogether.

Here is where hope comes into play. Hope believes when there are no tangible signs. Hope is almost unreasonable! Hope always has its sights on the future, confident that God will be faithful even in unimaginable ways. People who are hopeful or who are possessed by hope rest firmly on a foundation that is beyond sight, on faith in God.

In the Acts of the Apostles, Philip is a successful preacher. He is able to convince the people of Samaria about the truth of his words. He ignites their faith, and they believe. The people must have sensed in his manner and speaking that he believed in what he said. He was convincing. He was a man of hope, and that hope rests in Jesus Christ!

This is not something one can fake. If you don’t believe what you speak to others, don’t expect them to believe it. Conviction comes from within. We have all been touched by such convincing teachers and preachers. The “great joy” resulting from Philip’s preaching suggests that he has imparted to them something believable, in which they can place their hope.

The signs Philip works are reminiscent of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus’ miracles attest to the time of fulfillment, a time of restoration and hope when the burden of the human condition will be lifted and all forms of chaos, oppression, and evil would be overcome. The church, in the person of Philip, continues to do battle with the powers of chaos and overcomes these ills that threaten.

The First Letter of Peter pulses with hope and optimism even though very often speaking about the reality of suffering as part of our life in Christ. The authentic believer lives his or her faith with enthusiasm

even when facing difficulties. This is not done simply to put on a good face for those who might be watching. How can this become a way of life unless it is deeply rooted and held to firmly?

Nothing can prepare you for how to respond to the question, “What is the reason for your hope?” The answer comes from deeply within and is the fruit of faithfulness in our search for God. It is personal for each one of us and good to ponder. Our answer to the question will change as we pattern our life more and more on Christ.

Jesus, the very reason for our hope, the One who fulfills all the promises of God to humankind, gives us words to live by in the Gospel for today. Not just the Ten Commandments, but *every* word that comes forth from the mouth of God. Our daily listening to God requires the attentiveness of one who loves another, listening with delicate care and with the desire to please. If these words live in you, you will be able to explain the reason for your hope.

May 25, 2017 The Ascension of the Lord

Acts 1:1-11; Psalm 47:2-3, 6-8; Ephesians 1:17-23; Matthew 28:16-20

A statue of the resurrected Christ would appear in the sanctuary of the parish church after Easter. For the feast of the Ascension, billowing clouds of cotton batten would form the clouds, like those that lifted Jesus up from sight! We do have a need to imagine things. But can this distract us from the real meaning? Did Jesus really “go up”? Why do we imagine heaven as *up*? Perhaps as we mature in faith, we realize that heaven is something other than “up” and clouds don’t take Jesus away.

Putting the feast into a larger context, the Ascension brings to a culmination what began at the incarnation. Christ, in submission to the Father, took on our human existence, accepting death. By so doing, he restored us to right relationship with God, accomplishing our redemption. Then God raised him on the third day, seating him at his right hand. The Letter to the Hebrews says a similar thing, interpreting Psalm 8: “You have made him for a little while lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor, subjecting all things under

his feet" (Heb 2:7-8).

Christ came from heaven to earth, then returned to heaven to his Father. This act of returning begs to have a spatial and temporal component to enable us to reflect on the significance. But let us focus on what the biblical writers are trying to say. One who became "little less than the angels" must be restored to his rightful place, exalted at God's right hand after accomplishing his work of salvation. When did the event take place? Did it occur when God "raised him up on the third day" or was it separated by "40 days"?

The reading from Ephesians for today links these two moments together: "raising him from the dead" and "seating him at his right hand." The mention of "40 days" (or 40 years) is symbolic language in the Bible, indicating a passage of time for events to unfold or time to accomplish a needed change of heart. Forty days pass for the flood to end, for Moses to receive the Law, for Jesus to resist Satan in the wilderness. Here, 40 days are needed to confirm and give witness to Christ's risen presence. Should we read this as a literal 40 days or does it mean however long it took to turn disbelieving disciples into credible witnesses of the risen Christ?

The text from Matthew is the conclusion of his Gospel and, as such, it echoes many points from the beginning and threads woven throughout the gospel narrative. The disciples are back in Galilee where it all began. Do we sometimes need to go back to some beginning place to discover what changes need to take place in our thinking? The disciples are gathered on a mountain, recalling that is where Jesus delivered his first sermon. Similarly, mountains are places of revelation as at the transfiguration. Does the mountain suggest a time to draw closer to God in prayer, a time to listen, watch, and wait in solitude?

"I will be with you until the end of the ages" (Mt 28:20). These final words take us back to the beginning of the Gospel: "You shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us" (Mt 1:23). These words remind us of the most significant and consistent theme throughout Scripture: the presence of God with his people.

Some may recall a time when the paschal candle was extinguished after the reading of the Gospel on Ascension Thursday, conveying the sense that Jesus had physically departed. Happily, the emphasis now

is not on Christ departing from us, but on him taking his rightful place at God's right hand, returning to his Father, having completed his work. And that he presents *us* to the Father that we, too, might share in the divine life he accomplished for us through his life and death.

May 28, 2017 Seventh Sunday of Easter

Acts 1:12-14; Psalm 27:1, 4, 7-8; 1 Peter 4:13-16; John 17:1-11a

"As far as the eye can see!" We have to admit that is not very far, aware as we are of the expansiveness of our world. Things can obstruct our vision: bends and angles prevent us from seeing around corners, smog clouds our view, darkness conceals images, and brightness can blind us. At the same time, with the aid of microscopes and telescopes we can see the smallest forms of life and with amazing clarity look into the boundless reaches of space. The precious gift of sight is our window onto the beauty and wonder of God's creation. Yet it has been said that the most real things in life are things we cannot see.

The readings for this week speak about this kind of sight, the vision of the glory of God variously manifested. "Of you my heart has spoken, 'Seek his face.' It is your face, O Lord, that I seek" (Ps 27:8). We know what it is to await the sight of someone we love, to look into their eyes, to see their smile. But how do we "see" God's face? What is the psalmist trying to say? Just beyond our sight, there is God! To "see" him is to begin to understand this unfathomable reality.

Our biblical ancestors believed that no one could see God and live. God's essence, his very being was holiness; and this aspect of God, this otherness of God, was imperceptible to human beings, beyond our ability to experience. "Glory" implies the reflection of God's being, his holiness. It is the only way we can "see" God. To seek God's face is to see his glory which leaves us in awe. Glory is like looking to the east when the sun is setting and taking in the reflection of the sunset. This reverse side of the sunset is a different perspective, but it can astound us with its beauty!

In the account in Acts, we are told of the bond of prayer and oneness of heart. The link formed by prayer and communal charity is something

we cannot see, but without question we have palpably experienced this perhaps many times in our life. Jesus promised this to us: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there!" (Mt 18:20). The bond among those who share a vision of faith and common prayer cannot be seen but can be felt.

The First Letter of Peter takes us even deeper into this mystery. He speaks of the "Spirit of Glory" that comes to one who suffers for and in the name of Christ. A recurring theme in this letter is the privilege of discipleship, but also the cost of faithful following. Is it comforting to know that the glory that awaits us is a share in the glory of Christ that was his after his passion and death? This glory is beyond our ability to see or imagine! Such a firm belief is the reverse side of what we usually refer to as "glory." It is the hard-won victory that is part of our Christian life.

"Glory" is a word that weaves in and out of the Gospel of John. In today's text, Jesus speaks of the glory he shared with the Father. The passage takes us back to the Prologue of the Gospel: "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and we saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth" (Jn 1:14). In biblical writing, God's glory is manifested at moments of salvation. Jesus is the one who will manifest God's glory most perfectly through his life-giving death.

Our part in this is not overlooked. To set one's mind to pondering this understanding of glory is to seek the face of the Lord perceptible only to eyes of faith. How far beyond our vision is the glory of God? Not far! Just because we can't see it doesn't mean it isn't so.

June 4, 2017 Pentecost Sunday

Acts 2:1-11; Psalm 104:1, 24, 29-30, 31, 34; 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13; John 20:19-23

What one can readily sense in each of the readings for this Pentecost Sunday is the transformative effects of the Spirit-presence on individuals and the assembled church. It is a pure gift given by God. A new beginning! Fear gives way to faith, timidity to bold proclamation, individualism to community, and the world is thus recreated by God's

Spirit. There is something gentle and imperceptible accompanying this upwelling!

In the verse that follows the readings for this day, a question is posed that is always important to ask of a text: "What does this mean?" (Acts 2:12). More often we ask a different question: "Did this really happen?" We can get stuck in this question and lose sight of the first question: "What is the meaning?" This opens for us God's living word.

The assigned readings for Pentecost are steeped in words with rich resonances in the Old Testament. Understanding what they meant allows us to discover the rich meaning assigned to these events.

The Jewish festival of Pentecost recalled the giving of the Law at Sinai. This event is described as taking place amidst a colorful backdrop of wind, fire, and earthquake. God's presence is most often described using such language. It tells us this is not an ordinary day! Acts makes use of this same language to speak of God's mysterious and awesome presence, affirming the meaning of what is taking place. The covenant made between God and Israel at Sinai represented the establishment of the covenant community. The giving of the Law was the tangible sign of that bond. Israel becomes a new creation, carrying God's hopes. The echoes we hear in Acts suggest that here now is a new covenant community. A new creation!

We find other creation references throughout the readings. In the original Hebrew, the word *ruah* can be variously rendered as "spirit," "breath," or "wind." Each of the readings and the psalm make reference to these diverse meanings. It connotes the spirit-breath that God breathed into the earthling crafted from clay. *Ruah* as wind recalls the mighty wind that swept over the dark, formless wasteland before God spoke creation into being. Here again, the accounts suggest to us that this Pentecost event initiates a new creation.

In the Gospel reading from John, he mentions the disciples being gathered on the "first day of the week," the day of a new creation. And we see the risen Lord doing what God did . . . breathing his life-giving Spirit on them, this same Spirit that he handed over in his death on the cross (Jn 19:30). His death seems to be required before he can give over this Spirit, thus assuring his disciples and us of new life. He intimated a similar thing when he declared that he had to leave before the Paraclete could come (Jn 16:7).

Twice, Jesus says to them, “Peace be with you.” *Shalom*, in Hebrew, means more than the absence of conflict. Rather, it suggests the fullness of life and blessing. This was God’s intended plan for his creation. When he finished his work of creation, God looked at all he had made and found it very good. This is the meaning of *Shalom*: wholeness and harmony. All is well here! It was short-lived, this hope of God’s, but this is precisely the task entrusted to the Son, to restore us to that peace lost to us and beyond our ability to restore. Peace/*Shalom* here takes us into God’s original intention for us. Jesus’ action is powerful in its gentleness!

The language used by Luke, Paul, and John and set within the context of this feast declares that a new age has dawned! The age-old curses of Babel that saw people scattered have been reversed. The scattered are gathered, and we are able to listen and to hear one another. Do we not wish for such a world? Yet we believe within ourselves and deeply within our world that all things are restored in Christ.

June 11, 2017 The Most Holy Trinity

Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9; Daniel 3:52-55; 2 Corinthians 13:11-13; John 3:16-19

What did Moses see when God passed before him? God came down in a cloud, but no description is given. The account related in the reading from Exodus takes place well into the story of the departure from Egypt. For Moses, the departure from Egypt had its beginning sometime earlier as he tended his father-in-law’s sheep in the desert and had an encounter with God at the burning bush. At that time, he was given his mission to return to Egypt to free the Hebrew slaves. There was much Moses didn’t or couldn’t know at the time. We are always better off not knowing all the facts beforehand! This is surely true for Moses.

At the burning bush, Moses asked to know God’s name. Who is this one who is sending him on this mission? God gave Moses half an answer: my name is “I AM.” You may recall that Moses only reluctantly accepted the mission. The story unfolds: the ten plagues, the hardhearted pharaoh, the escape at the sea — a powerful display of God’s might!

Who would question the leader Moses now? But shortly after, amidst many signs of God's protective presence, the grumbling starts again! God provides what is needed, and the people quit their grumbling until the next problem!

As the journey continues, they arrive at Sinai and God invites Israel into a covenant relationship. The people accept the Lord as their God. But how deeply embedded in their memory are the ways learned in Egypt? They fail to recognize the ways of the Lord their God and fail to love and trust him. Things go from bad to worse. God threatens to annihilate them. But God responds to Moses' plea on their behalf and has a change of heart, extending forgiveness and restoration of their covenant. Moses and God have been through a lot together. So, like any friend might do under the circumstances, Moses asks to deepen the level of intimacy between them. "Show me your glory," he asks (Ex 33:18).

This brings us to today's reading from Exodus. Earlier on, Moses asked to know God's name, and God gives half an answer: "I AM." Here, God offers Moses a little more insight: "I am the Lord, a God gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in love and fidelity." Would Moses have understood these words earlier? Is it only after he came to know God in the challenges of the journey that Moses came to learn who God was?

Do we also come to know God as life unfolds for us? As we struggle in faith, cling to hope, and remain faithful in love, do we come to know who God is?

Trinity Sunday is God's feast! We know before we begin to speak of this mystery that we will fall short of grasping or communicating its fullness. This reading from Exodus is a touching depiction of God. What hope would we have if God were not "... gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in love and fidelity"? God, by his very nature, is all that we need him to be for us as we make our way through life. The story unfolds, and God is there.

Just as the inexpressible takes shape through human experience, so, too, does the incomprehensible God become audible to our human ears in Jesus. The God we cannot see is made visible in the human face of Jesus. The ancient love of the creator-God finds a way to reach human hearts finally and most effectively in Jesus and in ourselves as

we reflect his goodness.

We, too, seek to know God's name, to deepen our relationship with him. Like Moses, we need to watch what God does and in this way come to know who God is for us. What did Moses see? What is it that we see as God passes by?

June 18, 2017
The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ
Corpus Christi

Deuteronomy 8:2-3, 14b-16a; Psalm 147:12-13, 14-15, 19-20; 1 Corinthians 13:16-17; John 6:51-58

There are several threads that weave together in the readings that can help us ponder the significance of what we celebrate today and every day: the gifts of bread and wine that become the source of eternal life for us.

"Remember" sets the tone for what follows. To remember means more than a simple recollection of something that happened in the past. It suggests a dynamic, active reliving of the past, inviting us to place ourselves into that moment. So, when Israel remembers the wilderness time, they are not simply remembering what their ancestors experienced in their desert wanderings, but they themselves are to put on the shoes of their ancestors and experience and learn the desert lessons in their own time and place.

Why is the wilderness so important? Israel wanders for 40 years, we are reminded. This suggests the passing of the old generation and time to learn the ways of God. It is time for a change of heart to occur. The ways of this God are dynamic and not easily perceived. Israel has to learn to trust this God in the barren landscape of the desert. There are no props, no supports. It is a harsh land, and there are no sure pathways. It is a wide expanse of nothingness, and the end is not in sight. It is threatening by day and frightening by night.

Yet we remember that God brought them here! He protects them, providing water and nourishment; light by night and cloud by day.

Israel learns a lot about God in the wilderness. It is this dependent trusting relationship that God wishes to find in his chosen ones. Learning to trust God is what the desert time for Israel was about. It is what the desert moments of our own life are about also.

It does not come easily for the children of Israel! They misread the signs, take matters into their own hands, and grumble a lot. Moses constantly reminds the people that God is with them. He keeps before their eyes the meaning of events, interpreting the signs and pointing out the wonders along the way. Often, he also has to beg God's pardon for their abject failures.

"Remembering" challenges us to know the story of the past but also how to make it our own. How do we enter the story and become sojourners? The "desert" moments of our life can be those times when we are not sure of the script of our life, when the landscape is unfamiliar, when we are in between the land of oppression and the land of promise. As "pilgrim people," we struggle to learn what Israel struggles to grasp: that God is to be trusted, that he is present, and that he will provide and protect us along the way. To be convinced of this roots us and enables us to see that the gifts we have been given are fragile invitations to look to the giver. We possess an inner relationship with God that will allow us to travel light and trust.

The text from John's Gospel is the middle section of a longer story about feeding. The people are impressed that Jesus fed them the day before; now they want more! But when Jesus gets on to a new line of teaching about his flesh that is true food and his blood that is true drink, they are stuck in the past and the story sounds unbelievable to them. Jesus is demanding the same of them as God expected of Israel: "open your minds, learn my ways and trust!" Jesus looks for faith as God did, and it is a hard-fought struggle for some. In the desert, Israel failed to appreciate the gift of daily bread that God provided and live in gratitude for the provident care of God. God's gifts are given to lead us to faith, not to make us self-sufficient.

June 25, 2017
Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time

**Jeremiah 20:10-13; Psalm 69:8-10, 14, 17, 33-35; Romans 5:12-15;
Matthew 10:26-33**

Scripture, faith, and life do not allow us to stay long in any one place. This pattern of change and growth is evident in the readings for today's celebration. We pick up the thread of Matthew's Gospel in the midst of the Mission Discourse. We "hit the deck running" as we consider the implications of living and extending the reign of God. It may not be a smooth ride! What we have pondered in our celebration of the paschal mystery is brought home to us to live in real time.

Today's psalm captures most effectively the pattern of change and growth. We hear the words of an innocent, suffering individual. At first, we sense some profound struggle or conflict. These words may evoke images and phrases used by the gospel writers in the accounts of the Lord's passion: "Zeal for your house consumes me; I am scorned by those who scorn you."

But note that another emotion takes over, giving insight into the heart of this suffering, righteous person. It tells us that what rivals and overcomes his fear and betrayal is profound trust in God: "... in your abundant kindness, answer me with your sure deliverance." These words express the determined faith of the one who prays, whose faith then becomes a source of instruction and encouragement for the community. The psalmist calls on the heavens and the earth to praise God because God hears the prayer of the needy.

We see in this psalm, as often in Scripture, a progression from a personal struggle that is transformed by faith and trust and ultimately finds expression in praise. Do we recognize this process within ourselves?

The lament of Jeremiah from which today's reading is taken makes us privy to the prophet's interior struggle. The lament in its entirety (Jer 20:7-18) reveals a crisis of faith in God who called him into his prophetic ministry and now seems to have abandoned him. The portion set before us today to ponder alludes to this struggle, but the emphasis is on the transition into trust and then praise for God's power to defeat his enemies. There may be "terror on every side," but

... the Lord is with me like a mighty champion." This brings Jeremiah finally to praise God who will remove all that opposes him.

Jeremiah and the psalmist are on the same page. "Sing to the Lord ... for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the evildoers" (Jer 20:13).

This pattern that we observe in Jeremiah and in many of the psalms is one we can detect in any number of nuanced ways throughout the Bible. Does it not reflect a process we recognize as we sometimes struggle to embrace the will of God for ourselves? There are opportunities for new insight and growth as we make our way from uncertainty or grief into trusting God and finally being able to praise God as we acknowledge God's role in the transitions that come our way.

The dynamic component in this process is God. If we are attuned to God's presence, it is not difficult to be at home with the instruction given in the gospel passage: "Do not be afraid." Is there work for us to do to reach this place of living without fear? Indeed! It is the silent work of prayer that is required for us to own these words, to believe with absolute confidence that God knows us so well and is with us.

What Jeremiah or the Psalmist did not have knowledge of was "... how much more the grace of God and the generous gift of the one person Jesus Christ overflow for the many" (Rom 5:15). Paul's words to the Romans provide all we need to know to live a life of peaceful trust in God despite the terrors that surround us.





EUCCHARIST & CULTURE

Art • Music • Film •
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Art Review



THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF BROTHER GARY LAVERDIERE, SSS

John Christman,
SSS

The changing of the seasons, the seasons of nature and the seasons of life, such is the subject of two thoughtful *Emmanuel* articles by Peter Schineller, SJ. The first article appeared in the January/February 2017 issue of *Emmanuel* and it explored the spirituality, or rather, various “spiritualities” of winter and spring. In this issue of *Emmanuel*, Father Schineller continues his commentary on the seasons, exploring the many meanings that can be found in summer and fall. It’s lovely how throughout his reflections on the seasons he draws from the work of numerous poets, musicians, and theologians who all found in the seasons a deep source of nourishment and inspiration. I can’t ponder a “spirituality of the seasons” without thinking of Brother Gary LaVerdiere, SSS.

Readers of *Emmanuel* through the years are quite familiar with Gary’s vibrant photographs of the seasons that so often graced the covers of the magazine. As the art director of *Emmanuel* for more than 30 years, Gary taught with his images so much of what Peter Schineller expounds with his words.

And not only did he convey this deep spirituality in his photography, but he lived it and continues to live it in his everyday life. There’s not a spring day that passes where he doesn’t tend to the wide variety of flowers sprouting in the garden. There’s not a summer day that passes without him mowing the lawn and watering the plants. Fall finds him gathering all of the falling leaves and putting the garden to rest. While in winter he delights in the accumulation of snow and marvels the neighborhood with his wonderful and luminous Christmas display. Nature, faith, and the rhythm of the seasons all blend into a spirituality that truly nourishes him.

Beauty is often the “fruit” of all his labor. As Father Schineller intimates of the spirituality of summer and fall, they are times to bear fruit. And

so often the fruit Brother Gary has born has not only been his radiant garden or well-tailored lawn, but the meticulously attentive eye that nurtures both the growth of plants and trees and then shares their beauty through sumptuous photographs.

The photographs on the front and back cover of this issue come from Brother Gary's lens and spirituality. And with his photographs, he reminds all of us who can easily be so distracted by the hustle and bustle of daily living, that nature and the changing of the seasons have something important to teach.

Poetry

Lord, Teach Us to Pray, Just as John Taught His Disciples

john, did you impart words
distilled from honeycombed wildness —
were there utterances with a rocky landscape message
that would later call all to repentance
what vision of the coming Holy One did you reveal
yet in spite of visions
you failed to recognize at first
and you would later fail to understand
did you teach with stories, proverbs, or sayings
filled with meanings like the locust
you and your followers scavenged from thorn bushes
then,
when your death made all seemed finished
did your disciples still hear your voice announce your
final lesson
the Bridegroom is here

Lou Ella Hickman, IWBS

Saint Joseph's Lilies in Mary's Kitchen
A double sonnet

Saint Joseph's virtue overcame his pain,
And showed his love for Mary through the years
As husbands do with flowers now and then
To share love's joys and wipe away life's tears.

When early yellow daffodils spring up
And hyacinths their fragrant blossoms start,
Then puppy love and first-time kisses pop
Like apple blossoms in each teen-age heart.

When prayer and searching find a love sincere,
Each couple's hearts entwine with sacred vows.
Their bridal flowers testify all year
That love will grow as deep as time allows.

But kids and kitchens come along quite soon
Like lilies spilling forth their cups of joy.
Their parchment trumpets resonate in tune
With mother's love and each new childhood toy.

Gardenias yield a soft and silky scent
As suave as pearly moonlight on a pond.
Their aromatic fragrance brings content:
As soothing as a mellowed marriage bond.

Sweet roses accent special life events:
From buds of pink to glowing ruby sprays.
They waft devoted love — much like incense —
From spring's first blush to autumn's golden haze.

Each flower brings its own unique delight:
Like orchids, who help aching hearts take flight.

May trust, like Joseph's flowers, ever pure
Help husbands' love in every age endure.

Patrick Dolan

Book Reviews

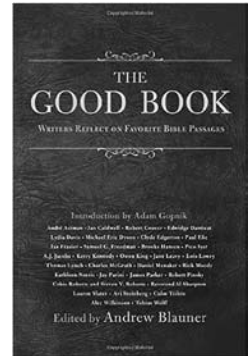
Thirty-two writers ranging from poet laureate Robert Pinsky to television commentator Cokie Roberts reflect on their favorite Bible passages from both the Old and New Testaments.

In the Introduction to the book, *The New Yorker* writer Adam Gopnik suggests that there are four ways or habits of reading the Bible: 1. Aesthetic: because they are good stories; 2. Accommodationist/Moral-metaphysical: because they show enduring moral values; 3. Anthropological: to understand human nature; and 4. Antagonistic/Hostile: to demonstrate why we don't need biblical lessons. And lest the reader think that one way is better than the others, Gopnik goes on to show that any good reading of the Bible stories contains all four elements!

Each author has a way of connecting the biblical story to his or her own life experience or contemporary events. For example, Michael Dyson, a Georgetown University sociology professor, Baptist minister, author, and television commentator relates the often puzzling story of Abraham being asked by God to sacrifice his son Isaac to the story of Trayvon Martin, the young African-American killed while innocently walking down the street eating a box of Skittles, which he had paid for. In his essay "Abraham, Isaac, and Us," Dyson connects the experience of young black men, often with fathers as well as a society who beat them, who perished as "unwitting victims of sacrifice on the altar of an American history that has exploited and expelled black youths from society and history."

Kerry Kennedy, one of Bobby Kennedy's daughters, understands John 20, the resurrection story, in light of her experiences in Haiti in 2014, when she returned four years after the terrible earthquake of 2010 to reconnect with some of the families and children she had worked with previously.

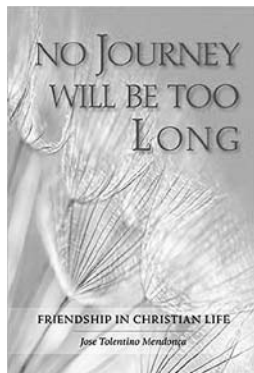
This book [or the concept behind it] could easily be used as a discussion starter for a beginning Bible discussion group. Each person could talk about his or her favorite Bible passage and why or how it is significant personally or in the life of another person, or how it might be reflected in some current event.



**THE GOOD BOOK:
WRITERS REFLECT
ON FAVORITE
BIBLE PASSAGES**
Andrew Blauner
New York, New
York: Simon and
Schuster, 2015
320 pages, \$27.00

A short biography of each author is included at the end of the book.

Mary Denis Maher, CSA
Archivist
Sisters of Charity of Saint Augustine
Richfield, Ohio



**NO JOURNEY WILL
BE TOO LONG:
FRIENDSHIP IN
CHRISTIAN LIFE**
José Tolentino
Mendonça
Mahwah, New
Jersey: Paulist
Press, 2015
192 pp., \$19.95

Dominican biblical scholar José Tolentino Mendonça's book on Christian friendship takes its title from a Japanese saying: "With your friend beside you, no journey will be too long." His concern about the overuse of the word "love," which has distorted its true meaning, has led him to this in-depth reflection on friendship in one's personal life, in communities, in social relationships, and in one's relationship with God.

Friendship is a universal experience which is irreplaceable in becoming fully human. Friends are a part of our lives but retain their own identity. They enlarge our vision, help us face the truth, and supply us with humor. This book includes spiritual wisdom which can enable one to live friendship more fully.

The author presents familiar examples of friendship from both Old and New Testaments. He draws widely from classical texts, philosophy, and anthropology to illuminate the meaning and significance of friendship.

The heart of the book is his depiction of friendship in the life and mission of Jesus. Short chapters such as "At Table We Taste the Friendship of Jesus" and "A Friend Is a Witness" take us into the Scriptures.

One wonders whether Pope Francis was familiar with this book, which was originally published in Portuguese. The chapters on "The Little Gospel of Joy" and "Paul, Master of Christian Joy" remind one of the themes in his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel).

This is a book to ponder, to appreciate, and to return to often as a source and support for prayer, thereby strengthening one's friendship with God and ultimately with one another. Friendship encourages the heart to realize that whatever journey is undertaken, it will never be too long.

Ann Kelly, OSU, PhD
Professor Emerita
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Reading this book is like being privy to someone's personal journal or diary. Although Wendy Bowen refers to the "princess" throughout the book, it is herself and her experiences that underlie the meaning of the 35 short chapters.

Since the author is a holistic therapist, I felt as if she were giving herself a therapy session throughout the book. Bowen does refer to others, whom she calls "great inspirational teachers" who have guided her through her life's journey so far, but again relates their teachings to herself. In one example at the beginning of the book, she mentions Jill Bolte Taylor, a neuroanatomist and scientist who wrote *My Stroke of Insight*, a personal description of her experiences when the left side of her brain was damaged after a stroke (8). Another example is in Chapter 33, where Bowen states that "she discovered her interior castle with the help of Caroline Myss" (145).

The various steps and stages along the journey that Bowen acknowledges in her own life are revelatory of issues that most of her readers can relate to. These include: "Awakening" (Chapters 1-10), "Climbing Out of the Potholes" (Chapters 15-22), "Avoiding the Potholes" (Chapters 23-33, and "Happily Ever Now," the final two chapters. Three Appendices are also added: "My Potholes (or Pitfalls) in the Journey Towards Self-Love and Self-Acceptance," "Getting Out of the Potholes (Getting Unstuck)," and "Filling the Potholes."

Throughout the book, Bowen intersperses poetry that relates to her various issues. Most of the poetry is her own; however, she does quote from a few authors, including Aristotle who wrote, "Friendship is comprised of a single soul inhabiting two bodies" and Mark Twain who said, "Forgiveness is the fragrance that the violet leaves on the heel that has crushed it."

Anyone wanting to self-analyze may benefit from reading this book. However, for those of us who have passed through many of the stages of the journey analyzed in the book, deeper spiritual reading would be more beneficial.



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HAPPILY EVER
NOW:
DISCOVER YOUR
SELF WORTH
Wendy D. Bowen
Bloomington,
Indiana, 2013
202 pp., \$14.99



EUCCHARISTIC WITNESS

John Christman, SSS

A number of years ago, I was ministering in a parish in a neighborhood that was beset by many challenges. Poverty, intercultural tensions, and gang violence were just a few of the daily realities they faced. Quite regularly, people heavily burdened by life would come to the rectory door and ask for assistance. Some simply needed to talk. Some sought the sacraments. Many more, however, were looking for food or financial aid. I considered answering the rectory door an important part of my ministry, forcing myself to stop everything with each ring of the doorbell and be available.

Over time, I built relationships and got to know some people. I will always remember one homeless man who challenged me. He was a regular. He would come, seeking money or food, and my heart went out to him because his life was so difficult. He had mental disabilities and had lived on the streets for years. He had no family to support him, and it was practically impossible to imagine him being able to hold down a job. He was so clearly in need of help. On the other hand, he had serious drug and alcohol problems, lied constantly, and, when angry, became dangerous. On occasion, we would have to call the police because of his behavior.

My fellow religious and I helped him so often. We tried to find him housing and get him the support he needed, but he somehow could not break out of the life he had known. So we simply persisted. There were many times he stretched my patience and charity. I would stop working to make a sandwich for him, get him something to drink, or leave my dinner to sit with him when he was struggling and needed someone to listen to him. These things rarely happened when it was convenient. At times, I honestly didn't know what was the best way to deal with his requests. Words from Mathew's Gospel would ring in my ears, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (25:35).

Did he take advantage of my kindness? Possibly. But I didn't have to live his daily hardships and suffering. I'd like to think, however, in all of these encounters, he was teaching me how to be more eucharistic, to really be life-giving bread for others, if even for a moment.






*“Mary has led me by the hand...
to the Holy Eucharist.”*

Eymard
Sp. J. S.

NR 44, 109
Note de Retraite, March 1865
Saint Peter Julian Eymard



*We can miss the seasons,
or trivialize them.
Or we can go, grow and flow with them,
let them carry and instruct us.*

Peter Schineller, SJ