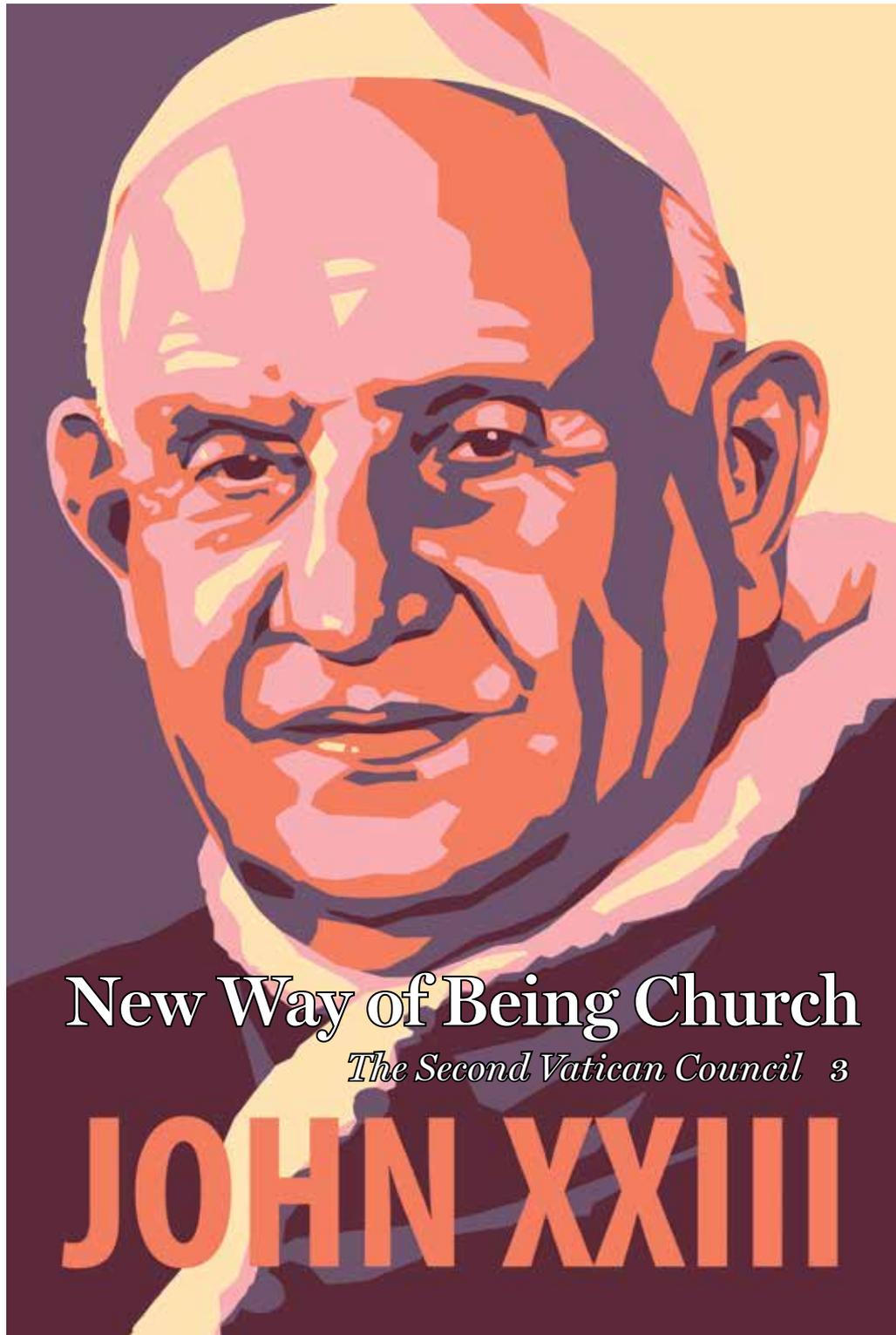


Celebration

October 2012 | 41:10

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A Comprehensive Worship Resource



New Way of Being Church

The Second Vatican Council 3

JOHN XXIII

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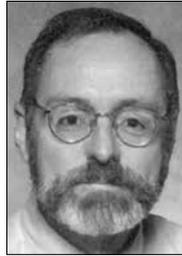
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EDITOR'S CORNER

Anniversaries are how we bring the past into the present. What happened 50 years ago at Vatican II provided a kind of blueprint for the renewal and reform of the church in the modern world. Pope John XXIII used his authority to convene a council in order to open the church to a more effective dialogue with contemporary culture and thought.



Pat Marrin

To accomplish this, he summoned 2,500 bishops representing the global church to Rome to act in parliamentary sessions where they hammered out 16 basic documents that set a course for the church into the future. One hallmark of these constitutions, decrees and declarations was a spirit of openness to the world and a more pastoral approach to the needs of all members of the church.

And as with all blueprints, the challenge of these past 50 years has been to translate concepts into actual structures, to lay the foundations for ongoing implementation. Given the complexity of problems facing the

church and diversity of opinions among so many bishops and their theologians at the council, it is no surprise that fierce debates ensued over the very nature and mission of the church, the authority of bishops in relationship to the pope, the prospects for unity with other Christian churches and dialogue with other religions.

What was revealed during the debates was the dynamic nature of the universal church, as strong voices sought a consensus that would move the church forward while preserving the critical balance between tradition and innovation. For Pope John and his successor, Paul VI, protecting the unity of the church became paramount, and their interventions were often to ensure that this dynamism was not resolved in favor of either the progressives or the traditionalists.

This same challenge is the legacy of the council today, an active, ongoing debate we are all now called and privileged to take up and advance.

Publisher..... Thomas C. Fox
Editor-in-Chief..... Pat Marrin
Associate Editor..... Erin Ryan
Production..... Tobias Becker
Advertising..... 816-968-2238

CELEBRATION: A Comprehensive Worship Resource (ISSN 0094-2421) is published monthly by The National Catholic Reporter Publishing Company, Inc. Write *Celebration*, P.O. Box 411009, Kansas City, MO 64141-1009. Periodical Postage paid at Kansas City, MO 64108 and additional mailing offices.

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Editor: Patrick Marrin, *Celebration*, 115 East Armour Blvd., Kansas City, MO 64111-1203; Phone: 816-968-2266; E-mail: patrickmarrin@gmail.com.

Missing issues: Call 800-333-7373. *Celebration* is mailed two months prior to the issue date. If you have not received your issue a month before the issue date, call for a replacement.

How to renew: Call 800-333-7373. Annual

subscription rates: \$69.95 print (\$87.95 foreign surface; \$99.95 Canada/Mexico air mail) with electronic access; \$49.95 electronic only.

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A New Way of Being Church

Fifty years ago, John XXIII called for a more engaged, pastoral church

By **BIAGIO MAZZA**

On October 11, 2012, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the convocation of the first session of the Second Vatican Council. Fifty years later, a great number of Catholics, along with others aware of the role and function of the council, are asking important questions. What happened to the enthusiasm and energy that the council initially generated? Why do some church leaders continue to undo many of the teachings and reforms initiated by the council? Where is the freedom to think and question, along with the active involvement in all areas of church life, that the council envisioned? Is the council dead? How do we interpret its teachings? Did the council lead to a new way of being church, or did it merely do some window dressing and essentially change nothing?

For many people, including Catholics, the Second Vatican Council — whose four sessions took place from 1962-1965 — is ancient history. They are not aware of what led to the council or what new teachings or reforms the council advocated. They have never read the 16 documents that resulted from those fascinating and exciting years of deliberation by nearly 2,500 of the world's bishops, not to mention multiple theological experts as well as observers from Orthodox and Protestant Christianity and other faith traditions. In light of the current controversies over the meaning, significance and effects of Vatican II, it is extremely important that all Catholics know the story of Vatican II and how it continues to impact us and the world to this day.

John XXIII, papa di passagio

The story begins with the Spirit guiding the church to elect a 77-year-old cardinal of Venice, Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, as pope to succeed Pope Pius XII, who had been pope for almost 20 years. Pius XII was elected in 1939 and died on October 9, 1958.



— Julie Lonneman

Much had happened during those tumultuous years: the Second World War, the Holocaust, the pain and loss of so many lives, the rebuilding of Europe and Japan. Upon Pius' death, the cardinals decided to choose a compromise candidate who would be a *papa di passagio*, a "transitional" caretaker pope with a short reign. So on October 28, 1958, they elected this pious old man whom some thought to be rather harmless, even simple, to head the church.

As pope, Angelo chose the name John XXIII, giving a number of reasons for his choice. But anyone who knew church history would certainly have looked upon the choice of the name John as odd, if not downright blasphemous. There had not been a pope named John in over 500 years. The last pope named John XXIII was considered a false pope and was deposed in 1415 by the Council of Constance, which he had been forced to call to reform the church. Surely, Angelo, a church historian, knew

that the last pope named John was a disreputable pope of questionable legitimacy.

However, by choosing to be called John XXIII, Angelo restored legitimacy to the name. Others also think that he might have chosen that name because he knew the previous John XXIII had called a council to reform and renew the church. Did Angelo already have an inkling that he, too, would soon call a council?

What we do know is that on January 25, 1959, less than three months after his election, as John XXIII concluded Mass at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls with a small group of cardinals in attendance, he announced his intention to call an ecumenical council. In his diary, *Journal of a Soul*, John described this desire for a council as something out of the blue, and indeed the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The announcement was greeted with stunned silence. While he was disappointed in the cardinals' response, this did not deter John from pursuing his inspiration as he set in motion the mechanisms that would make the council a reality.

Why an ecumenical council?

John's purpose for calling an ecumenical council centered on his vision of what it means to be church. His vision reflected his own personal style and pastoral approach with people, and he imagined a church that would incarnate and present that same style to all humanity. While others saw doom and despair, he saw possibility and promise. While others were ready to condemn, he was ready to forgive, reconcile and unite. While others saw God as selective and judgmental, he saw God as inclusive, compassionate and forgiving.

When he was questioned about the need for a council, John responded by saying that he wanted fresh air to come into the church, breathing new life and vibrancy. He insisted, "We are not here on earth to guard a museum, but



to tend a blooming garden full of life.” John emphasized that “the church is not an archaeological museum, but the ancient fountain which slakes the thirst of the generation of today as she did that of the generations of the past.” John envisioned the council, inspired by the Holy Spirit, as creating the opportunity for a “new Pentecost,” allowing the Spirit to reinvigorate the world. Ultimately John saw the council as an opportunity for aggiornamento, the updating that every generation of Christians must do to incarnate Jesus’ message and mission in its own culture, day and time.

John wished to break down boundaries and seek unity with fellow Christians. He wanted all Christians to understand their intimate connection with Jews, their elders in the faith. He saw the need for renewed vitality in the church. John desired a church that would be attuned to the “signs of the times,” opening itself to the new Pentecost that the Spirit of God was ushering in for the benefit of the whole world.

John’s desire came out of his lived experience with a church that was not hospitable or willing to break boundaries. His life experience helped Angelo develop a sense of church that was primarily pastoral and not defensive, legalistic or authoritarian. He was more interested in forging relationships, reconciling hostilities and building bridges of understanding than he was in judging, ostracizing or condemning.

This contrasted sharply with the defensive stance that had taken root since the church’s reaction to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, when the church was trying to protect itself from the attacks leveled at it by the Protestant reformers. While this reaction is natural and understandable, it did set the church on a course that would ultimately be detrimental to dialogue and collaboration.

Because Protestant reformers attacked the institutional church as not being true to Christ and to the scriptures, the church insisted on its legitimate foundation in Christ and the scriptures. This led the church to stress its institutional aspects, claiming itself to be a perfect society.

The church declared itself to be the kingdom of God on earth and thus needed no one to justify its institutional structure and mission.

The reformers questioned the legitimacy of church offices, especially the papacy, as well as the rights and claims of the ordained. So the church defended the legitimacy of the papacy, other church offices and the power and special status of the ordained. Such a heavy emphasis on the significance of the ordained in church leadership led to an overemphasis on the sacrament of holy orders at the expense of the sacrament of baptism. This relegated the laity to a passive, non-ministerial role, with no say in how to be church. Such emphasis also bolstered the authority and status of the papacy so that the pope became identified with the church, and vice versa. Bishops were then seen as merely delegates of the pope, deriving their power and authority from him and not from Christ.

The institutional church of the 16th century claimed to be exactly the church structure that Jesus Christ founded. Everything was the way Jesus ordained it to be when he walked the earth, especially during his Last Supper directives. Those who disagreed were traitors to what Jesus actually established. The church was understood as the only true church, the only church that had been faithful to the directives of Jesus. Salvation was possible only in the true church. Anyone who believed differently was a heretic and schismatic.

Fidelity to Jesus demanded that the church be as it was. Change was perceived as extremely negative and contrary to the mind of Jesus. Such a stance led to the notion that history, culture and ideas had not affected church teaching and structure in any way. Rather, it was the church that affected humanity, culture, history and ideas. This perspective dominated the church’s self-understanding for over four centuries, and was affirmed time and again by papal teaching and authority.

20th-century context to the council

Three particular 20th-century developments influenced John’s desire

for a council that would strive to unify Christianity and update Catholicism: ecumenism, scripture study and liturgical renewal. All three movements had made great strides during John’s lifetime.

A significant ecumenical step was taken in 1908 when the Graymoor or Atonement Fathers first observed a period that is now the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25. In 1910, various ecumenically minded Protestant groups met at the World Missionary Conference, which by 1948 flowered into the World Council of Churches. Before becoming pope, Angelo Roncalli became sensitized to ecumenism in his travels as a Vatican delegate.

Such sensitivity moved him to call for an ecumenical council on January 25, 1959, the closing day of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. His constant desire was that the church would recognize the unity that exists among all Christians, and he continually asserted that we are to “stress that which unites rather than that which divides. ... Let us come together and make an end of our divisions.” This led John to be the first pope to invite Orthodox Christians, Protestant Christians, Jewish observers, and other observers to attend the council.

The historical-critical approach to biblical studies—consistently banned by the Vatican—was eventually accepted by Pope Pius XII in his 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu*. Catholic scripture scholars began making the Catholic church’s traditions and doctrines more biblically based and thus more ecumenically sound than ever before. John XXIII’s council would eventually accept (and expand) such approaches as the church’s official teaching.

Beginning in the 1800s, the liturgical movement saw experimentation and development primarily in German, Belgian and other European monasteries, as well as in underground movements in various countries, including the United States. New discoveries and studies of ancient liturgical documents and practices led to greater understanding of the liturgical traditions of the church. Experimentation with the use of the



local language in celebrating Mass, Communion under both species, biblically based homilies, and a more expansive use of music paved the way for liturgical renewal and updating.

Pius XII had taken the first steps toward this renewal by revising the entire Holy Week liturgy in 1955, so that it would be more in tune with the rich symbolism and ritual that these highest of holy days demanded and deserved. Pius also encouraged greater participation in the Mass, including more singing and more frequent reception of Communion. John XXIII also saw this great liturgical need and decided that these new developments should be systematically examined. Understanding the church's liturgical life as foundational, John insisted that the first topic the council wrestled with would be the liturgy.

Movements in many areas of church life led people to re-evaluate our church in light of the needs and concerns of our time. In their study and deliberations, many of the scholars and theologians who aided the bishops at the Second Vatican Council accepted this emerging understanding of church. The aggiornamento that stirred the heart of Pope John soon became the overarching theme of the council.

The Second Vatican Council allowed change to come to beliefs and practices not simply for the sake of change, but because they had been examined, studied and understood to be more authentic to the nature and mission of the church. Unlike previous councils, which enshrined inherited practices and beliefs, the Second Vatican Council evaluated the church's inherited riches to discern how they were meeting the concerns of this generation and this time in history.

Watch for future articles and a series of columns by Biagio Mazza that will continue to explore the meaning of Vatican II in the life of today's church.

Biagio Mazza is an author and adult faith formation coordinator for St. Sabina Parish in Belton, Mo. He has facilitated learning experiences in the Diocesan Ministry Formation Program, New Wine, and at various colleges and universities. E-mail: biagio46@gmail.com.

Some key teachings of the Second Vatican Council

- ❖ The church as mystery, consisting of the whole people of God, who are called to holiness through their baptism to take on the mind and heart of Jesus.
- ❖ The full, conscious and active participation of all in liturgical and communal celebrations, as well as in the decision-making processes of the people of God, a process known as collegiality.
- ❖ The shift from seeing ministry as the exclusive domain of the ordained, to realizing it is linked to baptismal call and mission.
- ❖ God has a universal will and desire to save all people, and the Spirit is active in the world doing just that, in the great variety and diversity that exists among human communities.
- ❖ Freedom of conscience as the inner sanctuary between individuals and God where no one can enter, interfere or control.
- ❖ An incarnational spirituality in which God's Spirit is fully present and active in the world and in our cultural and social interactions, demanding a respect for the truth and goodness of the modern world.
- ❖ A more biblically based church in its liturgical, theological and spiritual life.
- ❖ Unity among all Christians, focused on those things that join us rather than those that separate us.
- ❖ Respect for all non-Christian faith traditions along with religious freedom as a right of all human beings to choose their own path to God.
- ❖ Respect for culture and diversity, leading to cultural adaptation and encouragement of appropriate local customs and traditions wherever the church exists or is planted.
- ❖ A strong emphasis on community, leading to active involvement in the world, emphasizing our active role in transforming the world into the reign of God.

Poustinia con la Palabra

El culto y la vida para el mes de octubre 2012

PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ
y RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ ALONSO

¿Es usted un *poustinik*? ¿Tiene usted una *poustinia*? Poustinia es una palabra rusa que significa un cuarto pequeño, escasamente amueblado, como una cabaña en donde un *poustinik* va a orar, ayunar y tener la experiencia de Dios en la soledad. Etimológicamente la palabra *poustinia* viene de la palabra desierto o tierra salvaje. Las *poustinias*, una tradición de origen ruso ortodoxo, fueron introducidas en la espiritualidad occidental por la activista social Catherine de Hueck Doherty. En su libro *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man* (Madonna House, Ottawa, Canada, 1975), Doherty afirmó que “entrar en la *poustinia* significa escuchar a Dios. Es entrar en la *kenosis*, el vaciamiento de uno mismo.” Aunque normalmente el/la *poustinik* reza solo/a, está siempre a la disposición de los demás para compartir con ellos no sólo sus riquezas y experiencias espirituales sino para servirles en sus necesidades físicas. Conrad Hoover sugiere que los creyentes podríamos seguir el ejemplo de Doherty y crear *poustinias* en nuestros propios hogares (“No hay más remedio que orar,” *Sojourners*, junio del 1977). Si hiciéramos eso y viviéramos en alerta esperando al Señor, nuestro propio corazón sería la *poustinia* en donde Jesús está siempre presente y nos acompaña en nuestro caminar por este mundo herido.

Cuán afortunados somos de tener en nuestro propio calendario litúrgico una experiencia semanal (o quizá diaria) de *poustinia*. Cada vez que nos reunimos alrededor de la Mesa del Señor y escuchamos la Palabra viva de Dios, entramos en comunión con Dios, recibimos el alimento del cuerpo y del alma, y lo que necesitamos para participar en el proceso de redimir al mundo con el amor y el cariño de Dios. El elocuente autor de la carta a los Hebreos nos recuerda (el



14 de octubre) que la Palabra de Dios, el centro de nuestra experiencia de *poustinia*, es “más aguda y penetrante que cualquier espada de dos filos” y es capaz de discernir todo lo que hay en la mente, el corazón y el espíritu humano. Cuando nos ponemos en presencia de esta palabra y nos abrimos a su verdad, no podemos aparentar ni escondernos; no hay excusas posibles. La Palabra que sale de la boca de Dios e inspirada por su Espíritu, también inspira a quienes la escuchan y les da el poder de traducir la Palabra en vidas inspiradas por Dios.

Este mes, la Palabra viva, penetrante e inspirada de Dios nos invita a examinar cuatro aspectos muy importantes de nuestra experiencia humana. Cada uno de ellos contiene sus retos, que no pueden ser minimizados; también nos traen bendiciones, que no pueden ser medidas.

El 7 de octubre, nuestra *poustinia* con la Palabra se centra en el matrimonio y el divorcio. No es un tema fácil sobre todo cuando en nuestra sociedad la mitad de los matrimonios terminan en divorcio y se debate acaloradamente el matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo. Así como Jesús nunca evitó un tema controvertido que podría provocar el resentimiento, tampoco quienes nos sentamos en los bancos de la iglesia ni quienes predicán desde el púlpito pueden minimizar su importancia ni azucarar la Palabra de Dios para evitar conflictos.

El segundo tema (el 14 de octubre) será el de las riquezas. La riqueza material puede ser una oportunidad para hacer el bien y aliviar las necesidades de los otros; también puede ser un impedimento al discipulado

verdadero. Consciente de ello, el Jesús de San Marcos invitó al joven rico a vender lo que tenía, a darlo a los pobres y a seguirle. En lo que podrían ser unas de las palabras más tristes de las sagradas escrituras, San Marcos nos cuenta que el joven se quedó afligido y se fue triste porque tenía muchas posesiones. ¿Nos iremos también tristes de esta *poustinia* porque damos más valor a lo que tenemos en nuestros bolsillos que a lo que Jesús nos ofrece?

El 21 de octubre, estamos invitados a considerar la petición de Santiago y Juan: la propensión humana a la ambición desmesurada. Ellos querían tener los lugares de mayor honor en la gloria de Jesús. Entonces Jesús les reta a que abandonen sus deseos de grandeza y se pongan al servicio de los demás. El camino que Jesús propuso fue y es: liderazgo mediante servicio y sacrificio. Todavía nos queda mucho que aprender y recorrer; por eso tenemos que seguir orando, escuchando y abriéndonos a la gracia de Dios.

El 28 de octubre, los textos sagrados nos piden que consideremos el tema de la enfermedad, la curación y la fe. Jesús dijo al ciego Bartimeo que su fe en el poder de Jesús le había devuelto la vista. Una fe similar hizo posible que muchos sordos, mudos, cojos, enfermos, endemoniados, etc., fueran curados en tiempos de Jesús. En nuestros días, somos nosotros quienes tenemos la responsabilidad de atender a las necesidades físicas, espirituales y mentales de los enfermos. Si no podemos lograr su curación, si debemos crear para los enfermos, los quebrantados y los que sufren una *poustinia* de paz y de aceptación; que sepan que tienen nuestro apoyo espiritual, nuestras oraciones, y que se sientan seguros de nuestro cariño y amor hasta que la fe les lleve a la casa de Dios.

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez y Rafael Sánchez Alonso han provisto de comentarios y homilias a *Celebración* desde 1979.

Poustinia with the Word

Lectionary themes for October 2012

PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ
and RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ ALONSO

Are you a *poustinik*? Do you have a *poustinia*? Poustinia is the Russian word for a small, sparsely appointed room or cabin where a *poustinik* may go to pray and fast and experience the presence of God in solitude. Etymologically, *poustinia* finds its roots in the Russian word for desert or wilderness.

Originally a Russian Orthodox tradition, the *poustinia* was introduced to Western spirituality by the social activist Catherine de Hueck Doherty. In the book *Poustinia: Christian Spirituality of the East for Western Man* (Madonna House, Ottawa, Canada, 1975), Doherty said, “To go into the *poustinia* means to listen to God. It means entering into *kenosis* — the emptying of oneself.” Although the *poustinik* regularly prays alone, he or she remains available to others to share not only spiritual treasures and experience but also to serve the physical needs of others. Conrad Hoover suggested that believers might follow Doherty’s example and create *poustinias* in our homes (“No Choice but to Pray,” *Sojourners*, June 1977). If we did so, if we watched and waited alone with the Lord, then we would come to know the *poustinia* in our hearts where Jesus is always present to us and goes with us into a wounded and worried world.

Built right into our liturgical calendar is a weekly (or, for some, daily) experience of *poustinia*. Each time we gather around the table of the Lord and listen to the living, breathing word of God, we commune with God. We are fed, body and soul, and equipped to share in the ongoing process of redeeming and gracing our world with the love of God. At the very heart of our *poustinia* experience this month (Oct. 14), the eloquent author of Hebrews will remind us that the word of God is as penetrating as a two-edged sword, capable of discerning all



As we stand before this word, open to its truth, there can be no dissembling, no hiding, no excuses.

that is within the human mind and heart and spirit. As we stand before this word, open to its truth, there can be no dissembling, no hiding, no excuses. This word is God-breathed, i.e., inspired by the Spirit, who also inspires those who hear that word and empowers them to translate it into their lives.

This month, the living, penetrating and inspired word of God will invite us to look at four very important aspects of the human experience, each of which holds challenges that cannot be minimized as well as blessings that cannot be measured.

On Oct. 7, our *poustinia* with the word will center on marriage and divorce. In a society where half of all marriages end in divorce and same-sex marriage is hotly debated, this is never an easy issue to tackle. Nevertheless, the word of God with its penetrating truth does not permit us to approach it cafeteria-style, taking only what we find attractive and doable while avoiding what is hard to hear and even harder to live. Jesus never shied away from an issue that was sure to spark controversy and resentment. Neither can those in the pews or in the pulpit sugarcoat the word of God in order to avoid conflict.

Riches will be the issue the word of God addresses on Oct. 14. While

material wealth can give us opportunity to alleviate the needs of others, it can also be an impediment to authentic discipleship. Aware of this, the Marcan Jesus will invite a rich man to sell what he has, give it to the poor and then come and follow him. Mark tells us the man’s face fell and he went away sad, for he had many possessions. Will we, too, go away sad from this *poustinia* experience because we place more value on what is in our pockets and purses than on what Jesus has to offer?

With the request of James and John on Oct. 21, the praying assembly will be invited to ponder their propensity for unbridled ambition. These two wished to share in his glory and be seated at places of highest honor; Jesus challenged them to set aside their desire for greatness in order to place themselves at the service of others. Leadership through service and sacrifice was the way of Jesus, but it has yet to become the way of all his followers. For this reason, we return again and again to pray, to listen, to believe and to be graced.

On the last Sunday of October (Oct. 28), the sacred texts will ask us to consider illness, healing and faith. Jesus will tell Bartimaeus that his faith in Jesus’ power enabled him to see. Similar faith helped to effect the healings of many in Jesus’ day: the deaf, the lame, the diseased, the possessed. Today, Jesus’ followers are to minister to the needs of the physically, spiritually and mentally ill. When healing cannot be achieved, then we can create for the ill, the broken and the wounded a *poustinia* of peace and acceptance where they may know the support of our prayers, the security of our care and the warmth of our love until faith carries them home to God.

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez and Rafael Sánchez Alonso have been collaborating to provide Lectionary commentaries and homilies for *Celebration* since 1979.

Words We Need to Hear

The bread you are holding back

By GABE HUCK

Here is the way I propose to keep this 50th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council: from October 2012 until September 2013 I will offer each month in *Celebration* a key passage—a sentence, a paragraph—from one of the council documents, and I will invite you to ponder it with me. For those who preach, I encourage you to consider these reflections as leading to preaching one Sunday each month on the council documents.

The texts of the council are its legacy, and in tone and meaning they lifted us in those few years of the mid-1960s. They sold! They were read, taught and preached. They made being Catholic in 1966 feel very different from being Catholic in 1956. They also impressed many non-Catholic Christians.

The reforms of Vatican II were never for the timid. But the way had been prepared by scholars of many disciplines and by the example of many who, taking the Gospel to heart, looked their world and its wars and economics and possibilities square in the face. John XXIII knew it was time to talk about all of this, and time to act not from fear but from love of the world and love of the Gospel. For those few years the church tried to speak urgently and honestly. After 50 years, the words of Vatican II, dated and compromised as they must be, can still fill us with a baptismal excitement.

For October 2012, we might begin with the council's final document, *Gaudium et Spes*, so that reading it and preaching it stand at the entrance to this anniversary year. The Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time this year (Oct. 14) has us reading about wisdom that is loved beyond gold and health, whose "splendor never yields to sleep," and we read about the word of God that can cut between soul and spirit. Then comes that troubled but excellent man who runs to Jesus with a question. He receives Jesus' answer and can honestly declare: "I have kept

those commandments." We are told that Jesus immediately loved this man enough to challenge him: "You are lacking in one thing. Go, sell what you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Note that in Mark, Jesus says this clearly: "You are lacking in one thing." Matthew and Luke soften that a bit with "If you wish to be perfect," allowing one to walk away saying, "I'm satisfied with being almost perfect."

The questioner didn't bargain. He understood the demand, he understood himself. All the eagerness went out of him. He made his decision. He went away sad, we are told. That "sad" can be our cue to turn to the document whose first words are "joy and hope," and whose second words are "grief and anxiety."

Gaudium et Spes, "joy and hope," is called "The Church in the Modern World." That document had a firm grip on what Mark's Gospel story wants us to think about. This is a long and heavy document. Many passages would support preaching in 2012-13, and there are multiple subjects here that need our fresh proclamation today. For our purposes, I want to take words from #29:

Although rightful differences exist between us, the equal dignity of persons demands that a more humane and just condition of life be brought about. For excessive economic and social differences between the members of the one human family or population groups cause scandal, and militate against social justice, equity, the dignity of the human person, as well as social and international peace.

Paraphrase: If you look around this world, you'd never know that all human beings have equal dignity. Where is social justice, where is equity, where is the dignity of the human person, where is peace when we allow such

a gap between the rich and the poor, such excesses of wealth and poverty within this one human family?

This passage, reinforced in many places in *Gaudium et Spes*, echoes Jesus' confrontation with the wealthy man, in fact Jesus' confrontation with so many of us who have done a decent job of honoring father and mother, telling the truth, avoiding stealing and adultery. Something is lacking. Something essential.

What the council said 50 years ago about "excessive economic and social differences" has only become worse. Whether we look at the differences between the pay of the CEO and the pay of the employees, or look at the tens of millions in the United States without health insurance and those well insured, or look at the life expectancy in Haiti versus our own, we see these excessive differences. In these 50 years the United States has had a disastrous love affair with unbridled capitalism, a survival-of-the-fittest economics that set aside the ideas of equality and fairness embodied in the graduated income tax and the reforms that flowed from the Great Depression. With mantras about "a rising tide lifts all" and "trickle down," we absolved ourselves, once the 1960s had passed, from any concern for excessive differences in wealth even among ourselves. Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz writes:

The upper 1 percent of Americans are now taking in nearly a quarter of the nation's income every year. In terms of wealth rather than income, the top 1 percent control 40 percent. Their lot in life has improved considerably. Twenty-five years ago, the corresponding figures were 12 percent and 33 percent. One response might be to celebrate the ingenuity and drive that brought good fortune to these people, and to contend that a rising tide lifts all boats. That response would be misguided.



While the top 1 percent have seen their incomes rise 18 percent over the past decade, those in the middle have actually seen their incomes fall. For men with only high-school degrees, the decline has been precipitous—12 percent in the last quarter-century alone. All the growth in recent decades — and more — has gone to those at the top. (*Vanity Fair*, May 2011)

What we have done in our own society is writ large in the world by virtue of our military and economic power. The economic institutions we fostered, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank and such, became instruments for unregulated capitalism. They call it “success” when poor nations start to sell their water to private companies that sell it then to the people of the country, and when the wealth produced is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

Once the church had a preacher who took this on. Basil the Great he is called. One Sunday he was preaching on this same Gospel story, and we have his words. Consider an excerpt from that homily:

... if what you say is true, that you have kept from your youth the commandment of love and have given to everyone the same as to yourself, then how did you come by this abundance of wealth? Care for the needy requires the expenditure of wealth! When all share alike, disbursing their possessions among themselves, they each receive a small portion for their individual needs. Thus, those who love their neighbor as themselves possess nothing more than their neighbor; yet surely, you seem to have great possessions! How else can this be, but that you have preferred your own enjoyment to the consolation of the many? For the more you abound in wealth, the more you lack in love. If you had truly loved your neighbor, it would have occurred to you long ago to divest yourself of this wealth. But now your possessions are more a part

of you than the members of your own body, and separation from them is as painful as the amputation of one of your limbs. Had you clothed the naked, had you given your bread to the hungry, had your door been open to every stranger, had you been a parent to the orphan, had you made the suffering of every helpless person your own, what money would you have left, the loss of which to grieve?

This fourth-century Christian bishop’s passion was not simply about the individual. It was social. Think whether this description of Basil’s times sounds at all familiar: “Economic factors such as heavy taxation of the lower classes to support the military and the increasing concentration of land in the hands of the wealthy absentee landlords were sharpening the distinction between rich and poor” (C. Paul Schroeder, Introduction to *On Social Justice: St Basil the Great*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009). Basil’s preaching was about creating what we would call today a sustainable community rather than an economy driven by human greed, an economy that demands putting immense resources into police and military whose responsibility it is to protect the wealth and the wealthy.

Gaudium et Spes tends to say things more politely than Basil in his preaching, but it comes to the same thing. Consider #69:

... the right of having a share of earthly goods sufficient for oneself and one’s family belongs to everyone. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church held this opinion, teaching that men are obliged to come to the relief of the poor and to do so not merely out of their superfluous goods. If one is in extreme necessity, that person has the right to procure what is needed out of the riches of others. Since there are so many people prostrate with hunger in the world, this sacred council urges all, both individuals and governments, to remember the aphorism of the Fathers, “Feed

the minding of hunger, because if you have not fed him, you have killed him,” and really to share and employ their earthly goods, according to the ability of each, especially by supporting individuals or peoples with the aid by which they may be able to help and develop themselves.

Basil put it more directly:

Is not the person who strips another of clothing called a thief? And those who do not clothe the naked when they have the power to do so, should they not be called the same? The bread you are holding back is for the hungry, the clothes you keep put away are for the naked, the shoes that are rotting away with disuse are for those who have none, the silver you keep buried in the earth is for the needy. You are thus guilty of injustice toward as many as you might have aided, and did not.

And elsewhere he says (perhaps to those of us who aren’t so wealthy?):

Do not shrink from giving the little that you have. Do not prefer your own benefit to remedying the common distress. ... For whoever has the ability to remedy the suffering of others, but chooses rather to withhold aid out of selfish motives, may properly be judged the equivalent of a murderer.

Perhaps the greatest reason for limp and empty preaching, even if it’s full of clever lines, is that the preacher *has nothing to say*. But you have plenty to say. Figure out how to say it as strongly as Basil did. The systems confuse us, the media blind us, the hierarchy misguides us — but the Gospel and the council are our firm foundation. And the very liturgy our assembly celebrates, even without a word of preaching, is rehearsing us in the ways of a different economy.

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It's Probably Nothing

Train travel relaxes the suspicion of strangers

By MELISSA MUSICK NUSSBAUM

On the Thursday before Memorial Day, my husband and I boarded the California Zephyr bound for Chicago. We can't board at Union Station in Denver as that building is being renovated. What has been turned into the train station is a low concrete structure just across the street from Union. If Denver International Airport announces itself in great tent tops that seem to float across the western sky, the temporary train station hunkers down, crouching against Coors Field.

It's crowded when we arrive. People sit surrounded by their luggage and their food: water bottles, soda, fruit, chips and sandwiches. Nothing appears to satisfy the airline carry-on three-ounce limit above which, one assumes, everybody dies.

I listen for the ominous warnings emanating from hidden speakers: Not only is the moving walkway ending, but unaccompanied luggage will be seized and, one suspects, detonated by the bomb unit.

I listen for the subliminal message just below the airport broadcast, the message that we should all "Be afraid; be very afraid."

Instead, I see a single sign. It is my favorite sign from our endless war on terror. It says:

If You See Something,
Say Something.
It's Probably Nothing.

Amtrak had me at "It's probably nothing."

No one searches our luggage. No one swipes my packed underwear with an explosive-detecting eye makeup remover pad (or, at least, what looks to me like an explosive-detecting eye makeup remover pad).

We shuffle to our sleeping car and settle in our "roomette." Ventures to the bathroom at the end of the car, and to the dining room two cars over reveal compartment after compart-

ment of people sitting... and reading. Having conversation. Looking out the window at the eastern plains of Colorado. Playing cards.

Because there is no Internet reception and only sporadic cell phone reception (thanks, government inefficiency!) passengers are forced to fall back on non-battery-operated pursuits.

There are no televisions broadcasting minute-by-minute misery, and there is no piped-in music to mask the sounds of the wheels on the rails as we make our way into Nebraska and night.

Meals on the train are at tables set for four. For my husband and me, that means we shared three meals with strangers before we pulled into Chicago on Friday afternoon.

We ate with an Amtrak employee who discussed government subsidies for various means of transportation with my husband and possible future western rail lines with me and advised us both on menu choices.

We ate with an English couple traveling by train from San Francisco to New York City. She's an administrator with the British National Health Service and he's an engineer. They've opted for private health insurance and do not sing the praises of the single-payer system.

We ate with a woman whose speech is stroke-slowed, but whose thoughts are bright and quick. She is an Iowa native, returned home for good after many years away, a follower of Wendell Berry and Michael Pollan and an advocate for foods that are recognizable as comestibles rather than chemicals, and places where people root and remain.

The conversations were not always easy and there were as many points of disagreement among us as agreement, but our conversations were always civil, as well as lively. We learned some things and continued the conversations even after our tablemates parted and it was just

the two of us talking about whether a city building an airport counted as a government subsidy of the airline industry.

I'm not sure why bringing a group of people into the closed space of an airport or an airplane is atomizing, while bringing a group of people into the closed space of a train station or train observation car is not. I can only reflect on my experiences in both settings.

Perhaps it is the connection to the outside world. At one point during a meal we all sat and watched in wonder as we crossed the Mississippi River. Sailors on a barge waved at us as we passed. I have made that crossing many times, by car and by train, and I never tire of the sight. On a plane, only the captain's voice alerts me to what I could not otherwise identify far below.

Perhaps it is the speed at which a train travels. I can watch the towns passing, watch as the farmland of Illinois bleeds into the exurbs and then the suburbs and finally the city of Chicago. It is not the same sense of dislocation one feels after being sealed in a tube and whisked above the clouds from one place to another with nothing but sky in between.

Perhaps it is the experience of sleeping in close proximity, all of us vulnerable, barefooted and bed-headed as we pass on the way to the toilet. Perhaps it is sharing meals with strangers.

Perhaps it's the announced assumption of the official sign in the station. Yes, it says, we are strangers, and so initially suspicious of one another. But we're going to share a journey together and will most likely discover along the way that we mean no harm and may even intend good.

So, if you see something, say something. But it's probably nothing.

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Remembering Heaven

Sacrosanctum Concilium: *The first act of Vatican II*

By BARBARA O'NEILL

“The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” promulgated on December 4, 1963, was the first document out of the starting gate at Vatican II, and is perhaps the most influential of them all. Scripture scholar Fr. Carroll Stuhlmueller, in his book *Thirsting for the Lord* (Alba House, New York: 1977), says the Holy Spirit continued reforms that previous popes initiated by “directing John XXIII to give the schema on the liturgy priority over all other agendas at the Second Vatican Council. ... With great care he was making sure that the liturgy provided the context for considering everything else about the Church, Scripture included. The Christian must approach doctrine and life in the Bible in the same way as the Church — through the liturgy.”

A brief history might give some insight as to why the liturgy is to be taken so seriously.

The 1960s were a time of radical upheaval, in the United States and around the world. Major changes were taking place in the areas of politics, economics and technology. Globally, society was shaken by liberation movements that challenged colonialism, sexism and racism. The church, too, would encounter the need for transformation in response to new pastoral challenges.

Behind the scenes, studies in liturgical reform had long been underway. In the early part of the 19th century, the Liturgical Movement began with Dom Prosper Guéranger in the French Benedictine abbey at Solesmes and quickly spread to monasteries in Germany and Belgium and to theologians worldwide. Scholars examined the history of liturgical development in light of sources such as the Didache, written around the year 100, literally translated “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles.” Details regarding the conversion process and baptismal ritual provided a wealth of insight into



early church practices. “The Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus,” written in 215, provided a more extensive description and text of eucharistic liturgy. It is from this source, among others, that the Roman rite would develop.

Papal pronouncements spurred change. In 1903, Pope Pius X encouraged reform especially in the areas of music and frequent Communion, calling for increased participation by the faithful and lowering the age for first Communion to the “age of reason.” Pope Pius XII, in his 1947 encyclical *Mater Dei*, encouraged participation of the faithful in music and gesture.

Other world events raised new questions about the effectiveness of the liturgy on Catholic life. During World War II, some German theologians noted the tragic disconnect between the behavior of faithful German Catholics who participated in the Holocaust and also attended Mass and received Communion every Sunday.

Pope John XXIII, who was apostolic nuncio to Turkey during World War II, had witnessed and tried to prevent the deportation of Jews. He shared with many bishops and theologians the desire to see the liturgy take center stage and set the focus for all of Christian life.

The “Constitution” states:

This Sacred Council has several aims in view: it desires to impart an ever increasing vigor to the Christian life of the faithful, to adapt more suitably to the needs of our own times those institutions that are subject to change; to foster whatever can promote union among all who believe in Christ; to strengthen whatever

can help to call the whole of humanity into the household of the Church. The Council therefore sees particularly cogent reasons for undertaking the reform and promotion of the liturgy. (#1)

In its reform and promotion of the liturgy, the council permitted the use of the vernacular, encouraged the expression of local culture in liturgical celebration and restored the Liturgy of the Hours (Divine Office).

The Paschal Mystery — the life, death and resurrection of Jesus — stands at the center of the “Constitution.” Indeed, it is the heart of every liturgical celebration, the heart of our identity as church. Because of this, baptism is given primacy as the first sacrament from which all others are derived. We are immersed in the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection, anointed and strengthened to bear witness to it, and we participate at the eucharistic table to be nourished in the Christian spirit.

As we approach the 50th anniversary of Vatican II, I encourage you to read “The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.” What might happen if we break open this rich document at the beginning of every parish staff meeting or social justice meeting, every choir rehearsal or religious education session? How might this impact each ministry when it is seen in the light of liturgical spirituality?

The sacred liturgy is all about a living memory — a dangerous memory. We step out of earthly time and space and glimpse eternity; it is the bridge spanning heaven and earth. This holy gathering calls us to unity, nourishes us, challenges us and sends us forth to carry Christ’s love out into the world and make a difference in the lives of everyone we meet.

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The Psalms of October

God has done great things for us

By DENISE SIMEONE

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then we thought we were dreaming. ... Those who sow in tears will reap with cries of joy. Those who go forth weeping, carrying sacks of seed, will return with cries of joy, carrying their bundled sheaves. (Ps 126:1, 5-6)

Psalm 128, proclaimed on the Twenty-Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Oct. 7), is also sung every liturgical year on the feast of Holy Family. The verses convey a message of the blessings of family life. Most of us know that family life has its challenges, so we understand how blessed are partners who work together and love one another. The psalmist's hopeful wish for peace, prosperity and abundance — not only for the present generation, but for all generations to follow — is found also on our lips. We yearn for the time of God's blessings on our families, relationships and communities: "May the Lord bless us all the days of our lives" (v. 5). These familial relationships symbolize the faithful love God has for the people of the covenant. Human relationships may not be perfect, as the scriptural references to divorce remind us, but God's relational love offered to each of us is always perfect and unconditional.

Psalm 90 begins with the words: "Lord, you have been our refuge through all generations" (v. 1). Though it is a psalm of lament, today's verses bring us face to face with God's loving kindness and compassion. The psalmist recognizes the abundance of God's love and gives voice to the overwhelming joy it brings to believers. On the Twenty-Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Oct. 14), we sing the responsorial: "Fill us with your love, O Lord, and we will sing for joy" (v. 14). We ask to be filled with the source of love — with God — that our lives might resonate with joy.

If God is the place from which all life springs, then nothing can distract



If God is the place from which all life springs, then nothing can distract us; nothing can block us from the work of extending God's mission to the world.

us; nothing can block us from the work of extending God's mission to the world. In the Gospel story from Mark we hear Jesus tell the disciples, who have given up everything to follow him, that they have not done it in vain. They have offered their lives and made sacrifices for the sake of Jesus and the Gospel. They have done it to carry forward Jesus' mission of spreading the good news of God's reign. The disciples encountered the source of God's love and mercy in Jesus and accepted his invitation to follow. When we encounter the source of that love, we are compelled to follow and carry God's love into the world.

In the fifth stanza of Psalm 33, the psalmist contrasts God's greatness with other powers: "A king is not saved by a great army, nor a warrior delivered by great strength. Useless is the horse for safety; despite its great strength, it cannot be saved" (vv. 16-17). We don't hear those verses in today's responsorial psalm for the Twenty-Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Oct. 21), but the refrain expresses that we know God's greatness and power: "Lord, let your mercy be on

us, as we place our trust in you" (v. 22).

The question of entrusting ourselves to God is reflected in the Gospel story of James and John, who say to Jesus, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you" (Mark 10:35). What an outrageous demand: "Jesus, do whatever we ask. We know best. We are in charge." But how often do we also make those demands? We want to decide the places where God works. We want to decide to whom God's mercy is given. We want to decide whom God welcomes, loves and forgives. Do whatever we ask, God; follow our direction. But the psalm invites us to wait for the Lord, knowing that God is our shield, our help and our deliverance from evil and death. All we need to do is put ourselves into God's loving hands.

If you have ever felt lost and uncertain how to find your way back; if you have ever been blind to a life choice or a relationship; if you have ever felt forsaken, trapped or estranged, then the readings of the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Oct. 28) may soothe your memories and fears.

Jeremiah tells us that God will gather the people and bring them back — the blind, lame, lost and exiled. There will be shouts of joy and praise. This praise is echoed in the psalm refrain: "The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy" (Ps 126:3). God's people will be restored to life, peace and joy. The Gospel about restoring the sight of blind Bartimaeus is also a story of being restored into relationship with Jesus. By following Jesus on the way, he becomes part of a wider community of disciples. Bartimaeus' courage, witness and faith calm our anxieties and hesitations. We can proclaim, "The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad indeed" (v. 3).

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Vatican II Redux

The council's documents send us forth

By PEG EKERDT

The year was 1972. I had just been hired as a campus minister at Marquette University, and my boss, Jim Sauv , S.J., handed me a copy of the documents of Vatican II. It was a paperback version, but I nonetheless felt something akin to awe as Jim presented the book. It was a commissioning of a kind, and it was clear that this book was a sacred offering.

I had heard about the work of the Second Vatican Council and its efforts to allow the breath of the Spirit to renew the church. Aggiornamento was the buzzword of the day. And change was no threat. But this day marked my formal introduction to the documents. It took me some years to read the 16 main documents in their entirety, and only over time did I grasp their import.

But their effect in my life was immediate. "The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy's" directive that the faithful should be led to "fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations" (#14) inspired the 10 p.m. campus Masses where we sat on a shag-carpeted floor, gathered around a small wooden altar to listen to the word of God, sang with joyful abandon and added our own two cents to the homily. Never mind that when my father visited he believed that he needed to find another Sunday Mass to fulfill his weekly obligation. Those liturgies provided an initial experience of vibrant and participative ritual prayer that formed my faith and inspired a lifelong belief in the power of liturgy to change hearts and transform lives.

"The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" sent us out of church buildings and into the world to serve the needs of our brothers and sisters. Perhaps there is no more famous statement than the first sentence that gives this document its Latin name, *Gaudium et Spes*: "The joys and hopes, the grief and



There is great value in discussing these documents not for the sake of reminiscence but for the sake of the life of the church.

anguish of the people of our time, especially the poor or afflicted, are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. ... The community of people united in Christ ... cherish a ... deep solidarity with the human race." This document made service on behalf of the most vulnerable an essential dimension of faith. Its formative effect endures in every program of service that links faith and justice and in every action of solidarity that pursues the common good. In short, it endures whenever we, who are the people of God, work to create the kingdom here on earth, fostering a social order "founded in truth, built on justice and enlightened by love" (#26).

"The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" spoke directly to the laity in a way previously unknown: "The laity are given this special vocation to make the church present and fruitful ... it is only through them it can become the salt of the earth. ... [They] are the living instruments of the mission of the church itself" (#33). The document broadened the understanding of the role of the laity as the church welcomed the laity to mission. It is an invitation that has not been rescinded

and begs a response.

How then do we best honor this anniversary of 50 years?

Some months ago, our parish faith formation team read and discussed a small segment of the "Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy." Many were reading the document for the first time and prefaced their comments with the disclaimer: "I don't really know much about the documents of Vatican II." And then they proceeded to talk about liturgies that had moved their hearts in ways never to be forgotten. They could not quote any document, but they knew the meaning and benefit of fully conscious and active participation in liturgy. All these years later, the truth of that document was revealed in the words of those gathered around the table. It reminded me that there is great value in discussing these documents not for the sake of reminiscence but for the sake of the life of the church. For our discussion that night was Spirit-filled.

We have been given this anniversary to enliven and commission our people as once we ourselves were commissioned. We have been given this time to listen for the whisper or recognize the bold movement of the Spirit in our days. We have been given this time not to ignore the diversity of opinion that exists about the merit of Vatican II, but to acknowledge it and continue to discern the presence of the Spirit in our midst. We will know we are on the right track when the fruits (Galatians 5:22) of the Spirit — love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control — shine in our lives and the life of the church.

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Walking the Walk with Jesus

Social consciousness flows from empathy based on experience

By RHONDA MISKA

The Gospel stories for the Sundays in Ordinary Time include accounts of Jesus, accompanied by his followers, traveling through Galilee teaching, preaching and healing. One way to enter into these scriptures is the Ignatian practice of engaging the imagination. Place yourself in the scene. Can you smell the dust kicked up by fellow travelers and their pack animals? Can you feel the bright Mediterranean sun in your eyes, the rocks beneath your feet on the path, the thirst from the midday heat? Many stories in scripture invite us to picture such journeys: the Israelites en route to the Promised Land, the Holy Family's flight to Egypt, Jesus' way of the cross.

While I have often sought to place myself in a scene described in scripture, my recent trip to Arizona's Sonoran Desert provided a firsthand experience of traveling on foot through rugged terrain.

As a part of *Celebration's* liturgical conference "Eucharist Without Borders," held in Rio Rico, Arizona, last April, I had the opportunity to go with the humanitarian organization "Humane Borders" to some of the desert trails traveled by undocumented immigrants entering the United States from Mexico. Though I was wearing sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat, the sun was intense and there was no shade afforded by the giant saguaro cactus, the scrubby creosote bushes or the dramatically named "Crucifixion Thorn" shrub. The land was dry and rough, and we had to help each other not to slip and fall as we climbed up a hill with the rocks moving beneath our feet. The only water in sight was a small, stagnant pond for the grazing cattle on a nearby ranch. The landscape is starkly beautiful, but unforgiving to anyone who would be there for a length of time.

Along the paths, we came across reminders of human presence: the



The Gospel images of Jesus' long trek from Galilee to Jerusalem invite us to take a step back and engage our imaginations. Can we seek to understand the motivation driving migrants who make such a risky journey? Can we imagine what it would take for us to leave our home and family, country and culture?

insole of a tennis shoe, a toothbrush. Evidence that this rugged land is traversed. A more sobering witness to the migrant presence was a small altar that has been erected by Humane Borders volunteers at a site where several migrant bodies were found last year. What will become of those who make this journey? Some will be apprehended by the Border Patrol and deported after a quick and perfunctory trial in Tucson under Operation Streamline. Some, like those whose lives are commemorated by the altar we visited, will perish from exhaustion or dehydration, adding to the more than 2,300 known deaths in the Sonoran Desert since 2000.

Then there are those who will beat the odds, who will survive the trek and

build a new life in the United States: finding work, learning English, building community here while striving to stay connected to family and friends in their home countries. A 2011 report published by the Pew Hispanic Center placed the number of undocumented immigrants in the United States at 11.2 million, comprising 3.7 percent of the nation's population. They can be found in the kitchens of many restaurants and on construction sites painting or pounding nails. They are the ones cleaning hotel rooms and caring for children. They are the ones who might be sitting in the next pew at Sunday Mass, or even up front, singing in the choir or serving as eucharistic ministers.

Our Catholic faith connects us to Jesus, who traveled the roads of Galilee, as we hear in the Gospel readings of Ordinary Time. That same faith also connects us to each other and to countless others who travel difficult and inhospitable roads. We are connected with those people Jesus aligned himself to in a special way: those who hunger, those who thirst, those who are strangers. Before we consider what it would mean for us — as individuals and as parish communities — to respond to the immigrant presence in our church and our nation, the Gospel images of Jesus' long trek from Galilee to Jerusalem invite us to take a step back and engage our imaginations.

Can we seek to understand the motivation driving migrants who make such a risky journey? Can we imagine what it would take for us to leave our home and family, country and culture? Can we imagine the emotions that accompany such a journey? Can we imagine walking a mile in their shoes?

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What Is Liturgy?

Our worship is an encounter with God in the mystery of the Trinity

By JAMES SMITH

What are we doing when we are doing liturgy? Or, in psychological terms, what do we experience during worship?

Every human experience, including liturgical experience, has three components: recognition, participation and interpretation. Very often they happen simultaneously, but we may separate them to better understand each distinct phase.

The first thing we experience is simply recognition, or sensation. We see the tree, we hear the sound, we feel the touch, we smell the odor, we taste the coffee. It is simply a matter of our senses responding to various stimuli. On that primitive, physical level, our experience is like that of any animal.

But since we are human, we do not only react — we participate, get involved with the object of our interest. We inhale deeply or hold our nose; we peer closely or we close our eyes; we approach or withdraw. Animals do this by instinct, automatically knowing what helps or harms them, increases or decreases their pleasure. But we humans have a choice about whether to participate in an experience and how intensely to get involved in any experience.

The third aspect of human experience is the interpretation: What are we to make of this particular event? Is this phone call an intrusion or a welcome new contact? Is that smile an invitation or a warning? Is that noise the footsteps of a friend or a burglar? Unless we give an experience some explanation, some minimal meaning, it has little impact on our life.

These same psychological aspects apply to our experience in liturgy. The first and last are simple enough and do not call for much interpretation. First, we recognize, acknowledge the experience. That is, we say words, sing hymns, kneel and stand. These are simply physical elements. Third, we



Liturgy is not merely a symbolic, ritual engagement with the real world.

Liturgy is the deepest meaning of the real world.

interpret the experience. We realize that we are worshiping God, connecting with God, celebrating Mass.

It is the middle component, the participation in the liturgy, that needs further attention. And not merely on psychological grounds, but on religious grounds, under the aspect of prayer and community and Christ and the Blessed Trinity.

Participation in our liturgy occurs on three different levels. Our participation may involve various degrees of intensity on each level. And, once again, they are simultaneous aspects that can be separated for better understanding.

Our first level of liturgical participation is participation with other members of the congregation. It may be merely physical, just the physical fact of being in the same room, sensing each other's presence, saying the same prayers and performing the same actions. Or it could be the spiritual activity of praying with one mind and heart, worshipping as a single body with Christ at the head.

Which leads us to the second level: our participation with Christ. We realize that we are not praying alone,

and we pray with more than just the other people next to us that day. We believe that whenever more than one is praying, there is Christ. Our worship is not just a Bible service designed by ourselves — it is the official worship of the church. The prayer leader is not delegated by us but by the church. The prayers are not personal, pious sentiments but the universal expression of the church.

The more we get involved in liturgy, the more we recognize that the priest is just a stand-in. Christ is the celebrant and we are all concelebrants. We understand that if we bring our hopes and fears to the altar, they are joined to the hopes and fears of Christ, that Christ accepts them as meaningful parts of his own life and death and resurrection, that our worship has inestimable value.

We finally realize that our liturgy is not ultimately about Christ, but about God. As magnificent as our participation with Christ is, Christ remains the mediator between God and us. Christ takes our prayer with his to the Father. In our liturgy, you and I actually participate with God. We participate in the inner life of the Blessed Trinity. God's own Spirit enables us to offer our prayers through God's Son to his Father.

Authentic liturgy — participation with each other and with Christ and with the Holy Trinity — is the highest human experience possible. Liturgy is not merely a symbolic, ritual engagement with the real world. Liturgy is the deepest meaning of the real world, the most intense experience of the real world that is available to us. Liturgy is the lens through which God sees the world. And it is the best lens through which we can experience the world as it really is.

Fr. James Smith is pastor of St. Matthias Church in Columbus, Ohio, and a longtime contributor of homilies and other reflections to *Celebration*.

Singing Communion Antiphons

We sing the word at Mass

By J. MICHAEL McMAHON

Bible study is a popular faith-enriching activity among Catholics, and indeed Christians across the denominations. Many believers take time regularly to read the Bible on their own and to participate in groups or classes to deepen their understanding. Whether or not they participate in these activities, however, most Catholics encounter the word of God primarily in a liturgical context, and especially in the celebration of the Eucharist.

Much of the time people are probably unaware that they are using the words of scripture during large portions of the Mass. A careful look at the words we sing and say at Mass shows that the liturgy is permeated with the biblical word. Many of our familiar texts of the Mass, including the sung parts, are drawn from or based on portions of scripture, including “The Lord be with you,” “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill,” “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of hosts,” “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world” and “Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof.” Both the scriptures and the liturgy reveal the presence and action of the living Word of God, Jesus Christ, and so it stands to reason that so much of the liturgy’s language should be drawn from the Bible.

The Second Vatican Council directed composers to draw primarily on biblical and liturgical texts when choosing texts for musical compositions to be used at worship.¹ Pope Benedict XVI recently applied this same principle for the selection of music to be sung at the liturgy: “As part of the enhancement of the word of God in the liturgy, attention should also be paid to the use of song at the times called for by the particular rite. Preference should be given to songs which are of clear biblical inspiration and which express, through the



Singing is of course integral to the celebration of God’s word. The acclamation before the Gospel (“Alleluia” except during Lent) and the responsorial psalm, which is both a proclamation of the word and a response to it, are the primary sung elements.

harmony of music and words, the beauty of God’s word.”² Evaluation of new and existing repertoires and the selection of music for the rites might appropriately be grounded in a preferential option for biblically based liturgical songs.

Not only does the biblical word help to shape the words of our prayer, but the liturgy is itself “the home of the word... the privileged setting in which God speaks to us in the midst of our lives.”³ In the Liturgy of the Word, Christ is present and speaking to the members of his body. The connection between Word and Eucharist is so close that at Mass we are engaged in one single act of worship. The same Christ who reveals himself to us in the spoken word also breaks the bread and opens our eyes to his saving presence

in our midst. The placement of ambo and altar represent the table of God’s word and Christ’s body⁴ at which we are nourished for our life in the world.

Singing is of course integral to the celebration of God’s word. The acclamation before the Gospel (“Alleluia” except during Lent) and the responsorial psalm, which is both a proclamation of the word and a response to it, are the primary sung elements. Other parts may be sung as well, including the acclamation that concludes the readings, the dialogue before and after the Gospel, the creed, the prayers of the faithful, and even the Gospel and readings themselves. The principle of progressive solemnity dictates that decisions regarding the extent of singing and the choice of parts to be sung should depend on the solemnity of the feast, season or occasion, also taking into account the nature and makeup of the assembly.

Musicians have an important role to play in fostering the active participation of the assembly in listening to God’s word, praying together with the words of scripture, and above all in opening their hearts to the word so that it can transform the gathered community for a life of discipleship in the world.

Endnotes

1. Second Vatican Council, “Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), no. 121.
2. Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, no. 70.
3. *Verbum Domini*, no. 52.
4. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 51; General Instruction of the Roman Missal, third typical ed., no. 28.

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By J. MICHAEL McMAHON

October 2012

27TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 7, 2012

Psalm of the Day: Ps (127) 128

Blest Are Those Who Love You (Haugen) RS 173/GC 125/GC2 70/G3 86/W4 101/CBW 628/WC 441

Happy Are Those Who Fear the Lord (Kreutz) PSC 68

How Happy Are You PSL B-175/SS 374

Like Olive Branches, ref. 2 (Deiss) PMB 333/WC 690

May the Lord Bless and Protect Us (Gelineau/Murray) W3 944/W4 1188/RS 172/LPGG 949

May the Lord Bless and Protect Us (Guimont) GC2 997/G3 1171/LPMG 140

May the Lord Bless and Protect Us (Stahl) PMB 171

May the Lord Bless Us (Alstott) BB p. 218

May the Lord Bless Us (Cooney) PRM B97/PMB 721

May the Lord Bless Us (Haugen/Kodner) RS 173/GC 125/GC2 70/G3 86/W4 101

May the Lord Bless Us (Hunstiger) SS 606

May the Lord Bless Us (Schiavone) LP 172/JS 1027

May the Lord Bless Us (Somerville) CBW 191

May the Lord Bless Us (Stafford) LPGA B86/WS 202

O Blessed Are Those (Inwood) MIBB 824/JS 104/GP 273

Que Dios Nos Bendiga (Grajeda) GP



274

Suggested Common Psalms

Ps (18) 19: Lord, You Have the Words

Ps (26) 27: The Lord Is My Light and My Salvation

Songs for the Liturgy

A Spendthrift Lover Is the Lord (1,G) W3 597

Bwana Awabariki/May the Lord Bless You (1,G) LMGM 155/GC 587/RS 720

Come Away to the Skies (1) GC 440

Come, My Children (G) PSL B-176/SS 244

Come, My Way, My Truth, My Life (1,Ps,G) W3 569/W4 662/RS 717/GC 577/WC 830/JS 693

Covenant Hymn (1,G) RS 904/GC 797/GC2 798/G3 904

For the Beauty of the Earth (1,G) JS 642/W3 557/W4 632/WC 957/CBW 531/GP 704/MIBB 618/RS 697/GC 572/GC2 548/G3 633/PMB 517/WS 775/SS 909

God, beyond All Names (1,G) JS 634/GC 491/MIBB 423/GP 667

God, in the Planning (1,G) GC 868/GC2 858/RS 944/W4 984/SS 1097

God Is Love (1,G) GC 629/GC2

608/G3 699/JS 749/CBW 473/MIBB 463,472/RS 744/GP 647/SS 886

God, Whose Love Is Reigning O'er Us (1,G) JS 613

Holy Spirit, Lord of Love (1,G) CBW 417

*How Happy You Who Fear the Lord (1,Ps,G) PMB 336/WC 696

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (G) W3 510/W4 585/GC 507/GC2 513/G3 593/RS 651/PMB 404/WC 795/WS 628//MI-BB 540/SS 887

Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You, v 4 (1,G) W3 525/W4 611/WC 918/GP 693/LMGM 197/MIBB 556/RS 669/GC 528/GC2 520/G3 614/CBW 511/JS 617/PMB 497/WS 742/SS 901

*Let the Children Come to Me (G) PMB 411/WC 812/WS 643

Like a Child Rests (G) JS 734/MIBB 489/GP 635

Like a Seal on Your Heart (1,G) GP 466

*Lord, All Things Are Guided Still (E) IH 65

Lord of Our Growing Years (G) W3 556

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (1,G) W3 588/W4 642/MIBB 468/GP 640/JS 746/RS 743/GC 622/GC2 613/G3 641/CBW 625/PMB 431/WC 832/WS 677/SS 934

Love Is the Sunlight (1) RS 946/GC 866/GC2 855/G3 967

Love One Another (G) GC 630/RS 745/W4 693/GP 645/JS 752/WC 834/WS 672/MI-BB 464

Love Which Never Ends (1,G) JS 573/GP 465

Lover of Us All (1) GC 633/GP 643

Make Us One (1,G) PMB 392/WC

KEY: * = Quotes or makes direct reference to one of the scripture readings or antiphons. E = Related to entrance antiphon. 1 = Related to first reading.

Ps = Related to responsorial psalm. 2 = Related to second reading. G = Related to Gospel. C = Related to Communion antiphon.

Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, Publications Service, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1: CBW=Catholic Book of Worship III (1994).

G.I.A. Publications, Inc. (GIA), 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638: CCS=Cantor/Congregation Series; G3=Gather, Third Edition (2011); GC=Gather Comprehensive (1994); GC2=Gather Comprehensive, Second Edition (2004); HG=Hymns for the Gospels (2001); LMGM=Lead Me, Guide Me (1987); LPGG=Lectionary Psalms: Grail/Gelineau (1998); LPMG=Lectionary Psalms: Michel Guimont (1998); PCY=Psalms for the Church Year (1983, 1988, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1995); PST=Psalter (1990); RS=RitualSong (1996); SI=Songs of Israel (1971, 1983); W3=Worship-Third Edition (1986);

W4=Worship-Fourth Edition (2011). **Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN:** BFW=By Flowing Waters (1999); PFS=Psalms for Feasts and Seasons (1990); PSL=Psallite, Year A (2007); PJ=Psalms for the Journey (1991); SS=Sacred Song (2011). **OCP, 5536 N.E. Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213:** BB=Breaking Bread (2012); GP=Glory and Praise, Second Ed. (1997); JS=Journeysongs-Second Edition (2003); LP=A Lectionary Psalter: John Schiavone (2003);

MI=Music Issue (2012); PSC=Psalms and Selected Canticles (1983). **World Library Publications (WLP), 3708 River Road, Suite 400, Franklin Park, IL 601312158:** LPGA=Lectionary Psalms and Gospel Acclamations, Year A (2010); PMB=Peoples Mass Book (2003); PRM=Psalms and Ritual Music, Year A; SO=Sing Out (1994); WC=We Celebrate (2011); WS=Word and Song (2012).

PREPARATION: MUSIC



781/WS 626
May God Bless You (1,Ps,G) JS 566/
RS 941/GC2 859/G3 971/MIBB
681/GP 467
May Love Be Ours (Ps,G) GC 623/
GC2 612/W3 589/RS 748/JS 564/
GP 637
May We Praise You (1,G) GP 678/
GC 519
Not for Tongues of Heaven's Angels
(Ps,G) GC 623/GC2 612/G3 709/
W3 589/W4 701/RS 748/JS 564/
GP 637/WC 692
O Perfect Love (1,G) WC 697
One Bread, One Body (1,G,C) GP
499/GC 830/GC2 813/G3 932/W4
931/MIBB 357/LMGM 139/JS 820/
RS 915/WC 661/WS 518
Our Father, by Whose Name (G) W3
570/RS 961
Praise to Our God, Creation's Lord
(G) SS 914
Precious Lord, Take My Hand (2)
LMGM 162/GC 874/MIBB 702/RS
754/GC2 847/G3 955/W4 980/WC
854/GP 478/PMB 448/WS 705
Priestly People, v 2 (2) PMB 383/
WC 761/WS 617
Seed, Scattered and Sown (C) RS
918/GC 834/GC2 830/JS 811/GP
516/MI-BB 348
*Sing a Happy Alleluia, v 3 (G) W4
638
Sing a New Church, vss 23 (1,G)
MIBB 409/GP 572/GC2 644/G3
743/W4 727
Stewards of Earth (1) PMB 509/
WC 941/WS 759/CBW 634/SS 947
The Head That Once Was Crowned
with Thorns (2) W3 464/RS 591
This Is My Will (G) W3 590
We Praise You, vss 6,7 (Ps) GP 677/
GC 541/GC2 540/MIBB 565/RS
694/JS 626
We Will Serve the Lord -- Haas (1,G)
GC 869/GC2 652/G3 753
What Wondrous Love Is This (2) W3
600/W4 641/WC 732/GP 642/JS
755/MIBB 465/RS 749/GC 627/
GC2 614/G3 642/PMB 253/WS
453/SS 932
When Love Is Found (G) W3 745/
W4 982/GC 865/GC2 856/G3 966/
WC 694/RS 942/CBW 629/JS 568/
PMB 337/WS 575/MI-BB 685/SS
1098
Wondrous Is Your Name (1,Ps) CBW
632
*You Have Given Everything Its Place

(E) PSL B-174/SS 484

28TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 14, 2012

Psalm of the Day: Ps (89) 90
Fill Us with Your Love (Alstott) BB
p. 221
Fill Us with Your Love (Alstott/
Young) CBW 194
Fill Us with Your Love (Batastini)
W3 947/W4 67,1191/RS 120/LPGG
952
Fill Us with Your Love (Bolduc) PRM
B98/LPGA B87/PMB 724/WS 204
Fill Us with Your Love (Bonighton)
JS 65
Fill Us with Your Love (Guimont)
GC2 956/G3 1174/LPMG 143
Fill Us with Your Love (Hunstiger)
SS 566
Fill Us with Your Love (Kogut) PCY10
46
Fill Us with Your Love (Schiavone)
LP 175/JS 1030
Fill Us with Your Love (Stewart) GC
84/RS 121
When You Fill Us with Your Word
PSL B-178/SS 462
Suggested Common Psalm
Ps (26) 27: The Lord Is My Light
and My Salvation
Songs for the Liturgy
A Follower of Christ (G) LMGM 117
All Glory Is Yours (1,G) GC2 524/
G3 605/SS 900
All That Is Hidden (G) JS 762/MIBB
521/GP 585/GC2 654/G3 746
All That We Have (G) GP 618/GC
601
Blest Are They (1,G) GC 659/GC2
636/G3 735/W4 721/MIBB 635/RS
774/CBW 522/WC 946/WS 768/SS
950
Blest Are We (1,2,G) PMB 409/G3
789/WC 774/WS 623
Center of My Life (G) JS 697/MIBB
446/GC 598/GC2 580/G3 679/W4
678/GP 593
Change Our Hearts (G) GP 349/GC
394/GC2 414/G3 493/MIBB 672
Christ's Church Shall Glory in His
Power (G) W3 616/RS 777/SS 793
Come with Me into the Fields (G)
GP 553
Embrace My Way and Cross (G)
GC2 698

For God Risk Everything! (G) W4
778
For the Life of the World (G) GC
801/GC2 792/G3 901
*From the Depths of Sin and Sad-
ness (E) WC 535
God Has Chosen Me (G) JS 831/
GC 682/GC2 669/G3 761/W4 781/
MIBB 379/GP 546
Here I Am, Lord -- Schutte (G) GP
542/WC 804/GC 686/GC2 671/G3
777/W4 783/JS 832/LMGM 283/
MIBB 375/RS 802/CBW 520/PMB
406/WS 641/SS 971
Hold Me in Life (1,G) JS 702/GC
599/MIBB 447/GP 596
*Holy Wisdom, Lamp of Learning
(1,G) JS 774/MI-BB 528
I Bind My Heart (G) GC 668/RS 790
I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (G)
LMGM 118
*I Loved Wisdom (1) PSL B-179/
SS 304
I Say "Yes," Lord (G) GC 597/GC2
581/G3 676/RS 722
I Sing the Mighty Power of God (2)
W3 502/W4 572/MIBB 421/GP
668/RS 633/CBW 541/WC 925/JS
635/PMB 351/WS 749/SS 880
I Surrender All (G) LMGM 235
I Will Choose Christ (G) GP 459/MI-
BB 527/GC2 683/G3 802/JS 775
*If You Should Count (E) IH 66
In This Place Your Word Is Planted
(1,2,G) W4 595
Jesus, the Lord (G) GP 370/JS 484/
GC 418/GC2 403/G3 491/MIBB
744/RS 574/CBW 432
Lead Me, Lord (G) JS 659/MIBB
636
Lord Jesus, We Must Know You (1,G)
CBW 517
Lord, to Whom Shall We Go (2,G)
GP 663
Lord, We Hear Your Word with Glad-
ness (2) CBW 444
Lord, When You Came/Pescador
de Hombres (G) JS 763/GC 696/
GC2 678/G3 781/W4 760/LMGM
116/MIBB 522/RS 817/WC 790/GP
580/WS 640/SS 989
O God of Wisdom, God of Truth (1,G)
CBW 649
*O God, Our Help in Ages Past (Ps)
W3 579/W4 689/CBW 644/MIBB
427/GP 613/LMGM 230/JS 705/
WC 842/RS 735/GC 614/GC2 588/
G3 688/PMB 435/WS 687/SS 926
O Holy Spirit, Enter In (1,G) WC 751

PREPARATION: MUSIC



O Spirit All-Embracing (1,G) W4 536
 O the Beautiful Treasures (1,G) W3 689
 *Out of the Depths (E) JS 107/PMB 241/WC 537/WS 369
 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness (2) CBW 582/G3 625
 Priestly People, v 1 (1) PMB 383/WC 761/WS 617
 Receive in Your Heart (2) WC 653
 Remember Your Love (Ps) GP 474/GC 881/GC2 851/G3 961/MIBB 675/RS 550/JS 561
 *Restless Is the Heart (1,Ps) MIBB 691/GP 483
 Seek the Lord (1,G) GP 351/RS 540/GC2 395/G3 663/JS 558/MIBB 674
 Seek Ye First (G) W3 580/W4 663/JS 720/MIBB 436/RS 728/GC 615/GC2 600/G3 658/WC 837/GP 608/PMB 433/WS 679
 Servant Song—McGargill (G) GC 683/JS 837/MIBB 372/GP 550
 Show Us the Path of Life, v 3 (1,G) GC 645
 Song of Good News (1,2,G) WC 776/WS 622
 Song of the Chosen (2,G) GC 813
 Spirit of Jesus, If I Love My Neighbor (G) HG 32
 Take, O Take Me As I Am (G) GC2 692/G3 795/W4 767/SS 974
 Thanks to God Whose Word Was Spoken (2) W3 514
 The Love of the Lord (G) GC 702/GC2 680/G3 792/RS 814/W4 776
 The Summons (G) GC 700/GC2 687/G3 790/RS 811/W4 773/WC 805/WS 651/MI-BB 380/SS 988
 The Word Is in Your Heart (2) GC 518
 This Day God Gives Me, vss 23 (1,G) W3 673/W4 850/WC 201/JS 2/GC 757/GC2 749/G3 856/CBW 650/RS 4,856/MIBB 641/GP 727/PMB 2/WS 34/SS 1023
 Thy Strong Word Didst Cleave the Darkness (2) W3 511
 Two Fishermen (G) W3 633/W4 774/RS 812/GC 688/GC2 693/G3 798
 Weary of All Trumpeting (G) W3 635
 Wisdom, My Road (1,G) GC2 500/G3 583/WC 847
 Wisdom's Feast (1,G) PMB 298/WC 618/WS 520
 You Are Called to Tell the Story (G)

GC 680/GC2 675/G3 774/RS 800/W4 784
 *You Are Rich in Mercy (E) PSL B-177/SS 481
 You Are the Way (1,G) CBW 441/W4 682/PMB 365/WC 629/WS 590
 Your Word Went Forth (2) RS 655
 Your Words and Spirit and Life (2) JS 680/MI-BB 577

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 21, 2012

Psalm of the Day: Ps (32) 33
 Let Your Love Be upon Us PSL B-181/SS 341
 Let Your Mercy Be on Us, vss 1,2,4 (Haugen) GC 45/GC2 32/G3 44/W4 45/RS 66/SS 640
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Alstott) BB p. 223
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Arnold) JS 36
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Dufford) GP 196/MI-BB 774
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Folk) CBW 100
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Guimont) RS 68/GC2 914/G3 1177/LPMG 146
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Hughes) PRM B99/LPGA B88/PMB 727/WS 206
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Hunstiger) SS 526
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Proulx/Gelineau) W3 950/W4 1194/LPGG 794
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Schiavone) LP 178/JS 1033
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be upon Us (Warner) PMB 145/WC 401
 Lord, Let Your Mercy Be on Us (Willcock) PJ 2
Suggested Common Psalm
 Ps (62) 63: My Soul Is Thirsting for You
Songs for the Liturgy
 A Follower of Christ (G) LMGM 117
 All That Is Hidden (G) JS 762/MIBB 521/GP 585/GC2 654/G3 746
 Amén. El Cuerpo de Cristo (G) JS 824/W4 934/G3 912/MI-BB 338
 At the Name of Jesus (1,G) W3 499/W4 561,563/G3 569/CBW 427/JS 400,483/MIBB 749,752/GP 424/WS 598

Bread for the World (G) JS 810/GC 827/MIBB 349/GP 528
 Bread of Life (G) GP 498,520,522/JS 819/MIBB 323,331,367/CBW 597
 By Gracious Powers (1,G) W3 577
 Center of My Life (1,G) JS 697/MIBB 446/GC 598/GC2 580/G3 679/W4 678/GP 593
 Christ, Be Our Light (G) GP 656/JS 661/GC2 512/G3 590/W4 584/WC 937/WS 766/MI-BB 542/SS 888
 Draw Near and Take the Body of Your Lord (2) W3 732/W4 935,947/JS 472/PMB 293/GC2 829/G3 935/WC 624/WS 521
 Embrace My Way and Cross (G) GC2 698
 For the Life of the World (G) GC 801/GC2 792/G3 901
 Gift of Finest Wheat, v 5 (G) W3 736/W4 939/CBW 603/MIBB 327/LMGM 136/GP 525/JS 803/WC 640/RS 912/GC 815/GC2 816/G3 940/PMB 300/WS 536/SS 1086
 God Remembers (1,2) GC2 572/G3 669
 God, Whose Love in Jesus Found Us (G) CBW 501
 *Guard Me as the Apple of Your Eye (E) PSL B-180/SS 282
 *I Call upon You, Lord (E) IH 67
 I Have Decided to Follow Jesus (G) LMGM 118
 In the Cross of Christ (1,2,) RS 221/GC2 436/G3 515/SS 818
 Jesu, Jesu (G) W3 431/W4 487/GP 361/JS 402/LMGM 33/RS 564/GC 409/GC2 429/G3 505/PMB 407/WC 784/BB 143/WS 653
 Jesus, the Lord (1,2,G) GP 370/JS 484/GC 418/GC2 403/G3 491/MIBB 744/RS 574/RS 574/CBW 432
 Jesus, Wine of Peace (1) GC 817/GC2 804
 Lead Me, Guide Me (2) LMGM 168/GC 574/GC2 555/G3 656/RS 712/W4 657/PMB 397/WC 791/WS 630/MI-BB 403/SS 334
 Lift High the Cross (1,G) W3 704/W4 885/CBW 435/GP 444/JS 522/MIBB 732/WC 767/RS 884/GC 791/GC2 785/G3 881/PMB 393/WS 634/SS 1054
 Lord, Help Us Walk Your Servant Way (G) W4 779/HG 150/SS 795
 Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (1,G) W3 630/W4 780/JS 840/

PREPARATION: MUSIC



MIBB 584/RS 793/GC 681/GC2 668/G3 764/CBW 507/WC 943/GP 557/PMB 508/WS 760/SS 972
Make Us True Servants (G) PMB 501/WC 936/WS 764/SS 992
Now We Remain, vss 34 (1,G) GC 694/GC2 696/G3 785/W4 764/WC 652/MIBB 523/RS 813/WS 537/SS 983
O Christ, What Can It Mean for Us? (G) W4 567
O Living Bread from Heaven (2) PMB 546/WC 991,995
*O Love of God Incarnate (1,G) JS 410
Our Blessing Cup (1,G) GP 513/JS 89,91,92/MIBB 322,814,815/RS 155/GC2 61,63/G3 78,79/W4 91/PMB 167/WC 438,636/WS 363,553/SS 520
Pan de Vida (G) JS 813/GC 848/GC2 811/G3 920/W4 925/MIBB 345/RS 909/WC 649/GP 500/WS 531
Priestly People, v 8 (2) PMB 383/WC 761/WS 617
Pues Si Vivimos/If We Are Living (G) RS 727/GC 666/GC2 650/G3 756/W4 754/PMB 408/WC 810/WS 658/SS 966
Receive in Your Heart (G) WC 653
Service (G) GP 550
*Shelter Me, O God (E) JS 724/GP 626/RS 765/GC 636/GC2 634/G3 717/MI-BB 494
*Since Our Great High Priest, Christ Jesus (2) W4 531
*Song of the Chosen (Ps) GC 813
Take Up Your Cross (G) W3 634/W4 761/CBW 353/LMGM 50/JS 524/MI-BB 731/RS 808,810/GC 698/GC2 688,690/G3 787,801/WC 768/GP 586/PMB 238/WS 449/SS 985
The Church of Christ in Every Age (G) W3 626/W4 785/JS 843/RS 803/GC2 665/G3 765/WC 940/SS 979
*The Greatest among You (G) PSL B-182/SS 421
The Lord Is Near (2) JS 719/GC 609,619/GC2 599/G3 692/GP 606
The Name of God (1,G) GC 110/GC2 62/G3 80/RS 152
The Servant Song – Gillard (G) GC 669/GC2 661/G3 751/RS 788/JS 829/PMB 413/WC 814/WS 655/MI-BB 374/SS 967
The Spirit Sends Us Forth (G) JS 835/W4 787/MI-BB 384

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (Ps) W3 595,596/W4 645/JS 748/MIBB 466/RS 742/GC 626/GC2 603/G3 644/CBW 443/WC 682/GP 639/PMB 322/WS 560/SS 935
'Tis the Gift to Be Simple (G) RS 792/GC2 657/G3 748/JS 772/PMB 402/WC 798/WS 636
*To Serve Is to Reign (G) MI-BB 534
Unless a Grain of Wheat (G) JS 760,802/MIBB 352,517/GC 697/GC2 699/G3 783/W4 759/RS 804/GP 579
We Are Called (G) GC 718/GC2 710/G3 807/W4 799/RS 820/WC 792/WS 644/MI-BB 586/SS 819
We Are Your People (G) W3 623/RS 789/PMB 387/WC 765/WS 619/SS 948
We Have No Glory (G) JS 671
*We Will Drink the Cup (G) GC 709
What Wondrous Love Is This (2) W3 600/W4 641/GP 642/JS 755/MIBB 465/WC 732/RS 749/GC 627/GC2 614/G3 642/PMB 253/WS 453/SS 932

30TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

October 28, 2012

Psalm of the Day: Ps (125) 126
God Has Done Great Things for Us (Haugen) GC 124/GC2 69
Laughter Fills Our Mouths PSL B-184/SS 333
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Alstott) BB p. 225
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Cortez) GP 271/MI-BB 822
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Guimont) RS 169/GC2 995/G3 1180/LPMG 149
The Lord Has Done Great Things for Us (Hunstiger) SS 603
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Manalo) JS 103
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Marchionda) PRM B100/LPGA B89/PMB 730/WS 208
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Proulx) W3 69,953/W4 99,1197/RS 171/GC 123/LPGG 771/SS 666
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Schivone) LP 181/JS 1036
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Smith) GP 272

The Lord Has Done Great Things (Stewart) RS 170
The Lord Has Done Great Things (Twynham) CCS 2024
What Marvels the Lord Worked for Us (Young/Black) CBW 58
Suggested Common Psalms
Ps (62) 63: My Soul Is Thirsting for You
Ps (90) 91: Be with Me, Lord, When I Am in Trouble
Songs for the Liturgy
*A Blind Man Sat beside the Road (G) W4 979/HG 57
All Are Welcome (1) RS 846/GC 753/GC2 741/G3 850/W4 833/WC 885/WS 714/MI-BB 411/SS 1000
All Things New (1,2) GC 427/GC2 450/G3 541
All Who Hunger (1) GC 820/GC2 817/G3 852,925/W4 844,951/RS 845,926/SS 1084
Amazing Grace (1,G) W3 583/W4 650/MIBB 424/CBW 480/GP 615/LMGM 173/GC 612/GC2 586/G3 645/JS 713/PMB 323/WC 685/RS 737/WS 562/SS 927
Anthem (1,G) GP 578/JS 761/GC 690/GC2 681/G3 778/MIBB 520
Arise, Your Light Has Come! (1,G) CBW 302/W4 583
As Grain on Scattered Hillside (1) SS 1009
As We Remember (2) GC 818
At the Table of the World (1) PMB 301/WC 658/WS 541
Be Light for Our Eyes (G) GC 509/GC2 511
Bless the Feast (2) GC 752/GP 532
Christ, Be Our Light (1,G) JS 661/GP 656/GC2 512/G3 590/W4 584/WC 937/WS 766/MI-BB 542/SS 888
Christ's Peace (1,G) JS 844
City of God, Jerusalem (1,Ps) W3 362/W4 391/RS 486
Come Out the Wilderness (1,Ps) LMGM 258
Come to the Feast (1,G) JS 795/GC 503/GC2 499,734/G3 585,838/RS 642/MIBB 307
Come to Us (1,G) GP 537/GC 743/GC2 740/G3 842
Come, You Sinners, Poor and Needy (2) W3 756/W4 962
*Courage! Get Up! (G) PSL B-185/SS 248
From East and West (1) GP 567

PREPARATION: MUSIC

Gather 'Round This Table (1) GC2 735
Gather Us In (1) W3 665/W4 836/GC 744/GC2 743/G3 848/MIBB 302/WC 883/RS 850/CBW 587/WS 716/SS 1002
God, Whose Almighty Word (1,G) W3 486/RS 619/CBW 513/PMB 470
God's Holy Mountain We Ascend (1,2) PMB 467/WC 884/WS 713
Hail to the Lord's Anointed (1,Ps) PMB 225/WC 517/WS 433/SS 736
He Healed the Darkness of My Mind (G) W3 749/W4 976/RS 951/GC 876/GC2 844/G3 953
Healer of Our Every Ill (1,G) WC 686/WS 569/GC 882/GC2 854/G3 960/W4 965/RS 958/CBW 363
Healing River (1,G) RS 715/GC 584/GC2 564/G3 643
Holy Darkness (G) MI-BB 487/JS 578/GP 477
I Will Sing, I Will Sing, v 4 (Ps) GC 543/GC2 79/G3 96
In Christ There Is a Table Set for All (1) GC 749/RS 916
Jesus, Heal Us (G) GC 875/GC2 846/G3 952
*Let Every Heart Who Seeks (E) IH 68
Lord, Come and Save Us (G) GC 140/JS 113/GP 308
Most Wondrous Maker of the Light (G) CBW 664
Now as We Gather (1) MIBB 319
Now in This Banquet (1,G) GC 833/GC2 825/G3 937/RS 933/CBW 608
O Blessed Savior (1) PMB 308/WC 647
O Food of Exiles Lowly (1,Ps) W3 729/W4 557/GC 886
O Healing Light of Christ (G) JS 576
Open My Eyes (G) JS 695/GC2 569/G3 651/MIBB 389
Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness (G) CBW 582/G3 625
Priestly People, v 8 (2) PMB 383/WC 761/WS 617
Remember Your Mercy, Lord (2) JS 561/GC 885/GP 476
*Rise to Sing! The Light Is Breaking, v 1 (1,Ps) W4 517
Save Us, O Lord (1,Ps) GP 301/JS 555/MIBB 670
*Seek the Lord (E) PSL B-32/SS 403
Shine on Me (G) LMG 160

Table of Plenty (1,G) JS 793/GP 530/MI-BB 310
The Spirit Sends Us Forth (1,G) JS 835/W4 787/MI-BB 384
The Voice of God Goes Out (1,G) W3 358/CBW 639
There Is a Longing (G) JS 692/GP 620/G3 653/MI-BB 397
There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (1,2) W3 595,596/W4 645/MIBB 466/RS 742/GC 626/GC2 603/G3 644/CBW 443/WC 682/JS 748/GP 639/PMB 322/WS 560/SS 935
We Come to Your Feast (1) GC 850/GC2 814/G3 938
We Remember (1) GC 593/GC2 578/G3 681/W4 938/MIBB 456/WC 665/WS 523/RS 724/SS 922
Within Our Darkest Night (G) GC 644/RS 767
Word of God, Come Down on Earth (G) W3 513/W4 590/CBW 429/RS 653/PMB 367/WC 726
You Are Mine (1,G) RS 762/GC 649/GC2 627/G3 721/W4 704/MIBB 491/WC 867/WS 699/SS 943
You Are the Healing (G) MI-BB 393
You Are the Voice (G) GC 549/GC2 538/G3 609/RS 659/CBW 576
You Have Anointed Me (1,G) RS 795/GC 676/GC2 662/G3 773
Your Hands, O Lord, in Days of Old (G) W3 750/W4 972/RS 949/JS 579/PMB 332/WC 687/WS 570
Your Song of Love (G) GP 583

J. Michael McMahon is president of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. Contact him at mcmahon@npm.org.

Seamless Garment

The Gospels tell us that Jesus wore a seamless garment that was stripped from him at his crucifixion. The outer robe was gone, yet he still wore his inner cloak, connecting him to the ever expanding universe, the uninterrupted network of fauna and flora, water, air, earth and fire, myriad supernovae and galaxies flowing together in an indestructible covering that cherished each species, each tiny creature as if it were the only one and embracing all in one grand embrace of love.

— Barbara Mayer, OSB

Barbara Mayer is a member of the Benedictine monastic community of Mount St. Scholastica in Atchison, Kan.



"First we'll have to form a committee to study the impact this will have on the economy."

October 7, 2012

Encouraging Marriage

Fr. Lawrence Mick

Today's readings provide a natural basis for encouraging married couples to be faithful and to grow in their love. In the current cultural climate, there may be a temptation to use these readings to attack gay marriage, but that would be a misuse — the point of the readings is the permanence of marriage, not who can enter it. If anything is a threat to traditional marriage, it is easy divorce rather than gay marriage.

Even if you focus on divorce, however, try to encourage permanence without condemning those who have suffered a breakdown of their marriage. The divorced have suffered much already (as have gays in our church), and they generally don't need more pain inflicted by the church.

The Year of Faith: This Thursday marks the beginning of the Year of Faith declared by Pope Benedict XVI. Thursday is the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council, and the observance continues through the next liturgical year until November 24, 2013.

The Vatican provided some suggestions for how this year might be observed at various levels in the church. At the level of the local parish, the Vatican would like to see a focus on the liturgy, since in the Eucharist "the faith of the Church is proclaimed, celebrated and strengthened. All of the faithful are invited to participate in the Eucharist actively, fruit-

fully and with awareness, in order to be authentic witnesses of the Lord."

This can be understood as another call for mystagogy, for opening up the meaning of the prayers and rites that make up the liturgy so that the spiritual richness found there can nourish the lives of parishioners. Sometimes that is done by preaching, but it can also be done through a variety of means: choice of songs, bulletin items, comments before Mass, the way the announcements are worded, the composition of the petitions — all can help the assembly understand the liturgy more deeply.

The opening collect today is quite convoluted. It might flow a bit better if "in the abundance of your kindness" followed "who entreat you," but it will still be hard to understand. "Pardon what conscience dreads" is obtuse, to say the least. The 1998 text had "forgive the things that weigh upon our consciences."

The prayer over the offerings speaks of commands and "dutiful service," which sounds like Sunday Mass obligation. The 1998 text speaks of "faithful service" instead. The prayer after Communion offers a wonderful phrase for mystagogy today: "To be transformed into what we consume." This prayer echoes St. Augustine's teaching that "It is your own mystery that is placed upon the altar. ... Be what you see and receive what you are."

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Paige Byrne Shortal

INTRODUCTION

My friends, in today's Gospel we will hear Jesus teach about marriage and then welcome the little children. Today is also Respect Life Sunday. Let us pray today for the grace to make "Respect Life" more than a slogan. Let us pray to make it a way of life.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you welcome the little children: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you taught us to love one another: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you forgive us when we fail to love: Lord, have mercy.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Gen 2:18-24 The two become one flesh.

Ps 128:1-6 The Wedding Psalm

Heb 2:9-11 By grace Jesus tasted death for everyone.

Mark 10:2-16 Jesus teaches about marriage and receives the children.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Presider My friends, on this Respect Life Sunday, let us pray for all those whose lives are threatened; all those for whom we are concerned.

Minister For those in harm's way: for those who live where there is war, violence or abuse ... we pray,

❖ For those whose lives are not valued by society: for the very young and the very old and those yet to be born; for those who live invisibly; for all those who have no one to pray for them ... we pray,

❖ For families: for married couples who are happy and content in their relationship and for those who are struggling to love ... we pray,

❖ For children: for those who are loved and cherished and for those forgotten or ignored; for a world that is safe and nurturing for all young people ... we pray,

❖ For the people with whom we live: for those who gave us life and for all who nurtured us; for our brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and cousins, parents and grandparents and godparents ... we pray,

❖ For those who are sick or in pain: for those suffering with Alzheimer's disease, depression or anxiety; and for the ones who love them ... we pray,

❖ We remember those who have died ... (*names*). For our ancestors who have gone before us; for those we miss every day; for all who have died by violence ... we pray,

Presider Good and gracious God, watch over and protect us. Strengthen the love that unites families in peace and joy and grant that our parish family may know the unity that is a sign of your presence among us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

October 14, 2012

Looking Ahead

Fr. Lawrence Mick

The season of Advent will arrive in less than two months, so planners should be well along in preparing for that season by now. One area that needs coordination with the parish musicians is deciding whether it's time to learn a new musical setting for the parts of the Mass. Some parishes may have been using the same setting since last Advent, which would have allowed parishioners to get thoroughly comfortable with it and probably able to sing it now without books or booklets. Other parishes may have introduced a new setting during the year so that the parish now has two settings that work with the new missal.

In any case, decisions need to be made about what will work best for Advent and Christmas this year. Since Christmas still brings many visitors, a key question is what setting is most visitor-friendly. That might mean the one you used last year for Christmas, since it might ring faint bells for visitors, but it may mean a different setting that is easier for people to pick up. A call-and-response setting, for example, might work especially well on such a day.

Once the decision is sorted out, then figure out what is necessary for the assembly to sing well on Christmas. If it is a new setting or one not used in recent months, you might want to begin using it again now so that the Glory to God

is familiar before it goes into hibernation during Advent.

Today's texts are not too difficult, but some slight rearrangements would help. In the opening collect, "at all times" would flow better behind "follow after" (and a second "us" between them would help, too). Using "always" instead of "at all times" in its current spot would also help. "Go before and follow after us" also seems clearer than "go before us and follow after." In the prayer over the offerings, simply putting "O Lord" first makes it more comprehensible.

In the prayer after Communion, there is another rich clause: "so you may make us sharers of his divine nature." That echoes the prayer said silently by the priest as he pours water into the wine at the preparation of the gifts: "By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." This concept of deification (that we somehow become divine) is much more common among Eastern Christians. Planners might want to spend some time discussing what this prayer means and how its message can be brought to the attention of the assembly. Could you at least print the text in the bulletin this week for individual reflection?



28th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Paige Byrne Shortal

INTRODUCTION

My friends, today we will hear the story of the rich young man who sadly walked away from Jesus when he learned that to gain eternal life, he must sell his possessions and give the money to the poor. Please notice in the Gospel that Jesus looked at the young man and loved him. Jesus looks at each of us in just the same way. Let us pray to receive his love, hear his teaching and remain with him in joy.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you are the Word of God dwelling in our midst: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the Word of God who speaks to us today: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you are the Word of God who lives in our hearts: Lord, have mercy.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Wis 7:7-11 A prayer for wisdom

Ps 90:12-17 Fill us with your love, O Lord.

Heb 4:12-13 The word of God discerns the thoughts of the heart.

Mark 10:17-30 What is needed to inherit eternal life?

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Presider My friends, let us pray today for the grace to relinquish all that stands in the way of God's kingdom on this earth.

Minister For the nations: for nonviolent solutions to conflicts between peoples ... we pray,

❖ For the United States and citizens preparing to vote: for wisdom and clear thinking; honesty and integrity; for a peaceful process ... we pray,

❖ For the church: for the grace to hold fast to necessary convictions, to compromise when it will serve the greater good, and for the wisdom to know the difference ... we pray,

❖ Let us pray for less attachment to things that do not lead us to God: for the wisdom and the courage to live simpler, faith-filled lives ... we pray,

❖ For those of our community who are sick and have asked for our prayers: for those living with mental and emotional illnesses; for those who struggle to cope with daily life and for those who care for them ... we pray,

❖ Let us remember those who have died ... (*names*). For all of our loved ones who have gone before us and for those who have died with no one to mourn their passing or to pray for them ... we pray,

Presider Good and gracious God, Creator of all life and all that is good, hear our prayers this day. Make us mindful of our blessings and fill us with gratitude for your love for us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

October 21, 2012

Approach Confidently

Fr. Lawrence Mick

There is a very useful line in today's second reading: "Let us confidently approach the throne of grace." That suggests a good approach both for planners and for assemblies. There is a balance we strive to achieve, though we will never achieve it fully; balance is an elusive goal. But we need to combine awareness that we are approaching the throne of grace with a sense of confidence that we do so as children of God, as God's chosen people. There is need for reverence, but that reverence does not have to be linked to an outsized sense of guilt and unworthiness.

One of the complaints about the liturgy after Vatican II is that it became too casual. Liturgy should never be casual, for it deals with ultimate mysteries and allows us to approach the throne of grace. We should always try to be aware of what we are doing and of the presence of God in our midst. But the uniqueness of the Christian revelation is that we are invited into intimacy with God, to be members of God's family, to share in the very life of the divinity. This calls for a very different approach than many of us experienced before Vatican II, despite those who want to go back to that era. We approach God not in fear and trembling but with joy and confidence because we trust in God's love and the power of God's grace to heal us. We are sinners but we are forgiven sinners.

The need to balance reverence and confident approach should set the tone for our worship — serious but not somber, joyful but not superficial, prayerful but still communitarian. We need to welcome one another as we gather and still create an atmosphere of interior silence that fosters prayerful worship.

Mission Sunday: This Sunday is designated each year as Mission Sunday. The theme for 2012 is "Called to Radiate the Word of Truth." Pope Benedict's annual statement can be found at www.fides.org/aree/news/newsdet.php?idnews=30860&lan=eng, and materials from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' national office may be available through links at www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/world-missions. The day's readings lend themselves fairly easily to a focus on missions, with both the first reading and the Gospel speaking of God's servant giving his life as a ransom for many. This might also suggest some catechesis today on the changed text of the institution narrative in the eucharistic prayer, where Christ pouring out his blood "for all" has been changed to "for many." As the Catechism of the Catholic Church (#605) makes clear, Christ died for all people, not just some; "many" is meant to be inclusive rather than exclusive, though "all" communicated our belief more accurately.

29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Paige Byrne Shortal

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks James and John what they want him to do for them. In next week's Gospel, Jesus will ask the same question of Bartimaeus the blind man. Let us imagine Jesus here today, in this assembly, asking each one of us, "What do you want me to do for you?" Let us pray.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you came to give your life for us: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you are the servant leader: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you call us to be like you: Lord, have mercy.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Isa 53:10-11 The suffering servant

Ps 33:4-5; 18-20, 22 Lord, we place our trust in you.

Heb 4:14-16 Jesus, our high priest, sympathizes with our weakness.

Mark 10:35-45 If you wish to be great, be a servant.

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Presider Brothers and sisters, let us pray for the world, for the church and for ourselves, confident that God knows our needs and hears our prayers.

Minister Let us pray for the church: for believers gathered this day all over the world; for those who endure the loneliness of the missionary life; for all who share their blessings with others ... we pray,

❖ During this month dedicated to Mary, let us especially remember all of those communities, efforts and activities under Mary's protection; for all men and women who are inspired by Mary's "Yes" to God's plan for her ... we pray,

❖ Let us pray for peace: for all that is needed for every human being to live with dignity ... we pray,

❖ Let us pray for our country: for all who are seeking election to public service; for citizens who struggle with their decision about how to cast their vote; for wisdom and insight and gratitude for the opportunity to elect leaders without fear of violence ... we pray,

❖ Let us pray for all whose lives are at risk: for the mentally or physically disabled; for those who are poor, living with violence, imprisoned, unemployed, uneducated or without hope for their future ... we pray,

❖ We remember those who have died ... (*names*). For our ancestors and loved ones and for those who mourn their passing ... we pray,

Presider Wise and compassionate God, hear our prayers this day. Make us wise. Make us compassionate. Make us a people who reflect your love and goodness in our world. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

October 28, 2012

Triple Challenge

Fr. Lawrence Mick

Besides the Sunday celebration, this week brings us the Solemnity of All Saints on Thursday and All Souls Day on Friday.

The Sunday opening collect again speaks of meriting what God promises, which is questionable theology at best. Here's how the 1998 version handled the text: "that we may come to possess all that you promise." The prayer over the offerings seems logically incomplete, asking God to "look on the offerings we make," where the 1998 version had "look with favor." The prayer after Communion contains an intriguing line: "perfect in us what lies within them" (the sacraments). Since we are celebrating the Eucharist, "sacraments" presumably means the body and blood, not the seven. So at least part of what "lies within them" is the body of Christ and we are praying to be perfected as his body. We celebrate our unity in the signs of the Eucharist, and we pray that we might be actually united in truth. This could be the basis for mystagogy today.

The texts for All Saints and All Souls are found in the sanctoral part of the missal at November 1 and 2. The opening collect for All Saints seems quite awkward. A comparison with the 1998 version makes the disjointed structure of the new text obvious: "All-holy and eternal God, you have given us this feast to celebrate on one day the holy men and women of every

time and place. Through their manifold intercession grant us the full measure of your mercy, for which we so deeply long." The new text can be managed with significant pauses and careful stress on the key words. By contrast, the preface for this feast is quite nice, and the other texts are not difficult.

For All Souls Day, the missal offers three sets of prayer texts. While priests can celebrate three Masses today, that does not mean that all three sets must be used. Of the opening collects, the second seems easiest to proclaim, as does the second prayer over the offerings (which also links Eucharist and baptism). Any of the prayers after Communion should work. For the preface, all five of the Prefaces for the Dead are options. Any of the first four seem clear enough; the fifth one is open to misinterpretation when it says: "by our own fault we perish." That could be taken to mean that we die because we don't take care of our health or that we commit suicide, etc. The 1998 version was clearer: "We had deserved to perish because of our sins, but through your loving-kindness when we die we are called back to life with Christ, whose victory is our redemption."

Note: Daylight Savings ends next Sunday; remind people this weekend to reset their clocks next Saturday.

30th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Paige Byrne Shortal

INTRODUCTION

In last week's Gospel passage, Jesus asked James and John what they wanted him to do for them. Today he asks blind Bartimaeus the same question. What is our answer to this question? Is it what James and John wished for: to be set above others? Can we pray today for the desire to answer as Jesus would want us to answer — as that best part of ourselves wants to answer? What do you want Jesus to do for you? Let us pray.

PENITENTIAL ACT

Lord Jesus, you led by service and example: Lord, have mercy.

Christ Jesus, you made the deaf hear and the blind see: Christ, have mercy.

Lord Jesus, you promise to be with us in our gathering that we may see and hear you in our hearts and in those we meet: Lord, have mercy.

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jer 31:7-9 The blind and the lame I will console.

Ps 126:1-6 The Lord has done great things for us.

Heb 5:1-6 The calling of the high priest

Mark 10:46-52 The healing of blind Bartimaeus

PRAYERS OF THE FAITHFUL

Presider During this month of October we witness in a special way to our commitment to protect the dignity of life. Let us pray.

Minister Let us pray for continued dialogue on life issues: for wisdom and understanding; for compassion for all victims of violence and injustice; for dedication to the continued protection of human life ... we pray,

❖ On this Priesthood Sunday, let us pray for bishops and pastors; for all who have answered the call to service within the church ... we pray,

❖ For wisdom for all who will vote in next week's election; for a peaceful process carried out with respect, humility and gratitude ... we pray,

❖ Let us pray for those who are enduring a life-threatening illness, chronic pain, fatigue, depression or anxiety. For all those who feel overwhelmed by their struggles and for those who love them and serve them ... we pray,

❖ We remember those who have died ... (*names*). For all who are struggling with grief and the loneliness of losing someone they love ... we pray,

Presider Good and gracious God, Creator of all life and all that is good, hear our prayers this day. Give us the grace to be generous in our dedication to finding solutions to our society's problems that will respect the life of every human being. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Loose Change from Church and World

Words to Live by

- ◆ A man wrapped up in himself makes a very small package.
- ◆ A mathematician is a device for turning coffee into theorems.
- ◆ A person is just about as big as the things that make them angry.
- ◆ A professor is one who talks in someone else's sleep.
- ◆ A proverb is a short sentence based on long experience.
- ◆ A TV can insult your intelligence, but nothing rubs it in like a computer.
- ◆ A weekend wasted isn't a wasted weekend.
- ◆ A wise man can learn more from a foolish question than a fool can learn from a wise answer.
- ◆ According to my calculations, the problem doesn't exist.
- ◆ Adult: One old enough to know better.
- ◆ After all is said and done, more is said than done.
- ◆ Age has its advantages. Too bad I can't remember what they are.
- ◆ All generalizations are dangerous, even this one.
- ◆ All those who believe in psychokinesis raise my hand.
- ◆ All true wisdom is found on T-shirts.
- ◆ All work and no play will make you a manager.
- ◆ Always borrow money from a pessimist. He won't expect it back.
- ◆ Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them.
- ◆ Am I ranting? I hope so. My ranting gets raves.
- ◆ An atheist is a man who has no invisible means of support.
- ◆ Any clod can have the facts, but having an opinion is an art.
- ◆ Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
- ◆ As long as there are tests, there will be prayer in public schools.
- ◆ Bad spellers of the world untie!
- ◆ Carpenter's rule: Cut to fit; beat into place.
- ◆ Be careful of your thoughts; they may become words at any moment.
- ◆ Bravery is being the only one who knows you're afraid.
- ◆ Attitude determines your altitude.
- ◆ Chaos, panic, pandemonium — my work here is done.
- ◆ Character is what you are. Reputation is what people think you are.
- ◆ Does the name Pavlov ring a bell?
- ◆ Don't cry because its over, smile because it happened.
- ◆ Don't argue with a fool. The spectators can't tell the difference.

SCHWADRON



"Please don't judge me by my YouTube videos!"

Cartoons

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"Haven't seen you up here before. When were you uploaded?"



October 7
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
“Therefore what God has joined together, no human being must separate.” Mark 10:9



October 14
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
“At that statement his face fell, and he went away sad, for he had many possessions.” Mark 10:22



October 21
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
“Whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant.” Mark 10:43



October 28
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
“Master, I want to see.” Mark 10:51

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Mark Bartholomew is a member of the Holy Family Catholic Worker Community in Kansas City, Mo. These same graphics are available on our website for easy downloading for use in bulletins and parish newsletters. To access *Celebration* online, go to www.celebrationpublications.org. Register by clicking on the link REGISTER NOW and filling in the required fields. A username and password for your account will be sent immediately by e-mail. Use this to enter the site through the Administrator Panel on the same web page.

Stained Glass Windows

Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should be led to that fully conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy.

— Vatican II, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*



Stained glass art © by Symeon Gillette, OSB. Text and Photo by Abbot Barnabas Senecal, OSB, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan.

Religion and Ethics Newsweekly, June 26, 2009, “Stained Glass Windows,” a comment at the close: “See the beautiful stained glass at Saint Louis Abbey in Creve Coeur, Missouri.”

Abbot Thomas Frerking of that abbey gave me a 2012 tour of their facilities and artwork, allowing me to shoot photographs of their stained glass and their home.

This “interior wall of glass” provides inspiration as monks join for daily prayer in their private chapel. The view is into a center courtyard, the spires of their abbey, parish and school church further on.

In this stained glass, there is life in the movement of the lines and in brilliance of color; emphasis is on scripture in the four evangelists; centrality is given to the Trinity.

Vatican II opened on October 11, 1962.

The council offered movement and new life, in how we prayed, what we studied, how we presided, and invited discussion and a sense of consultation.

We sought fellowship with other faith groups through “Living Room Dialogues.” We wrote new music; we came to accept source theory and form criticism in scripture; we studied dogma in English.

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Ordinary Time

Respectful Relationships

Preaching Resources

CELEBRATION:
A Comprehensive
Worship Resource
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**ROMAN
LECTIONARY**
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Gen 2:18-24
Ps 128
Heb 2:9-11
Mark 10:2-16

**REVISED COMMON
LECTIONARY**
19th Sunday after Pentecost
Job 1:1, 2:1-10
Heb 1:1-4, 2:5-12
Mark 10:2-16

**ANGLICAN
LECTIONARY**
Proper 22
Gen 2:18-24
Heb 2:(1-8)9-18
Mark 10:2-9

Patricia Sánchez has been contributing to *Celebration* for 33 years. She holds a master's degree in literature and religion of the Bible from a joint degree program at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York.

The short story “The Eight-Cow Wife” by Patricia McGerr gives us an excellent example of the value of respect among married couples. In the days when dowries were expected, Johnny Lingo, an entrepreneur on the Pacific island of Kiniwata, offered eight cows to the father of Sarita, whom he wished to marry. Sarita was plain and too thin; she walked with her shoulders hunched and her head down. She had no self-esteem whatsoever. Usually, a dowry consisted of three cows or five at the most; eight was unheard of. Nevertheless, that’s what Johnny Lingo gave.

Months later, a visitor to the island of Nurabandi, where Johnny now lived, came over wishing to avail himself of Johnny’s business skills. He had heard of the eight-cow dowry and the plainness of Sarita. But when he met her, he found her to be the most beautiful woman he’d ever seen — the lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle in her eyes. The fact that her husband loved and respected her enough to offer an extravagant dowry for her made all the difference. Because of him, she had become her best and most beautiful self. Such is the dynamic of marriage: Two persons who love one another more than themselves call forth the best in each other, and together they bear witness to the world that true love and mutual respect are possible. (“The Eight-Cow Wife” is included in Stephen R. Covey’s *Everyday Greatness*, Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville: 2006.)

*Because of him,
she had become
her best and most
beautiful self.*

According to the authors of Genesis, the love between married people was ordained and blessed by God, who intended that the two become one so as to be helpmates and partners in all they are. Together, married people are to be stewards of all that God has made, and together they are to participate in the creative power of God by bringing forth new lives, which are to be cherished as God’s precious gifts.

However, for varied reasons, the ideal is not always realized. Many marriages are not lifelong. When approached with this reality, Jesus (Gospel) did not enter into debate about the lawfulness of divorce. Rather, he focused on marriage as a divinely ordained union, as did the Genesis authors.

William J. Bausch suggests that we recall the times in which Jesus lived (*Once upon a Gospel*, Twenty-Third Publications, New London, Conn.: 2008). His was a society in which women rarely, if ever, owned property and had no independent means of making a living. For that reason, marriage was a lifesaver: Marriage guaranteed support for the most vulnerable members of society, women and children. For their protection, marriage had to be stable and enduring. Laws forbidding divorce indicated that women and children should not be left on their own. In criticizing those who advocated divorce, especially for frivolous reasons, Jesus was taking up the cause of the poor and the weak. “He was,” says Bausch, “not once-and-for-all condemning divorced persons, but he was coming down squarely on the side of the defenseless. ‘Don’t do that to women!’ is his stern message.” With this background, we can understand Jesus’ words not as condemnation, but as an expression of compassion.

Although the social context of Jesus’ day no longer exists, his message of compassion and his desire to protect the weak and defenseless continues to apply. Whether married or divorced, whether gay or straight,



October 7, 2012

Ordinary Time

27th Sunday

Respectful Relationships



all people are cherished creations of God. Whether or not each is able to sustain a lasting relationship with another is not a reason to judge or condemn them. On the contrary, like Jesus, we are to be compassionate and caring, trusting in the good consciences of others and respectful of the difficult decisions they have to make. To exclude those who are most in need of the ministrations of the faith community would not only be unkind; it would be contrary to the example set by Jesus and the Gospel he came to proclaim.

GEN 2:18-24

When he was imprisoned by the Nazis for his stance against the injustices perpetrated by their regime, Lutheran pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote a wedding sermon for a niece who was about to be married (*A Testament to Freedom*, HarperCollins, San Francisco: 1995). In it he said, “Marriage is more than your love for each other. It has a higher dignity and power, for it is God’s holy ordinance. ... In your love, you see only your two selves in the world, but in marriage you are a link in the chain of generations ... whom God calls into the kingdom. In your love, you see only the heaven of your happiness, but in marriage you are placed at a post of responsibility toward the world and mankind.” If marriage were always perceived in this manner—as a service not only to one another but also to humankind—how might this perception strengthen the bond between married persons?

In today’s first reading, the most ancient of the Genesis authors (the Yahwist) has made a similar point. Man and woman have been purposefully created for one another by God to share a loving and complementary relationship. Woman’s equality with man is affirmed in that she is described as having been made from a part of him, i.e., from the same substance (or species) and nature. Working from the premise that “it is not good for the man to be alone” (v. 18) and insisting that none of the various animals, birds or fish would be

suitable companions, God performed what Walter Brueggemann has called a stunning and fresh creative act (*Genesis*, John Knox Press, Atlanta: 1982). Like the man, the woman is God’s free creation. These two surprising creatures belong together in the garden where solidarity, trust, mutual respect and well-being can grow.

Significantly, the ancient author portrays the man as openly acknowledging the value of the woman with the triple enunciation “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh, this one shall be called ‘woman’ ” (v. 23). In Hebrew, the words for woman, *adamah* and *ishah*, are derived from the words for man: *adam*, *ish*. Some have cited these derivations as support for woman’s secondary or inferior status to man, but it was the ancient author’s intent to affirm the shared nature and integral, equal partnership of women and men.

Given their divinely ordained complementary relationship, the union of married persons is understood to be fitting (“that is why ...” v. 24) and intended for the fulfillment of the two as one flesh. In Hebrew, the word for flesh is *nepesh*, and unlike the duality of body and soul conceived by the Greeks, *nepesh* applies to the whole living being in all aspects — physi-

cal, psychological, emotional and spiritual. Therefore, while sexuality is an important aspect in a marital union, it is not the only means of expressing oneness. Praying together, working together, growing old and better together, married persons are also to preserve the sense of service that Bonhoeffer described. One with each other, both are also committing themselves, through marriage, to something greater than themselves. They have, as William Bausch (*op. cit.*) has said, bonded to combine and channel their growing love toward the service of God and others, toward their children, their elders, the poor, the future and the betterment of society. Understood in this way, married persons and their children can truly be the nucleus that society needs to grow into more authentically good and loving images of God.

HEB 2:9-11

Thomas G. Long has suggested that the purpose of this brief passage is to explain how it was that the glorious Son of God was seen wearing a private’s uniform and operating behind enemy lines; that is, to explain why it was necessary that Jesus, for a while, assumed a rank “lower than the angels,” became incarnate and, as a consequence, suffered and died in combat with the forces of death and evil (*Hebrews*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Ky.: 1997). The fact that the ancient author refers to Jesus’ action as “fitting” (v. 10) may seem strange to contemporary believers. However, this term bears the conviction that everything in Jesus’ ministry and in his saving death and resurrection was necessary (fitting) because of God’s foreordained plan of salvation. In keeping with that plan, Jesus was made “perfect” through his suffering. *Teleios* (made perfect) does not mean morally flawless, although Jesus was authentically and completely holy. Rather, perfection here refers to the fulfilling of one’s intended purpose. Teleologically, Jesus accomplished all that God had willed for him; he was, in a word, perfect.

Jesus achieved his perfection by



becoming one with those he was sent to save. He attained solidarity with humankind; he was incarnate in time and space and flesh and blood. In this solidarity, Jesus feels what humans feel. He has empathy. William Barclay has said that it is almost impossible to understand another's sorrow or suffering unless we have known it ourselves ("The Letter to the Hebrews," *The Daily Study Bible*, The Saint Andrew Press, Edinburgh, U.K.: 1976). A person without anxiety finds it hard to conceive of the tortures of nervousness, just as the physically fit do not truly comprehend the weariness of the sick. Those who learn easily do not understand how someone else can find studying so challenging. Someone who has never loved deeply cannot realize the pain of losing one's greatest love.

But Jesus does understand because his solidarity with the human experience was absolute. He was so intensely one of us that he freely chose to redeem us and make us free to enter into the very relationship he shares with God. Through that relationship, all become the beloved brothers and sisters of Jesus. Long (*op. cit.*) insists that readers recognize this is a radical theological point. What the ancient author is saying is that when Jesus sees a criminal on death row, or a homeless woman crawling into a cardboard box for shelter on a cold night, or a person robbed of their dignity through mental illness; when Jesus sees a woman mourning the death of her child or a man ravaged by cancer or a child slowly starving to death, he does not see a sad statistic or a faceless victim. He sees a brother and a sister whom he loves. The daily challenge for believers who are brothers and sisters of Jesus is to take these words to heart.

MARK 10:2-16

In Jesus' day, rabbis were frequently consulted regarding their interpretation of the law. It was not unusual that Jesus, who was recognized as a rabbi or teacher, would have been sought out. Fond of parsing legal minutiae, the Pharisees questioned

Jesus about divorce. Would he take the more liberal approach of his contemporary Rabbi Hillel and permit divorce for something as minor as a woman complaining about her in-laws in public? Or would Jesus side with another of his contemporaries, Rabbi Shammai, who insisted that adultery was the only reason a man could hand his wife a writ of divorce and turn her out of his home?

Both Hillel and Shammai began with the text from Deuteronomy that the Pharisees referenced in this Gospel. According to the ancient author, a man could divorce his wife for *'erwat dabar*, which has been variously translated as "indecent," "adultery" and "the exposure of a thing." But Jesus would not be drawn into a debate about divorce. Rather, he declared that the text attributed to Moses was not a law but was a dispensation from the law due to the *sklerokardia* or hardness of heart of the people (v. 5). Then, in the ordered form of the rabbinic dialectic, Jesus silenced his questioners by calling on the only authority considered to be greater than Moses: God. Jesus upheld the marital union with a quote from the creation account in Genesis (2:24), citing the manner in which men and women were created for one another as complementary beings.

When they were alone with him "in the house" (v. 10), the disciples' questions evoked what may be a piece of Marcan editorializing (vv. 10-12). According to Jewish law, adultery

always referred to the sin of a married woman against her husband. But among the Romans (and most believe that the community within which the Marcan Gospel developed was Rome) the law was extended to protect the rights of women as well as men. Therefore, a man who divorced his wife to marry another was guilty of adultery.

In the latter part of this Gospel, Jesus' defense of children and his insistence that they were to be emulated for their innocence and simplicity represented a radical departure from the way children were treated in his culture. With no rights of their own, children, like women, were treated like property. But Jesus, who loved and valued all persons, treated the children with respect and care. "Let them come," he told his impatient and angry disciples. Then Jesus held out the example of the children to his followers. As Roland Faley has pointed out, children are not capable of meriting anything (*Footprints on the Mountain*, Paulist Press, Mahwah, N.J.: 1994). Depending on the goodwill of others, children are completely vulnerable and full of trust. By the same token, God's favor is a gift, entirely undeserved. The only possible human response is grateful acceptance. If only the church would emulate the compassion, the kindness and respectful sensitivity of Jesus when dealing with its children who are struggling with divorce, remarriage and sexuality.

Sermon Starters

Deacon Dick Folger

The pope recently described marriage as "an asset for the spouses, for the children, for the church, and for all of mankind." In today's Gospel, Jesus says, "What God has joined together, let no one separate." But despite many wonderful and enduring marriages, for many complex reasons, strong, stable marriages seem to be in trouble in today's society.

A recent survey found that nearly four out of 10 Americans view marriage as obsolete. About 60 percent of U.S. couples live together before marriage — up from 10 percent in the 1960s. The changing concept of family, as reflected in television and movies, seems to be "anything goes." How can we reaffirm this treasure today?

Preaching to Youth

Jim Auer

KEY VERSE(S) / MAIN IDEA (Gen)

“This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” “That is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body.” God’s beautiful plan for sex and lasting married love.

HOW YOUTH MIGHT INITIALLY APPROACH THE MAIN IDEA Interested but wondering if they’re going to hear a “If you do it before you’re married, you’re nothing but a tramp” lecture.

STARTER In the Genesis account, Adam catches sight of Eve and is instantly ecstatic. “Here at last ...!” Mark Twain’s version (“Diaries of Adam and Eve”) is quite different. Adam writes, “This new creature with the long hair is a good deal in the way. I wish it would stay with the other animals. Cloudy today, wind in the east. I think we shall have rain ... *We?* Where did I get that word? The new creature uses it!” We assume that at some point, Adam changed his mind about the new creature.

LEADING QUESTIONS/MEDIA LINKS * The pendulum of trends: A half-century ago, sex tended to be hushed up, especially publicly and in the media. It had a “not very nice” image. What image does sex have today in the media? Have we exchanged one bad idea for another bad idea? * Does anything in the entertainment world present sex as worthy of respect and essentially connected with love, or is it almost universally just cheap recreation (“friends with benefits”)? * What do you think is God’s plan for sex, love and marriage? Or do you think it’s none of God’s business?

DIRECTIONS TO EXPLORE * The Genesis account does not present woman as inferior to man. The “Adam’s rib” explanation of Eve intends to present them as equals. * The response to divorce should not be a shrug of the shoulders and an “Oh well.” * Surprising statistic: Couples who live together before marriage are more likely to divorce than couples who do not.

HOMILY

Fr. James Smith

Only with God

Jesus took a lot of grief from people, but he became downright indignant when his disciples tried to keep children from him.

We read this in a sentimental sense, thinking of how cute children are. But that is not how people in those days thought of children. They considered them helpless and useless. In our sober moments, we also know that children can’t take care of themselves: Unless we feed them they starve; unless we clothe them they run around joyously naked; if we don’t control them they run into the street or burn the house down. No, it is not their cuteness that makes children attractive to Christ. It is their helplessness. It is their inability to save themselves, their eager acceptance of outside help, that gives God the opportunity to act like God. That is precisely what made them model entrants into the kingdom.

We adults make it difficult for God to save us. We have outgrown childish dependency in physical ways, so we think that we can also make our own way in the spiritual realm. After all, how hard can salvation be? We know the commandments, we know how to pray, we know what God wants. Let’s just get to it!

We remember that Jesus said salvation is from God alone, that it is impossible for us to save ourselves. But humans have always trusted more in their own goodness than in God’s goodness. We simply cannot believe that we can be saved without our own effort; we cannot imagine anyone, even God, taking care of us without our own help. History is littered with human projects to get God on our side. We have sacrificed virgins and sheep, we have taken vows, said special prayers, worn special clothes, given up chocolate, avoided black cats, been baptized,

confessed and confirmed. Still, salvation remains just beyond our reach. And, with one last surge of goodness, we are convinced that we can do it.

Jesus is very clear on this point: Only with God is salvation possible.

But what about our virtue, our avoidance of evil — surely all that discipline and sacrifice count for something! Less than you think. If we do good to become good, we do it backward. First, God makes us good, then we do good.

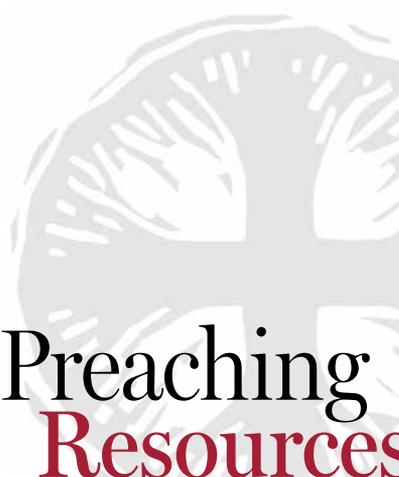
It is difficult to be both a good American and a good Christian. They work out of diametrically opposed principles. Americans are individualists, Christians are community-minded. Americans think they can do anything they like, Christians believe God has something to say about that. Americans think they own the world, Christians know they are just stewards of creation.

It is difficult to be both middle-class and Christian. They work out of different mindsets. Middle-class earns its keep, Christians know they can’t. Middle-class gets what it deserves, Christians know that would be disastrous.

Almost everyone has finally accepted the Copernican revolution: The earth is not the center of the universe; it revolves around the sun. Now we must accept the Jesus revolution: We are not the center of the cosmos; we revolve around God. This is a more difficult revolution because it is so personal. But it is not an option. We cannot get outside the cosmos to establish our own virtual reality.

Our Communion prayer sums up our status before God. It makes a good mantra: “We are not worthy, but you alone, Lord, can make us healed, holy, whole and good.”

Ordinary Time



Preaching Resources

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**ROMAN
LECTIONARY**
28th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Wis 7:7-11
Ps 90
Heb 4:12-13
Mark 10:17-30

**REVISED COMMON
LECTIONARY**
20th Sunday after Pentecost
Job 23:1-9, 16-17
Heb 4:12-16
Mark 10:17-31

**ANGLICAN
LECTIONARY**
Proper 23
Amos 5:6-7, 10-15
Heb 3:1-6
Mark 10:17-27 (28-31)

Patricia Sánchez has been contributing to *Celebration* for 33 years. She holds a master's degree in literature and religion of the Bible from a joint degree program at Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Bare Before the Truth of the Word

Gathered together in the presence of God's living and effective word, we reveal our true selves before God and others. Even better, God is revealed, yet again, in our midst. The author of Hebrews (second reading) understood that God's word has the power to cut to the quick of all matters and lay bare the truth. Twelfth-century doctor of the church Bernard of Clairvaux was similarly convinced. "The word of God," wrote Bernard, "is not a sounding but a piercing word, not pronounceable by the tongue but efficacious in the mind, not only sensible to the ear but fascinating to the affection.

God's word cuts to the quick and lays bare the truth.

God's word is not an object possessing beauty of form, but rather, it is the source of all beauty and form. God's word is not visible to the bodily eyes, but rejoices the eyes of the heart. And God's word is not pleasing because of the harmony of its color, but by reason of the ardour of the love it excites" (quoted in *A Treasury of Quips, Quotes and Anecdotes*, Anthony Castle, ed., Twenty-Third Publications, Mystic, Conn.: 1998).

Such was the experience that moved the author of today's first reading (purported to be Solomon) to share his desire for the word above all else. Rather than riches, health, beauty or long life, this ancient ancestor of ours prayed for Wisdom. Wisdom was regarded as God's own spirit, intelligent, holy, the fashioner of all things and the image of God's glorious goodness. Wisdom was also regarded as the creative *logos* or Word of God in which all truth is revealed. Understood in this way, the gift of God's Wisdom-Word is more precious and valuable than any other possession. Unfortunately, human beings are sometimes slow or even reluctant to place such value upon a gift that can't be seen or touched or counted. God's gift of Wisdom-Word offers security, but not of a monetary sort; it offers power and prestige but not in a worldly sense, and while it is an incalculable treasure, it is not earned or merited. It is pure gift, as are all of God's good and gracious blessings.

This truth is affirmed in today's Gospel. Although the young man who ran up to Jesus and knelt before him knew he was in the presence of one who spoke and lived the truth, he still had much to learn. His question "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" was, as Baptist pastor Bob Buchanan points out, a good one. But his assumptions were wrong. He thought that people could achieve goodness for themselves. He also thought he could merit eternal life by the good that he did. He probably also assumed that his good fortune and many possessions were somehow the result of his observing the commandments from his youth. His final erroneous assumption was that everything could be bought for a price, including eternal life.

As Barbara Brown Taylor has affirmed, "No matter what we do, none of us earns eternal life. We can keep the commandments until we are blue in the face; we can sign our paychecks over to Mother Teresa and rattle tin cups for our supper without ever earning a place at the banquet table of God. The kingdom of God is not for sale. It never has been; it never will be. The poor cannot buy it with their poverty and the rich cannot buy it with their riches. The kingdom of God is a consummate gift" (*The Preaching Life*, Cowley Publications, Boston: 1993). When the rich man

realized this truth, it came as a shock to his sensibilities. Everything he had believed through all his life was being shaken to its foundations.

Unable to cope with the challenge of the word, he went away sad. But this Gospel is about more than one man's choice. It is about you and me and our openness to God's word and God's offer as a gift. We do not deserve it even though we go to church, keep the commandments and the law of love, tithe, volunteer, read the Bible and pray daily. We are not worthy because we are just, honest, merciful, generous to the poor and supportive of foreign missions. We are blessed with every grace and all good gifts because despite our sinfulness and selfishness, God loves us.

WIS 7:7-11

Athenian philosopher Socrates, known for his method of analysis, was said to have been singled out by the Delphic oracle as the wisest of all the Greeks. When he was asked about this, Socrates replied, "It is because I alone, of all the Greeks, know that I know nothing."

Socrates was like an empty vessel, capable of being filled with truth and knowledge. In a sense, the author of the prayer that constitutes today's first reading was similarly disposed to accept from God the one gift that had more value than any other. Eschewing the transient gifts of power, riches, health and comeliness, he asked for wisdom, and in doing so, showed himself to be the wisest of all.

The Book of Wisdom has been attributed to the ninth-century B.C.E. King Solomon, reputed to be the wisest ruler of his people. This text is based upon that period of his reign when God promised to give him whatever he requested (see 1 Kings 3:6-9). In the Wisdom passage, Solomon's prayer is actually part of a longer soliloquy in praise of wisdom. It was the first-century B.C.E. author's intent to assure his contemporaries in the Diaspora that true wisdom was to be found in God alone and not in any of the systems of philosophy that abounded at that time, no matter how

October 14, 2012

Ordinary Time

28th Sunday

*Bare Before the Truth
of the Word*



appealing they might seem.

However, God's wisdom can, at times, seem unappealing and even impractical.

Put yourself in the shoes (sandals?) of the praying person featured here. Your wildest imaginings have been heard and you are promised that whatever you ask for will be given to you. What do you request? Do you ask for enough money to solve the world's debt, to make the European Union solvent, to shore up the world's stock exchanges, to provide jobs for all who need them and to secure the pensions of retirees? Do you ask God to bestow power and authority upon the right leaders, good people who will guide the world justly?

Perhaps the one praying imagined that the messianic expectations of Israel could be fulfilled in him. If he had all resources at his command, what could possibly stop him from saving the world and its people from every need and want and danger?

But rather than succumb to this messiah complex, the one who prayed this prayer was humble enough to stand before God and surrender to a power and a truth that were beyond his capability to grasp or even

imagine.

HEB 4:12-13

A consensus of contemporary scholars agrees that the letter — or, more correctly, the sermon — addressed to the Hebrews was intended for a community of Jewish Christian believers who had suffered some form of persecution, hostility or harassment (10:32-34) and had somehow grown "dull" and "sluggish" (5:11; 6:12) in their faith. Some were even growing nostalgic for their Jewish heritage and were tempted to return to their roots rather than continue to fight the hard fight of Christian faith and practice.

In an effort to renew their faith and encourage their continued commitment to Christ and the Gospel, the ancient author advanced argument upon argument about the unique superiority of Jesus over Moses; of the new covenant over the old; of Jesus' high priesthood over the cultic priests of Israel; and of Jesus' saving sacrifice over all the sacrifices of the Jewish temple. Should those arguments prove unconvincing, the author reminded his readers that God knew them fully and completely, this God whose word they were to heed in every aspect of their lives. He described God's word as living and effective and sharper than a sword that can penetrate to the heart of the believer, revealing all with its exquisitely precise sharpness.

The notion that God's word, once spoken, had a life of its own was not a novel concept. It was well known among the Jews. Recall the passage in Deutero-Isaiah that described the word going forth from God's mouth and not returning until it had done God's will and achieved the end for which God sent it (Isa 55:11). In reminding his contemporaries of this quality of God's word, the author of Hebrews wished to convey a sense of urgency so that they would listen with greater attentiveness to God's guiding, inspiring and challenging word. This word, as Thomas G. Long has explained, lays bare the very heart and soul of a person, dividing



what really matters from what only seems to matter (*Hebrews*, Westminster John Knox Press, Louisville, Ky.: 1997). God's word takes an ordinary day and makes it *today*; it takes an ordinary moment and makes it the time of crisis and decision. It takes a routine event and makes it the theater of the glory of God; it takes an ordinary, unchallenged life and charges it with grace and holiness. Human beings, says Long, may want to skip the casting call, leave the play early, wander in the lobby at intermission and rewrite the ending to suit their purposes. But the living, active and effective word of God permits no such excuse. It refreshes hope and restores confidence while insisting that the show must go on.

The word of God has the power to transform unwilling, mediocre human beings into protagonists in the epic drama of divine redemption. By virtue of the word of God and the light of its power and truth, wimps can become warriors and reticent spectators (who would rather make excuses for their lack of involvement) become active partners of Jesus, willing to take on responsibility for the world and to render an account of themselves before God and all humankind. All this the word can do if we listen and learn and live by its directives.

MARK 10:17-30

Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen once said, "Money can buy the husk of many things but not the kernel. It brings you food but not appetite, medicine but not health, acquaintances but not friends, servants but not faithfulness, days of joy but not peace and happiness." Ibsen understood that money is not an end in itself but a means. Those with money can spend their lives piling up a heap of husks, or they can see their money as an opportunity to ease the suffering and lighten the burdens of others. This was the same lesson Jesus wished to impart to the young man who ran up to him that long-ago day.

In the course of their conversation, it became clear to the man that his faithful observance of the law was

all well and good, but if he wanted to move beyond the law to live according to the mandate of love that Jesus offered, he would have to forego his base of security. "Sell what you have," Jesus challenged, "and give it to the poor; then come, follow me." Money offered the man security but it was also a tether, holding him back from full and free commitment to Jesus.

Jesus admitted that wealth made it hard for people to prioritize their lives in accord with the kingdom of God. Even so, he did not soften or dilute his challenge. He simply assured his would-be disciples that they were not unaided in their efforts. What would be impossible for them to do alone became possible with the grace and love of God.

With a detail that is easy to miss, the Marcan evangelist tells his readers that Jesus looked at the man and loved him *before* issuing what must have seemed like an untenable directive (v. 21). Because of Jesus' love for him, the man would have all the strength and support he needed to move beyond the prescriptions of the law and embrace the way of living, giving and loving to which Jesus was calling him. Because of Jesus' love for us, and for all his would-be followers, discipleship can become a way of life rather than an unattainable ideal.

With the image of the camel and the needle's eye, Jesus affirmed the radical nature of his call to trade transient riches for everlasting

treasure. Scholars suggest that the most plausible explanation for this imagery might be found in the architecture of Jerusalem's fortified walls. Several gates were built into the wall, one being so small that a camel would have to get down and shimmy slowly through—not an impossible task, but not an easy one either. Others have suggested that camel (*kamelos*) was actually an error and should have read *kamilos* or cable. To thread a cable through a needle would indeed be difficult!

In the final verses of this Gospel (vv. 28-31), Jesus shows us the rewards of discipleship. Those who forego their acquisition of transient riches and devote themselves instead to the kingdom will be blessed with everlasting treasure.

Rich in the immeasurable gifts of family, friends and fellowship, believers will inherit a share in eternity. But this eternal sharing will also require believers to follow the same path to glory as Jesus traveled. That journey will include renunciation, persecution and, ultimately, the cross. But all along the way, Jesus will be our guide and companion.

Will we go away sad because we cannot relinquish our many possessions—or will we allow Jesus' look of love to light our way and keep us close to him?

Sermon Starters

Deacon Dick Folger

Once there was a rich man who showed up at the entrance to heaven. Saint Peter, sitting at his desk in front of the gate, opened the rich man's Book of Life and pored over the pages. Finally he looked up and said, "I'm sorry, but I see nothing here that qualifies you for entry into heaven."

The rich man protested, reminding the clerk that he'd helped the poor. Saint Peter went back into the book, searching for a favorable entry. His finger stabbed the page. "Oh, here's something. It says that in 1957 you once gave a quarter to a street beggar." The rich man's face brightened.

"I'll have to clear this with the Board," Peter said. When he returned 10 minutes later, the rich man rose from his seat, awaiting the joyous news. "Sorry," Saint Peter said. "Here's your quarter back."

Preaching to Youth

Jim Auer

KEY VERSE(S) / MAIN IDEA (Wis)

“I prayed and prudence was given me; I pleaded and the spirit of Wisdom came to me, I preferred her to scepter and throne, and deemed riches nothing in comparison with her. ... Yet all good things together came to me in her company, and countless riches at her hands.” Don’t wait until you’re old to exercise prudence or gain some wisdom.

HOW YOUTH MIGHT APPROACH THE MAIN IDEA Are prudence and wisdom against having fun?

STARTER Who are the people in your life whom you consider wise, especially if you personally have learned from them?

LEADING QUESTIONS * Is wisdom the exclusive property of the old? How old must you be to have wisdom? * What do prudence and wisdom have to do with our life of faith? * Who do you consider wise among your relatives, friends or acquaintances? Would you like to have their wisdom when you reach their age? Would you like to have it *now*?

DIRECTIONS TO EXPLORE * Prudence is thinking things through before you act. In some situations, unfortunately, prudence is seen as caution. * Wisdom: understanding situations; knowing the right way to think and act; knowing what’s true and what’s a lie, what’s real and what’s fake, what’s important and what’s not. * We need wisdom to guide children well. When parents lack wisdom, children are cheated out of the direction they need. * Stories of young people who cause tragedy because they think they are invulnerable are all too common. * Urging due caution, whether it comes from a parent or God, is not an attempt to control but to safeguard the child they love. * “Yet all good things together came to me in her company.” Acquiring and acting on wisdom will not leave you wishing you had been rash and stupid instead.

QUOTATION “Rashness belongs to youth; prudence to old age” (Cicero). Agree or disagree?

HOMILY

Fr. James Smith

In the Letting Go

The rich man could not let go of his many possessions, even if he got eternal life in exchange for them. How hard it is to let go! Harder than a camel squeezing through a needle’s eye.

Jesus knew firsthand the difficulty and the pain of letting go. He let go of his family and village friends in order to take up the life of a wandering preacher. After becoming attached to the Baptist and his zeal for the kingdom, Jesus had to let go of that friendship, and even had to preach a different kingdom than the one his friend envisioned. When he offered people his body and blood, he had to let many of his followers walk away. He sadly let Judas go after that hypocritical kiss; he finally released his spirit in death.

But in this process of letting go, Jesus also learned the great value of traveling light, unbound by baggage, free to follow the Spirit. That is why he never flinched from demanding the same from other people. To the rich man, he said, “Riches are not bad in themselves, but they are a problem when they cut you off from other people. If the gap between you and other human beings gets too great, that gap must be spanned by the bridge of your possessions.”

To another man, Jesus said, “Burying your father is a noble duty, but you have to forgo it in order to follow me.” To another would-be follower, he said, “Your family is the basis of community, it gives you a secure place in society — but you must let go of your family in order to become a member of my family.”

Once, when Jesus visited his favorite family, he reluctantly took sides between two sisters. He said that Martha was “busy about many things” while Mary’s choice of talking with him “would not be taken

away from her.” The word “busy” is variously translated as “burdened, preoccupied, encumbered, bound.” Jesus tells her, “I appreciate your biblical hospitality, but don’t let it overwhelm you, obsess you, bind you to the kitchen. Let go of your compulsion to serve. Let the roast burn, let the cake fall. Talk to me!”

To shepherds, Jesus advised, “Let go of the 99 sheep safely in the fold and look for the lonely stray. The obedient, contented and docile sheep are not going anywhere. It is the frisky, adventurous, freedom-loving sheep that will produce the stronger flock.”

At supper on the night before he died, when he warned his friends that he would soon leave them, they were heartbroken. They could not imagine letting him go out of their lives. But he told them, “If you loved me, you would be happy for me that I am going home. Besides, if I don’t leave you, I cannot send you my Holy Spirit.”

One of the most poignant scenes in the Bible is when Jesus takes leave of Mary Magdalene in the garden. She desperately clings to him, but he insists, “You have to let me go. It has been wonderful knowing you in the flesh, but now I have a new mode of being. If you want to continue our friendship, you must meet me in that dimension.”

The process of letting go involves mixed emotions. Poet Cecil Day-Lewis summarizes the feeling in his poem “Walking Away,” where he describes watching his son leave for school on the first day. He is hopeful and proud of his child’s emerging selfhood, but sad and fearful of the future. In his concluding couplet, he writes:

“Selfhood begins by walking away — and love is proved in the letting go.”

Ordinary Time

Up to Jerusalem

By now we know that every time Mark's Jesus predicts his suffering, death and resurrection, someone is going to say or do something that demonstrates they've completely misunderstood what it means to die with Jesus. In our Gospel for September 16 it was Peter (8:27-35); in our September 23 Gospel it was all the disciples (9:30-37). Here in Chapter 10, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, are given the honor.

There's just one problem: Those responsible for choosing our Sunday liturgical passages failed to notice Mark's pattern of prediction, misunderstanding and clarification. They left out the prediction. And of these three Gospel scenes, *this* prediction is the most important. "They were on the way, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus went ahead of them. They were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. Taking the Twelve aside again, he began to tell them what was going to happen to him. 'Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and hand him over to the gentiles who will mock him, spit upon him, scourge him, and put him to death, but after three days he will rise'" (Mark 10:32-34).

If one keeps to Mark's Gospel chronology, Jesus will do just one more thing — cure a blind beggar — and then enter Jerusalem. The first verses of the next chapter describe his triumphant entry into the city. (One of the difficulties homilists face is that we're often commenting on scripture provided to us outside its original context. Technically, in two weeks we should be homilizing on Jesus' Jerusalem arrival. But we did that six months ago on Palm/Passion Sunday. I presume someone's going to have to answer to Mark one day at the pearly gates for having ripped apart his very structured Gospel.)

Because Mark's Jesus has about a week to live when he gives this last prediction, it's no wonder his disciples are both amazed and afraid. What he says has deep implications for each of them.

Yet, in spite of this, James and John come up with a classic misunderstanding of Christian faith. "Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left." Completely ignoring Jesus' words about suffering and death, they only fear their importance will be overlooked when he's finally recognized and accepted as the glorious Messiah most Jews were expecting.

Perhaps even more poignant than James and John's misunderstanding of what it means to be a disciple is Mark's comment, "When the Ten heard this, they became indignant at James and John." It seems all of them were eventually planning to make the same request. James and John simply beat them to the punch. More than just the two brothers were infected by this anti-Christian virus.

Jesus' initial response is a classic cut-down: "You do not know what you are asking." In other words, "You're not observant enough to even ask the right questions." Then, using two idioms for doing difficult things, he demands to know, "Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" (Early Christian baptism was always administered by immersion. Being submerged in the water

Because Mark's Jesus has about a week to live when he gives this last prediction, it's no wonder his disciples are both amazed and afraid.

Preaching Resources

CELEBRATION:
A Comprehensive
Worship Resource
CelebrationPublications.org

**ROMAN
LECTIONARY**
29th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Isa 53:10-11
Ps 33
Heb 4:14-16
Mark 10:35-45

**REVISED COMMON
LECTIONARY**
21st Sunday after Pentecost
Job 38:1-7, (34-41)
Heb 5:1-10
Mark 10:35-45

**ANGLICAN
LECTIONARY**
Proper 24
Isa 53:4-12
Heb 4:12-16
Mark 10:35-45

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October 21, 2012

Ordinary Time

29th Sunday

Up to Jerusalem


conveyed one's commitment to die with Jesus; coming up from it, one's belief in his or her own resurrection.)

When the brothers quickly answer "Yes!" to Jesus' question about drinking the cup and being baptized, he kindly assures them of something Mark's original readers already know: Both eventually will die and rise with him. But he also says something that might surprise some of us: "To sit at my right or at my left is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared."

At times, Mark's Jesus seems more limited than the Jesus of the other three evangelists. Remember how Mark mentioned back in Chapter 6, in the midst of Jesus' Nazareth rejection, that he "could not" work any miracles there because of their lack of faith? Matthew would later change that to "did not." As the Gospels go on, Jesus becomes less and less human and more and more divine.

Putting aside these preliminaries, the heart of Christian faith lies in Jesus' explanation of what it means to die with him. "You know that those who are recognized as rulers over the gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones make their authority over them felt. But it shall not be so among you. Rather, whoever wishes to be great among you will be your servant; whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all. For the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."

We recall that Mark's first way of dying with Jesus is to be completely open to whatever God asks of us; his second, to accept even the most insignificant persons into our communities on an equal footing with everyone else. Now, his third way revolves around how we look at our entire lives, our purpose for being on this earth.

In teaching this passage, I routinely ask my students how much a "ransom" is worth. They quickly inform me there's no set price. A ransom is worth as much as the person being ransomed is worth. Should you or I be kidnapped, our kidnappers could, on a good day, expect a few dollars. Kid-

nap the president of the United States, and you're in a different league.

By referring to himself as a ransom for many, Jesus is basically saying he finds his value in the value of those he serves. If he's important, it's only because he serves important people. Nothing could be more revolutionary.

Jesus recognizes the uniqueness of his dream by demanding his followers rid themselves of the normal, accepted image of leadership in which those in authority "lord it over" those who inhabit the lower rungs of that particular society. Before he came into their lives with his talk of God's kingdom, it was the only leadership model they knew.

I clearly remember comparisons made in the press years ago between the church and General Motors (or AT&T or IBM), pointing out the similarities and differences of the two "institutions," especially stressing how each carried on business and related to their employees. But I don't ever remember any writer bringing up Mark 10 in their evaluation of the church. It, like many sections of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, seems to have been omitted from the way many Christians live their daily lives of faith.

We simply have no one to whom

we can compare the makeup and operation of our Christian communities. No one, that is, except Jesus of Nazareth and the way he related to those around him. We're expected to pattern our lives not on a set of dogmas or the teachings and regulations of an institution, but on a person: an exceptional individual who believed his life's mission was to serve, not to be served.

Sadly, I've never seen a church banner that simply proclaimed: "It shall not be so among you!" If someone dared make one, I'm afraid some parish liturgical committees might reject it on the basis that "No one knows what it means."

We can't overlook the historical situation of Jesus' day and age. When he tells his followers, "Whoever wishes to be first among you will be the slave of all," he's speaking in and to a culture in which real slaves existed — some certainly in the communities in which this Gospel was first proclaimed. Though it's a loving gesture to tell one's significant other, "I'll be your slave for the rest of my life," few during Jesus' earthly ministry would have been so quick to make such an offer. It entailed implications back then that we don't have to worry about today. A slave's whole life revolved around dedication to the master. He or she only existed for the good of that important person.

To say Jesus planned to turn his society upside down is an understatement. Though many of us never seem to notice, much less imitate, his radicalness, the religious and civil leaders of first-century Palestine certainly noticed. His teachings and lifestyle were a direct threat to everything they stood for. They'd sleep much better if they could "permanently" get him out of their way.

That's why Mark's comment that Jesus and his followers were approaching Jerusalem is so significant. Jesus is dead within six days after he hits town. Scholars remind us that it was a courageous act just for the historical Jesus to visit Jerusalem. He could get by promoting his radical ideas up in Galilee. It was miles away from the country's power



source. Once he enters Jerusalem he's in another world. As German New Testament scholar Gerd Theissen observed years ago, "Everyone within a 20-mile radius of Jerusalem made his or her living, directly or indirectly, from the temple. They wouldn't take kindly to an itinerant preacher who consistently spoke against the kind of religion the temple officials taught and practiced." They'd be crazy to let someone that dangerous stay alive for long. Their very economic existence was based on a diametrically opposed worldview.

This logically brings us to Jesus' statement that he came "to give his life as a ransom for many." Most of us are so accustomed to regarding Jesus' death as a vicarious event that we don't realize the uniqueness of that kind of theology. How can one person's suffering and death take the place of another person's suffering and death?

The authors of our Christian scriptures certainly didn't gloss over Jesus' death. We know from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians that a lot of prospective converts had problems with it — both Jews and gentiles. Yet, different authors treat it in different ways. Luke, for instance, in copying Mark, omits the phrase about Jesus giving his life as a ransom. He approaches Jesus' death from a different perspective. The author of today's passage from Hebrews appears to look upon it as a way of Jesus joining himself to our suffering lives. "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses," he writes, "but one who has similarly been tested in every way, yet without sin."

The sixth-century B.C.E. disciples of Deutero-Isaiah seem to be among the first people of biblical faith to have developed the theology of vicarious suffering. Their reflection on the prophet's martyrdom prompted them to compose what we today know as the fourth song of the suffering servant, a small part of which comprises our first reading. In a world in which there was no concept of an afterlife as we know it, they tried to understand how Yahweh could create such a calamity

for them.

Eventually these anonymous writers were inspired to see Deutero-Isaiah's death as an event that affected their own lives for good. "Because of his affliction he shall see the light in fullness of days; through his suffering, my servant shall justify many, and their guilt he shall bear." As we hear in the first lines of today's pericope, "fullness of days" doesn't refer to heaven; it's simply a way of saying the prophet lives on in the lives of his descendants — in this case, his disciples. But, more important, the lives they now experience are more fulfilled and less sinful because of his death. They now have a better relationship with Yahweh than they ever had before.

It should come as no surprise that Jesus' earliest followers identified with Deutero-Isaiah's followers. Many of them saw their leader's death as something that brought them life, not just after their physical deaths, but also right here and now. Jesus had actually ransomed them from a sin-filled, frustrating existence. No wonder the fourth suffering servant song quickly became a first-century Christian favorite. Followers of Jesus couldn't hear it without thinking of Jesus.

The recent change in eucharistic wording has triggered a debate over the number of people for whom Jesus died. Did he ransom all, or just many?

Interviewed some years ago during an ABC program on the historical Jesus, Fr. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor was basically asked the same ques-

tion. The well-known Dominican surprised a lot of people with his answer: "Probably about two dozen." The historical Jesus died because it was the only way he could be faithful to the small handful of men and women who followed him. To have left Gethsemane that night and climbed the Mount of Olives to reach the safety of the Judean wilderness would have been a sign he wasn't convinced about his own message and ministry. (Murphy-O'Connor even pointed out recently excavated primitive stairs that led from the garden to the top of the mount. What a temptation!) Jesus died because he had to keep faith with those who had committed themselves to his dream of surfacing God's kingdom among them. He knew all their names, even the names of their children. The historical Jesus didn't die for an anonymous group of people.

Of course, we know those two dozen soon multiplied. And each new disciple, even those who had never come into contact with the historical Jesus, eventually began to understand he also died for them. They, like we, were able to become part of something that went beyond just one historical period.

It now makes sense why Mark emphasized the three ways of dying with Jesus. If all are willing to die with him, then he died for all. All are invited; all have an equal chance of achieving the salvation Jesus first experienced.

Sermon Starters

Deacon Dick Folger

Mother Teresa famously said, "When you don't have anything, then you have everything."

Today's Gospel story about the ambition of James and John illustrates the folly of always wanting more. James and John wanted power and prestige. They wanted to be higher than the rest. Jesus told them that the greatest among them is the least, the one who becomes the servant of all.

Still, we keep hoarding until we accumulate so much we have to throw some of it away.



Preaching to Youth

Jim Auer

KEY VERSE(S) / MAIN IDEA (Heb)

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness, but one who was tempted in every way that we are, yet never sinned. So let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and favor and to find help in time of need.” Confidence in God’s mercy, favor and help, no matter what our spiritual condition.

BACKGROUND NOTE Anticipate questions about how Jesus, who is God, can go to God on our behalf.

HOW YOUTH MIGHT INITIALLY APPROACH THE MAIN IDEA Exceptionally varied, depending on whether or not they feel a real need for God’s mercy and help.

STARTER Has anyone ever told you, “I understand what you’re going through — I’ve been there and I can help”?

LEADING QUESTIONS * Do you have to get cleaned up so you can take a bath? Similarly, do we need to get ourselves reformed, spiritually spruced up, and religious in order to approach God? * Hebrews: “... and to find help in time of need.” What times of great need do you think Hebrews might be referring to? What if a time of great need was caused by our own fault? Can we still approach the “throne of grace”?

DIRECTIONS TO EXPLORE * We’re uncomfortable trying to pray at precisely the times when we need prayer the most: times of severe temptation, times of being down on ourselves for not being a better person. * The fact that Jesus never sinned does not diminish his capacity to know what it’s like “in real life.” (“Real life” or “the real world” is often cited as distinct from the world of religion and spiritual principles.) * The arrogance and stupidity of feeling we’re not in any particular need of God’s mercy.

QUOTATION “And if through our own fault and human weakness we should fall, the Lord comes to our aid and raises us up” (St. Josemaria Escriva).

HOMILY

Karen Johnson

Becoming One with Him

[James and John] answered him, “Grant that in your glory we may sit one at your right and the other at your left.” Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking.” (Mark 10: 35-38)

I teach at Saint Nicholas Adult High School in Ottawa, Ontario, and this Thursday is our graduation ceremony. Some of the graduates will receive special engraved plaques for outstanding accomplishments; most will not. As a staff, it is hard to navigate our way through a sea of eager, deserving faces and choose the best candidates. Everyone yearns for an extra-special moment of recognition for a job well done. The desire to be first, the desire to be great seems engraved in our very DNA.

Today’s readings redefine greatness and challenge us to see the world and ourselves in a radically different way. The first two readings provide a template for the type of lives we are to live, while the Gospel presents the actual challenge.

This is not a comfortable Sunday. Isaiah, called the prophet of consolation, is not writing to console. Instead, the words of his suffering servant song are graphic and direct. The anguish is palpable. The suffering servant (who Christians know as Jesus) is afflicted with our infirmities and diseases. In the second reading, Saint Paul affirms Isaiah’s portrait, stating that Jesus has been tested as we are.

In the Gospel, James and John demonstrate our usual worldview. They want recognition and greatness and boldly ask to sit beside Jesus in his glory. The other apostles, also very human, are angry at James and John for asking the question. How dare they ask to be glorified! What about the rest of them? Jesus calls the Twelve to himself and

speaks these challenging words: “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be the slave of all.”

James and John ask to sit beside Jesus. Jesus asks us not to sit beside him but rather to become one with him. If we choose to walk through this life following Jesus, then we will walk through suffering and become triumphant. Isaiah tells us that out of this anguish, we will see light. All is not lost. Suffering is ultimately redemptive.

This all sounds very well and good, but how does becoming Jesus look different from sitting beside him? I could tell numerous saint stories but would rather challenge you to look for the saints who surround you, and most importantly, for the saint within you.

Through the wonders of YouTube, I have met a living saint named Gianna Jessen. Gianna was born alive in 1977 in Los Angeles while her mother was trying to abort her. She survived against all odds and, in her words, was “given the gift” of cerebral palsy. Today, she limps through life as a pro-life activist and singer. She continues to suffer, but uses this suffering to glorify God. She unabashedly refers to herself as “God’s Girl.” Joy flows from every pore of her body; she knows from deep within that God can make the most miserable thing beautiful.

Becoming like God involves living like Gianna Jessen. How do you suffer? Have you said yes to your suffering, or do you rant and rail against it? Once you have said yes, God can make of you a beautiful work of art. From this place you can serve others in a way that sitting beside Jesus would never afford.

Ordinary Time

A Blind Beggar Sees

Unless we understand the original context in which Mark placed today's Gospel pericope, we won't be able to appreciate the important theological message he tried to convey.

Shortly after World War II, some scripture scholars — later referred to as redaction critics — began to understand that individual Gospel passages are like scenes in a movie. They were never meant to stand alone. Each evangelist began with an overall picture of his work, distributing the different narratives in specific places in order to get his point across. Though we might enjoy certain scenes from specific movies, if we haven't seen the whole movie, we're really not seeing those scenes as the director or screenwriter wanted them to be seen. For instance, Clark Gable's famous statement "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn!" only makes sense to those who have courageously sat through the previous four hours of "Gone with the Wind."

Mark has just concluded his last prediction-misunderstanding-clarification passage on dying with Jesus. He and his disciples are leaving Jericho, the last town before they reach Jerusalem. The next narrative describes his triumphant Palm Sunday entrance into the holy city. In less than a week, Jesus of Nazareth will be dead. Mark has just one bit of unfinished business before he narrates Jesus' last days. His chance meeting with Bartimaeus will take care of that business.

The blind beggar, "hearing that it was Jesus of Nazareth [passing by], began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, son of David, have pity on me.'" In this situation, "son of David" is a messianic title, the way someone would refer to that long-awaited person Yahweh was expected to send to save Israel from its problems.

Those familiar with Mark's Gospel know about the "messianic secret": Whenever, during Jesus' ministry, a Jew uses a messianic title for him, he basically tells them, "Be quiet!" The evangelist begins this practice in Chapter 1, when Jesus cures a demoniac in the Capernaum synagogue, and continues it throughout his Gospel.

Most scholars believe this "secret" dates back to the historical Jesus. Though this itinerant preacher might have suspected he was the Messiah, he was convinced he wasn't the Messiah most Jews were expecting. Only the title was the same. He tries to quiet those who refer to him as Messiah because he doesn't want to give people the wrong idea about him before he's able to show them exactly what kind of a Messiah he is. Those of us with "titles" know exactly what the historical Jesus was up against. A person's title becomes a label that excuses others from discovering who someone really is.

Anyway, at this point in Mark's narrative, we can expect the beggar to be told, "Be silent." And he is. Only this time, for the first time in the Gospel, Jesus isn't the silencer; it's the crowd. The evangelist seems to be telling his readers that, just a few days before Jesus' passion and death, he's no longer hiding his messiah-ship. Now the people want to keep who he is a secret.

Refusing to be silenced, Bartimaeus continues to yell out until Jesus finally responds, "'Call him.' So they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you.'"

Notice the word used three times in less than 20 words? Call. It probably doesn't mean a lot to most of us, but for Mark's original readers, the word call is very significant. Each is convinced he or she has been called by

Preaching Resources

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**ROMAN
LECTIONARY**
30th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Jer 31:7-9
Ps 126
Heb 5:1-6
Mark 10:46-52

**REVISED COMMON
LECTIONARY**
22nd Sunday after Pentecost
Job 42:1-6, 10-17
Heb 7:23-28
Mark 10:46-52

**ANGLICAN
LECTIONARY**
Proper 25
Isa 59:(1-4) 9-19
Heb 5:12-6:1, 9-12
Mark 10:46-52

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"Take courage; get up, Jesus is calling you."

the risen Jesus to imitate his death and resurrection. In their minds, how Bartimaeus answers his call will be a big thing.

“He threw aside his cloak, sprang up and came to Jesus.”

The beggar responds to Jesus’ call as we would expect a perfect disciple to respond. He immediately throws aside what is probably his only possession, his cloak, and jumps up and hurries to Jesus. Obviously sightless people don’t normally move that quickly. But Mark isn’t interested in providing us with a video of the event; he wants us to understand its significance. When the risen Jesus calls, nothing should stand in the way of our immediate response. Jesus isn’t someone we put on our schedule for a future meeting. Our whole life revolves around his calls.

Jesus’ next words are very symbolic. “What do you want me to do for you?” Have we heard that specific question recently? Just last week when, after Jesus’ third prediction of his passion, death and resurrection, James and John come up to him and demand, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” At that point — the only other time in Mark’s Gospel — Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” Of course, we know the sons of Zebedee arrogantly ask for the glory seats, a request a true disciple would never make. But here, Mark has depicted Bartimaeus as the perfect disciple by the way he responds to Jesus’ call. And now every reader is bending forward with cupped ears to hear how a real follower of Jesus responds to that question. Bartimaeus’ answer is a simple: “Master, I want to see.” According to Mark, it’s the only prayer a true Christian should ever make.

Consider the message of Christopher Chabris and Daniel Simons’ 2010 book *The Invisible Gorilla* (Crown Publishers: New York). Every Christian should read at least its first few chapters. The two psychologists conducted an experiment. (It can be found on YouTube.) People are instructed to count the number of passes a team makes during a basketball game. While they’re counting, a girl

October 28, 2012

Ordinary Time

30th Sunday

A Blind Beggar Sees



in a gorilla outfit suddenly appears, weaving her way among the players, at times even standing in front of them. When the playing stops, the participants are asked two questions: How many passes did the team make? And did you see the gorilla? Though almost everyone nailed the number of passes, very few noticed the gorilla!

Chabris and Simons concluded that no one sees everything that passes before their eyes. We only see what we’re conditioned to see or what we’re looking for. We miss a lot of what’s right in front of us.

Their research helps us understand what Jesus of Nazareth was all about.

As we know from the synoptic Gospels, his historical ministry revolved around a conviction that God’s kingdom is close at hand, right before our eyes. God is working effectively in our everyday lives. Yet most people never seem to notice. They presume God is securely ensconced in heaven, not active here on earth. That’s why Jesus demands repentance of those who receive his good news. They must go through a *metanoia*, a complete change of their value system, a 180-degree change in how they look at everyone and everything around them.

Our Gospel passage two Sundays

ago from Chapter 10 clearly tells us that Jesus didn’t conceive of his ministry as primarily getting people into heaven. When the rich young man asks what he must do to “inherit eternal life,” Jesus answers like a good Pharisee, “Keep the commandments.” When he assures Jesus he’s already done that, Jesus offers to help him step beyond just getting into heaven, to experience God’s kingdom here on earth long before he physically dies. But to do that, the young man must change his focus from riches to the poor, to start seeing things and people he never noticed before. Sadly, he refuses. He simply can’t pull off such a drastic *metanoia*.

A Christian’s life revolves around seeing, especially seeing what other people don’t notice.

While we’re on the subject, many people don’t notice what Jesus says immediately after Bartimaeus asks to see. We’d logically expect him to command, “Receive your sight!” or something similar. But instead, he simply tells him, “Go your way; your faith has saved you.”

In a sense, Jesus is saying, “I don’t have to give you your sight; your faith has already done that. Your faith in me enables you to see the things and people I see.” Mark is using Bartimaeus, not as an historical figure for whom Jesus once worked a miracle, but as a way to help his readers appreciate the gift of sight that the risen Jesus has already given to them. Scripture scholar Marcus Borg stresses that very point in his recent book *Speaking Christian* (HarperOne, New York: 2011). Dealing with the term “salvation,” Borg points out that rarely does this biblical word refer to the afterlife. According to his reading, one way Jesus saves right here and now is to give us a new way of looking at reality, something the “unsaved” — even though they might eventually get into heaven — never seem to acquire. Starting eternal life here is possible.

How does one pull that off? Bartimaeus again demonstrates the technique. “Immediately he received his sight and followed him on the way.” On that particular day, on the road



outside Jericho, “the way” leads to Jerusalem: the place in which Jesus just predicted he’d have to suffer, die and then rise.

Appreciate how Mark ties the three predictions and the blind beggar story together. Remember back in Chapter 8, after Jesus’ first prediction, he was forced to tell Peter, “Get behind me, Satan!” I mentioned then that the Greek word for disciple literally means “someone who goes behind,” a character trait Peter had not yet acquired. In this tie-up-the-loose-ends pericope, the evangelist finally provides us with a glimpse of the perfect one who goes behind: Bartimaeus.

Today’s second reading, from Hebrews, helps us appreciate another of the different images our earliest Christian authors employed when they expressed their belief in the importance of Jesus. Because of our church’s emphasis on the ministry of priesthood, lots of time and effort has been spent through the centuries in clarifying and exploring the author’s concept of Jesus the high priest. The quote “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” was integrated into the closing hymn of my (and many others’) ordination ceremony.

As future priests, our seminary professors and spiritual directors constantly impressed on us that our main task was to get our people into heaven, as Jesus, the priest, did. Often they reminded us of the story of Jean Vianney, the patron saint of diocesan priests, being lost on his initial trip to Ars. Encountering a small boy, the priest offered a quid pro quo, “If you show me the way to Ars, I’ll show you the way to heaven.” Showing people the way to heaven was what we priests were to be about.

Though I wouldn’t dare question these saintly seminary men of the past, our sacred authors, according to Borg and other scripture scholars, often looked at salvation from a different perspective.

Jeremiah, for instance, in our first reading, knows nothing of a heaven or hell when he promises that Yahweh will one day save Yahweh’s people. The people he’s speaking about are

the Israelites exiled to Assyria in 721 B.C.E. over 100 years before the prophet spoke these words. Though most Israelites had given up hope of their return, Jeremiah still trusts God will pull off this act of salvation in the lifetime of his listeners. “I [Yahweh] will bring them back from the land of the north; I will gather them from the ends of the world, with the blind and the lame in their midst, the mothers and those with child; they shall return as an immense throng.”

Salvation from slavery or exile is a frequent theme and promise in the Hebrew scriptures. It even carries over into some weekly practices of the Chosen People. Glance at the third commandment in Deuteronomy 5. The reason the Israelites are to keep the Sabbath springs not from God resting on the seventh day of creation, but from Yahweh freeing them from Egyptian slavery. One day a week they’re to do no work, a practical way to remind themselves they’ve been saved; they’re free people.

Perhaps on this Sunday we should be helping our listeners notice people in our communities who are not free, those who still are in exile, individuals who continue to look for salvation. Jesus not only saw such people during his earthly ministry, he showed his followers how to be just as observant, the first step in bringing about that

salvation. But, even more important, we should be helping the members of our communities reflect on their own salvation, especially when it comes to freedom.

Moral theologians have been telling us for a long time that no action done out of fear will count for good or bad at our final judgment. Only completely free actions will come into play at the pearly gates. Most of us will be relieved to discover that the bad things we did from force or fear will be wiped off the slate. But we might protest when we see the good things also disappear. All those times, for instance, when as teenagers we went to Mass because our parents forced us to go. Or those occasions when we did something good for someone only because we were trapped by public opinion and didn’t dare do what we freely wanted to do.

If psychologists and psychiatrists are correct, very few actions on any given day are actually free actions. We’ve got a long way to go before we’re liberated from the slavery of fear that operates in all of us.

Whoever thought salvation would have anything to do with our most ordinary human actions, or that a blind beggar would actually show us what to pray for? It’s all a matter of noticing what’s before our very eyes.

Sermon Starters

Deacon Dick Folger

Bill Gates failed in his first business, Traf-O-Data. But he learned from the experience and started another business, which he called Microsoft. Persistence pays off.

President Calvin Coolidge once said, “Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Genius will not. Education will not. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent. The slogan ‘Press On’ has solved and always will solve the problems of the human race.”

Long before Bill Gates and Calvin Coolidge, blind Bartimaeus was putting persistence into practice. He wanted to have his vision back, and nothing was going to stop him. Bartimaeus first had to get in front of the crowds lining the street. He found his way to the front, and sat on the roadside to await the coming of the one who could heal him. When he heard him coming, he began to call out to Jesus. When people tried to silence him, Bartimaeus only called out louder.

Preaching to Youth

Jim Auer

KEY VERSE(S) / MAIN IDEA (Mark)

“A blind beggar, Bartimaeus, began to call out, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me. ... I want to see.’ ” The many varieties of blindness and learning to recognize our own. (Be alert to anyone in the assembly who is vision-impaired.)

HOW YOUTH MIGHT APPROACH THE MAIN IDEA It’s churchy theory.

STARTER What types of blindness can you think of besides physically not being able to see?

LEADING QUESTIONS * Say God invites you to look over your past and see clearly the good you’ve done for others: the ways you’ve made them happy, the ways you’ve supported them, the times you’ve been a good example to them, the times you’ve put your own interests aside in order to help them. Would you accept God’s offer? Why or why not? * God now invites you to look over your past and see clearly the pain and sorrow you’ve caused other people, the times you’ve disappointed those who were counting on you, the times you’ve deliberately hurt others with harsh words or bullying. Would you accept this offer from God? Why or why not? * Would you want the gift of seeing clearly what you should do—even (or especially) when it goes against what you would strongly prefer?

DIRECTIONS TO EXPLORE * The blindness of prejudice, which forms opinions about someone based on a stereotype. Sadly, this results in being blind to all the good things about the person. * The blindness of not seeing the inequality in the way the earth’s resources are distributed. * The blindness of failing to recognize greed, especially when it masquerades as “progress” and especially when the greed is ours. * The gift of seeing what is at work in a situation, why people are acting as they do. * Seeing Jesus in people we don’t like.

MEDIA LINK “Open the eyes of my heart, Lord / Open the eyes of my heart / I want to see you” (Michael W. Smith, “Worship” album).

HOMILY

Fr. James Smith

Original Faith

Jesus said that the blind man was saved by his faith. But what faith was that? Not his belief in the Trinity, which was unknown at the time. Not his belief in the death and resurrection of Jesus, which had not yet happened.

At its root, faith is not a belief in certain dogmas, but a raw response to mystery. Einstein, who was an agnostic, wrote: “The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mysterious. To sense that behind everything we experience there is something that the mind cannot grasp, whose beauty and sublimity reaches us only indirectly: this is religiousness. Those who cannot wonder and stand in awe are as good as dead.”

Faith is the response to mystery. We sense that there is something bigger and better than us; bigger and better than anything outside us; something so big and so good that we cannot even give it a name. It calls itself “I am” — and we translate that as God. But before we approach that mystery, we encounter three other mysteries closer at hand: the universe, our self, and others.

We stand in awe before the magnificence of mountains, the beauty of the stars, the terror of a tsunami, the mesmerizing roar of tides. And we wonder: Where did it come from? Where will it end? What is time, how extensive is space? This can be an occasion of faith.

We stand in front of the mirror that reflects our own mystery. Who am I, what am I doing here? Do I matter? Does anyone care about me? Do I have a future? Like an image in a mirror of a mirror of a mirror, my depth is fathomless.

We stand in awe before the mystery of others. How should we respond to someone we can never really know? Talmudic scholar Emmanuel Levi-

nas thinks that the other person is a challenge to us, a demand on our recognition. The other actually calls us into being, formulates who we are. The mystery of the other is an occasion of faith.

The radical mysteries of God, nature, our self and the other are too vague, too diffuse, too powerful to be sustained for long. So we structure them, codify them, categorize them into manageable pieces. The mystery of God becomes dogmas of Trinity and Incarnation; the mystery of the cosmos becomes physics and chemistry; the mystery of the self becomes ego and id; the mystery of the other becomes neighbor and stranger. And all this specialization guts religion.

Religion is supposed to be an unbreakable trust in a personal God, but for many, it is a list of doctrines. Morality is supposed to be a loving response to a caring God, but for many it is cold obedience to impersonal laws. Prayer is supposed to be answering the call of God, but too often it is the frantic attempt to contact God. The Gospel indicates the way, not the destination. The kingdom of God is here, not in heaven. Eternal life starts now, not sometime later. The sacraments are the divination of everyday affairs, not magical bolts from the blue.

Doctrines and catechism and creeds are useful ways to explain and expand on original faith. But they can also obscure and even replace original faith. More complex things are not always better. Enthusiasm can be reduced to routine; personal response can be institutionalized.

The original faith of the blind man was not complicated. He simply believed that Jesus could heal him. The original creed of Christians was simple: Jesus is Lord! The original moral code was simple: Love!

Everything else is commentary.



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The Lectionary provides a kind of spiritual script for the universal church that keeps us, literally, all on the same page as we journey through the liturgical seasons. These short reflections, written by four authors who meet regularly to share the readings, are intended to help daily preachers and others who pray from the assigned scriptures each day to orient themselves to the Living Word addressed to the church in the world. Authors are identified by their initials, with short bios provided on the last page.

October 2012

Twenty-Sixth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 1: Job 1:6-22; Luke 9:46-50

Thérèse of the Child Jesus, religious and doctor of the church

Master, we saw someone casting out demons in your name and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow in our company. Jesus tells John not to stop the outsider from doing good work. As Jesus explains, anyone doing good in his name is on the right side. Unfortunately, today many people use Jesus' name to justify all sorts of evil and hatred. Even so-called ministers of the Gospel use selected passages from scripture to promote an evil agenda, resulting in misery, discrimination, death and war. We need to be more welcoming of everyone doing good in the world and wary of those who employ Jesus' name but not his message. *Lord, open our hearts to all your servants, we pray.* PC

Tues., Oct. 2: Job 3:1-3, 11-17, 20-23; Matt 18:1-5, 10

Holy Guardian Angels

See that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that their angels in heaven always look upon the face of my heavenly Father. Belief in angels is mentioned many times in Hebrew scripture: Moses is told by Yahweh, "My angel shall go before you" (Exod 32:34); Psalm 34:8 states, "The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them." In the New Testament, we are told after Peter is arrested, "An angel of the Lord opened the gates of the jail" (Acts 5:19). In today's reading, Jesus confirms his belief by saying even a little child has a protecting angel in heaven. *O Lord, in thanksgiving for the angels in our lives, we pray.* PC

Wed., Oct. 3: Job 9:1-12, 14-16; Luke 9:57-62

No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God. What does it mean for us to look at what we left behind? Is it to have doubt about the mission we have taken on, or doubt in our ability to accomplish the mission? Is it regret? Has "putting our hand to the plow" entailed a greater sacrifice than we intended? Do we yearn for the comfort of the past instead of the continual hard work we have shouldered? Maybe we long for the ignorance we once had about the prevalence of social injustice. Looking back is a precursor to turning back, and Jesus knew it. *O Lord, keep our hand on the plow and our eyes straight ahead, we pray.* PC

Thurs., Oct. 4: Job 19:21-27; Luke 10:1-12

Francis of Assisi, religious

Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Jesus says a lot in these instructions to his disciples, as they are sent to neighboring towns to prepare for his coming. He says we must keep our focus on what we're about and not get encumbered by unnecessary possessions or sidetracked by other diversions. This passage may have been in the mind of Francis as he stripped off his garments in the public square as a dramatic gesture of complete poverty. The practice of poverty reminds us of our dependency on God and allows us to experience solidarity with the world's poor. As we celebrate the life of Francis, we determine to live simply so that all creation can flourish. *Lord, for your poor, we pray.* PC

Fri., Oct. 5: Job 38:1, 12-21; 40:3-5; Luke 10:13-16

For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. We no longer reform our lives by wearing sackcloth and ashes, but we still need to reform our character by offering sacrifice just as much as we ever did. We in the developed world must equalize the distribution of wealth among peoples. One particularly effective speaker recently came to our parish to speak on behalf of the poor in a Central American country. He said he would not ask for 10 percent of our wealth (the typical tithe), but 10 percent of our waste. We should examine our waste as a starting point to living more justly. *Lord, help us reform our lives, we pray.* PC



**Sat., Oct. 6: Job 42:1-3, 5-6, 12-17;
Luke 10:17-24**

Bruno, priest; Blessed Marie-Rose Durocher, religious

Blest are the eyes that see what you see. Jesus speaks these words to his disciples after they return from performing miracles in his name. They're excited, in awe about what they've been able to accomplish. They have experienced the power of God working through them, and they're greatly moved. Today we celebrate the lives of two others who saw a need and responded in Jesus' name. Bruno and Marie-Rose lived hundreds of years apart, but both were educators and both began religious communities that have continued their work to this day. Jesus is asking us now to relieve the suffering of others. *Lord, help us to realize that in you all things are possible, we pray.* PC

Twenty-Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 8: Gal 1:6-12; Luke 10:25-37

Who is my neighbor? We know this story; we've heard it regularly since we were little children. The priest passes by the man who was beaten and robbed and left for dead on the side of the road. The Levite also passes by. Maybe he had a good excuse, maybe not, but he was still a religious man — a leader, an example. Finally a Samaritan comes down the road, sees the man and is filled with compassion for him. He immediately takes action, cleaning and bandaging the man's wounds. He takes the man to an inn, where he pays the innkeeper to care for the man until he returns. A Samaritan? They were enemies, outsiders. But according to Jesus, the Good Samaritan is the guy in the black hat who turns out to be the hero. And what does Jesus tell the lawyer? "Go and do likewise." *Lord, grant us the grace, courage and energy to love all our neighbors.* JL

Tues., Oct. 9: Gal 1:13-24; Luke 10:38-42

Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. I am a Martha: the oldest daughter, someone who has no trouble setting goals, writing endless to-do lists and keeping busy. There's always *something* that needs to be done. But part of me is Mary, too. I enjoy — and need — solitude and quiet and rest. It's too bad this story has been used to put us in neat little boxes. Bible study or food pantry? Mission trip or retreat? If we consider the Good Samaritan and Mary and Martha together, we see that Jesus affirms not only going and doing but also listening and learning. Christians, it seems, are to do *and* to be. *Patient God, help us to slow down, rest in your presence, and then go forth renewed.* JL

Wed., Oct. 10: Gal 2:1-2, 7-14; Luke 11:1-4

Our Father ... hallowed be your name. In Luke's Gospel, it's less than 40 words — perhaps the most familiar words in the entire New Testament. No other prayer is so close to our hearts. We learn it as children, we say it together every week during worship. We are comforted by it in times of uncertainty and grief. It is used at every stage of life, from baptism to burial. More than anything else Jesus left us, the Lord's Prayer

stands at the heart and center of all his teachings. Consider all the themes included in this prayer: God's holiness, the hope for God's kingdom, God's providence, the pervasiveness of sin and God's great forgiveness, the reality of trial and temptation, and God's guidance and deliverance through those times. *Lord, teach us to pray.* JL

Thurs., Oct. 11: Gal 3:1-5; Luke 11:5-13

Ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. How did you learn to pray? Jesus' instructions about prayer continue with teachings that urge us to be persistent in prayer. The parable of the man going to a friend's house for bread — at midnight! — is understandable only when we know the Middle Eastern practice of hospitality. Hosts were expected to welcome and provide for guests or to share their resources with neighbors so they could care for their guests. In the same way, God will always welcome us, and our prayers do not have to be vague. The three imperatives, ask, seek and knock, give us permission to be honest and direct and persistent in our prayers. *Hear our prayer, O God, and grant us your peace.* JL

Fri., Oct. 12: Gal 3:7-14; Luke 11:15-26

By the power of Beelzebul, the prince of demons, he drives out demons. The word has gotten out that Jesus wields authority over unclean spirits. He can break their power over people. A delegation of scribes arrives, ready to thwart and undermine Jesus' preaching and healing. The scribes question the source of Jesus' authority; they try to label Jesus as a messenger of Satan rather than of God. But Jesus was not possessed by an evil spirit. It was God's Spirit who guided him. If we are to be counted among the brothers and sisters of Christ, we need to consider that God's Holy Spirit may act in ways we do not expect. God may surprise us! *Almighty God, open the eyes of our hearts to see you at work in the world.* JL

Sat., Oct. 13: Gal 3:22-29; Luke 11:27-28

Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it. The woman in the crowd probably believed what every other Jewish woman believed at that time: that a woman's worth depended, first, on having a son; and second, on having a son who was successful. Jesus offered her a completely different foundation for her identity and her life: her relationship with God. According to Jesus, it doesn't matter whether you have sons or who they become; listening to God, and responding in obedience and faith, should be at the center of our lives. *Lead us, O God, as we seek to hear and observe your word.* JL

Twenty-Eighth Week in Ordinary Time

**Mon., Oct. 15: Gal 4:22-24, 26-27, 31-5:1;
Luke 11:29-32**

Teresa of Jesus, religious and doctor of the church

For freedom Christ has set us free. In the United States there is a lot of talk about freedom. There was "Operation Iraqi Freedom" and, later, "Operation Enduring Freedom." This past summer the American bishops called for the "Fortnight for



Freedom” and a campaign by some women religious used the slogan “Honor Conscience, Defend Religious Freedom.” What is this Christian freedom that Paul exhorts us to claim? His answer is a few verses later: Christ set us free to serve each other in love. Perhaps disciples of Jesus should evaluate statements about freedom in light of this meaning. *Lord Jesus, help me to claim the freedom you offer us so that I may serve those you put on my path to love.* PBS

Tues., Oct. 16: Gal 5:1-6; Luke 11:37-41

As to what is within, give alms, and behold, everything will be clean for you. The Pharisees are shocked that Jesus doesn't observe the ritual washing before the meal. What is the solution Jesus offers? Confession? Spiritual direction? A retreat? While all these are good and may bring us to that place Jesus invites us, the solution is to give alms. We are to do for others, focus on the needs of others, and give what we have to make life easier for others. It's counterintuitive. It's impractical. It's divine. *Lord Jesus, forgive me when I spend my resources — my money, my time, my energy — on what doesn't matter to you.* PBS

Wed., Oct. 17: Gal 5:18-25; Luke 11:42-46

Ignatius of Antioch, bishop and martyr

These you should have done, without overlooking the others. I don't recall ever reading this line before. Jesus continues to pummel the Pharisees with “woes” — this time for tithing on even the most insignificant of herbs, but failing to pay attention to more significant acts of love for God and neighbor. But notice: It seems that Jesus does not absolve the Pharisees from their tithing. He doesn't say love your neighbor and forget the religious practice. Instead, it appears that we are to do both. As former Daily Bread author MEW liked to say, “Christianity is not for wusses.” *Lord Jesus, give me strength, and a sensitive conscience, and a sense of humor.* PBS

Thurs., Oct. 18: 2 Tim 4:10-17b; Luke 10:1-9

Luke, evangelist

The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few. Today's passage from the second letter to Timothy mentions Luke, whom Paul says is “the only one with me.” Paul gives us some of the homely details of being a disciple. It appears that he is lonely, feels deserted, and is resentful, too. He wants his cloak that he left behind and some books (papyrus rolls and parchments). One thinks of this lion of a man and is touched by his simple needs. In the Gospel, it is clearer what a disciple will have to endure, what risks a disciple is expected to take to proclaim the Gospel. *Lord Jesus, raise up for your church wise, energetic, generous leaders and help us each, by our words and how we live, to do our part in announcing your good news.* PBS

Fri., Oct. 19: Eph 1:11-14; Luke 12:1-7

Jean de Brébeuf and Isaac Jogues, priests, and companions, martyrs

Be afraid of the one who after killing has the power to cast into Gehenna. Isaac Jogues endured slavery and torture for 13 months, yet when he was rescued and sent back to Europe, he begged to return to Canada, to the very people who tor-

tured him and who ultimately killed him most cruelly. Jean de Brébeuf was almost refused the seminary because of his fragile health, yet he endured the privations of missionary life for 24 years before returning to France, and he also begged to return to Canada, where he was martyred. These and so many witnesses, those gone before us and those giving their lives today, are examples of people whose trust in God is so great that they are willing to undergo suffering in the name of Jesus. *Lord Jesus, give us the desire for such faith.* PBS

Sat., Oct. 20: Eph 1:15-23; Luke 12:8-12

May the Father of Our Lord Jesus Christ enlighten the eyes of our hearts, that we might see how great is the hope to which we are called. This is my favorite Gospel acclamation verse, based on the prayer of Paul for the Christians in Ephesus. It's a wonderful prayer for ourselves, for our loved ones, and especially for those who seem to live unaware of the wonders of this life; those we long to help, but cannot. It is the devil's own work when, surrounded by riches both spiritual and material, we feel poor. *Lord Jesus, open the eyes of my heart; I commend to your love those I love and for whom I have promised to pray.* PBS

Twenty-Ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 22: Eph 2:1-10; Luke 12:13-21

What shall I do, for I do not have space to store my harvest? Although we fear the ups and downs of the economy, we're still a nation of vast riches. The trappings of materialism prompt us to think we don't have enough, yet we waste enough to provide for the world's real needy. It isn't that we lack the resources to provide for all. We lack the desire and effort to provide for everyone sufficiently and justly. We've gone so far overboard with our covetousness that hoarding and storage wars pass for entertainment on television. Fear, greed and the lure of materialism only leave us hungry for more things while others sincerely hunger. *For the grace to know what we truly need, we pray.* PR

Tues., Oct. 23: Eph 2:12-22; Luke 12:35-38

Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. When people speak of “living each day as if it might be their last,” they tend to suggest taking advantage of the adventures and pleasures life has to offer. We don't know how much time we will be granted for our earthly life, but to squander that time in selfish pursuits seems ridiculously shallow. Sure, the Lord wants us to enjoy the many gifts we have received. However, if we're absorbed in fulfilling our every whim, we're going to be distracted from preparing to welcome the master. We need to find a balance in how we live, and we'll only find that in a life of justice and service. *Lord, help us to keep you at the forefront of our daily lives, we pray.* PR

Wed., Oct. 24: Eph 3:2-12; Luke 12:39-48

Much will be required of the person entrusted with much, and still more will be demanded of the person entrusted with more. We know we're blessed. We have the gifts of faith, material wealth, freedom and more. We also know that we're called



to share these gifts and ensure justice for the poor and marginalized, among our many Christian responsibilities. We know that weaknesses, brokenness, selfishness, laziness and other barriers keep us from living up to the call that accompanies our many blessings. If we could look at ourselves as the Lord sees us, and know how much faith and trust he places in each of us, we could live up to that call. He has given us these many gifts and responsibilities because we're capable of doing so much good. Lives depend on our being up to the challenge. *For the grace to be who the Lord calls us to be, we pray.* PR

Thurs., Oct. 25: Eph 3:14-21; Luke 12:49-53

I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! If you've ever come home from an inspiring Mass, retreat, lecture or discussion, you understand the enthusiasm Jesus tries to instill in his disciples. That passion tends to come in inspired moments, and then often wanes. If we're fortunate, another event sparks our excitement again, and we become energized to act on it — at least for a while. In this same passage, Jesus speaks of dividing households. It seems that he's suggesting we need to break away from what distracts us from our fervor so we can live continually in his love and keep the flame burning. *Lord, enflame our hearts with the desire to be more like you, we pray.* PR

Fri., Oct. 26: Eph 4:1-6; Luke 12:54-59

Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? We're bombarded with opinions and commentary. Twenty-four-hour "news" channels spin every conceivable event. Even the weather calls for interpretation and explanation. The how and why of many things can be mysterious and confusing, but we have been provided with a clear, solid guideline as to what is good and just and right. We simply need to trust in the grace and guidance that the Lord so generously provides. *Open our eyes, Lord, to your clear and unchanging wisdom, we pray.* PR

Sat., Oct. 27: Eph 4:7-16; Luke 13:1-9

I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. We're offered many chances to get it right, but like the barren fig tree, we'll never yield anything of value if we keep on following the same unproductive methods. We need to submit to the Lord's plan of tender care. We need to prune away what drains our life and drags us down. We're made to bear abundant fruit and to contribute to the Lord's bountiful harvest. We must allow the tender hand of the gardener to guide us. *Lord, help us to grow, we pray.* PR

Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Mon., Oct. 29: Eph 4:32-5:8; Luke 13:10-17

When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, "Woman, you are set free of your infirmity." Jesus flaunts his disregard for the absolute legalism that flies in the face of common

sense. Over and over in scripture we see Jesus acting on behalf of the suffering, even if it means breaking the rules. So many parallels to this lesson exist today. One that immediately comes to mind is the way many people want to treat undocumented workers. It makes no difference if they were brought here as children, or if they have no other home or family, or if they have worked from sunup to sundown for meager wages to harvest our food so it will not rot in the fields. *Lord, show us your ways, we pray.* PC

Tues., Oct. 30: Eph 5:21-33; Luke 13:18-21

To what shall I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed with three measures of wheat flour until the whole batch of dough was leavened. Jesus' parable is the answer to the question we ask in the face of social injustice: What can I do? I'm only one person, and the task is so large. With the proper conditions, prayer and community, we can change the situation. A local church allowed their front yard to be used as a community garden. Several farmers in the area are planting an extra row of produce for the food pantry. Three local churches started a meals program that offers a free meal every week. *Lord, inspire us to be the yeast today, we pray.* PC

Wed., Oct. 31: Eph 6:1-9; Luke 13:22-30

And people will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south, and will recline at table in the kingdom of God. Interesting. No one group is singled out in God's kingdom. People of all cultures, all races, from every area of the world are at the feast. All are called, inspired by Jesus' message of love and forgiveness. Once again, Jesus' emphasis here is on the lack of divisions in his kingdom — women, men and children are all present. Young, old, healthy, sick, educated, illiterate, native, foreign, gay, straight, all have a place at God's feast. In the same way, we must work to break down divisions among people, treating everyone as equally deserving of God's call. *Lord, let us hear your call, we pray.* PC

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