

Together

Sharing Christ

Vol. 28, No. 3

July 6, 2008

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Letter from the Pastor

2008

July 6,

Shalom!

Our summer series on the Tanakh takes up the wisdom books this year: Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth (or Ecclesiastes), as I hope you have been hearing at weekend liturgies. This has set me to some thinking about wisdom.

Wisdom is distinguishable both from knowledge and from prudence. Knowledge is mostly about stuff: theoretical knowledge is knowing stuff. Knowing the facts of history or science is theoretical knowledge. Practical knowledge is knowing how to do stuff: being able to throw a curveball is practical knowledge.

Prudence is about knowing when and whether to use knowledge. Does it make sense for you to make an issue out of my misstatement about some fact of history, or should you just let it go? Knowing to which batter and when in the count to throw your curveball is prudence. The two best definitions of prudence I know are Harry Truman's definition of politics as "the art of the possible," and the old maxim of the Roman Curia, "See everything, Overlook a lot. Correct a little. "

So prudence builds on knowledge. Similarly, I think, wisdom builds on prudence and knowledge. Wisdom is reflecting on an accumulated store of knowledge and prudence and properly assessing its value.

First, it's about knowing how much you know. The human race has learned a lot over the centuries, and each of us has absorbed more of that store of knowledge than we often give ourselves credit for. You know more than

you think you do, and you can do more than you think you can, and it is wisdom to know that.

Second, it's about knowing how much you don't know. The more you really know about something, the more you appreciate how much more there is to learn. The process is unending, so that the greatest minds appreciate better than the rest of us how little we know. Being a little too sure of either the completeness or the certitude of what we know is one of the most dangerous forms of pride, as well as true foolishness, the opposite of wisdom. You know less than you think you do, and it is wisdom to know that too.

Third, it's about knowing that all knowledge and all prudence both arise from and converge toward the same one point, which we commonly call God. This is the great contribution of the Jewish wisdom tradition, beginning in the book of Proverbs. The Jewish sages always tried to integrate secular knowledge, prudence, and wisdom with religious knowledge, prudence, and wisdom. As the books of Job and Qoheleth point out, the integration is not always completely successful. But we never give up on the process, even though the product will never be perfect: just as our knowledge, prudence and wisdom increase, both as individuals from our own personal learning and experience, and as a community from our corporate learning and experience, our ability to integrate our secular and religious learnings will continue to increase. This is the point that fundamentalists, both religious and secular, miss when they simplistically insist that they are the sole possessors of wisdom, and no other discipline has anything meaningful to contribute.

Fourth, it's about accepting our limits, and limits of our community. It is said that kids know that their parents are perfect, and think that's wonderful, adolescents know their parents are not perfect, and think that's terrible, and adults know their parents are not perfect and think that's o.k. Maybe that's the main point of Qoheleth: after struggling with the questions posed by Job, Qoheleth concludes that it's not really necessary for us to have all the answers, we just do the best we can and that's good enough.

Fifth, it's about continuing to stand in awe of the Divine Mystery. We should not misread Qoheleth as advice to give up on the quest. Precisely because all knowledge, prudence and wisdom begin and end in God, the infinite mystery, we can always know more and more, better and better, without ever coming to an end. Our fulfillment in heaven is not complete knowledge of God and everything else - that would surely get boring after a while. Rather, our fulfillment will be a constant growth in our understanding of, and our relationship to, God, always deepening, but never exhausting.

If all of the above sound fairly confusing, and even contradictory at times, that's because I'm not yet all that wise myself, and because I have trouble expressing what little wisdom

July 6, 2008

Together Sharing Christ

I do have in a coherent way, and perhaps also because reality itself is like that: often confusing, sometimes apparently contradictory, but always inviting us further into the journey. Lady Wisdom is still among us, still crying out, "Come to me, all you who are simple, and partake of my feast." May we always continue to respond to Her invitation.

Peace and Love,
Dick
Pastor

Sacramental Celebrations

April 29-July 28, 2008

Baptism

Mason James Dunn

Child of Scott & Courney Dunn

September 23, 2007

Christopher John Whitehead

Child of Andrew & Tiffany Whitehead

October 7, 2007

Marta Eyerusalem Dixon

Grace Makeda Dixon

Children of Julia Dixon & Lalanía Star

November 18, 2007

Madeleine Shea Bartolini

Child of Andrew & Susan Bartolini

November 25, 2007

Owen Robert Gibson

Child of Alex & Caitlin Gibson

December 9, 2007

Madeline Bell Waldman

Child of Scott & Francis Waldman

December 30, 2007

Lily Elizabeth Bedon

Child of George & Jennifer Bedon

March 30, 2008

Anna Katherine Simms

Child of Troy & Katherine Simms

May 25, 2008

Cole Bennett Craddock

Child of Sean & Christine Craddock

June 1, 2008

Our Catholic understanding—our theology—of the sacraments is multi-faceted. No one explanation can hope to capture everything there is to say about sacrament.

Our summer liturgy series on Proverbs, Job, and Qoheleth [Ecclesiastes] pulls together everyday, common sense human wisdom and the deeper wisdom sourced in discernment of God.

In the overall content of these books (and their endorsemen, by being included in the Bible), we affirm that the sacred and the secular are not separate. There is not one sphere that is “real life” and one that is “holy.” Rather, the holy is present in the ordinary, giving the mundane its true worth and meaning.

This might be expected in a faith which places at the heart of its belief and life, the Incarnation of the divine in the human Jesus.

Applying this perspective to sacrament, we note that our sacraments appeal to our common human senses through ordinary artifacts and proclaim that these can mediate to us the holy. In such things as water, bread, light, wine, we maintain that God is present and working.

This attention to the ordinary is reflected as well in the events which we have chosen to mark with sacrament.

Christopher John Whitehead
Child of Andrew & Tiffany Whitehead
October 7, 2007

First Eucharist

May 4, 2008

Samuel Biamonte
Kathleen Burbank
Ann Burke
Nicholas Hersfeld
Maya McKnight
Matthew McMillan

Matrimony

Samuel Porter Callard and Rachel Marie Gahan
September 15, 2007

Frank Herbert Greenlee and Kristina Lynn Moran
September 22, 2007

**Andrew Aloysius Callahan and Gia-Marie
D'Angelo**
October 20, 2007

Daniel Carroll Toomey Jr. and Kylene V. Dixon
September 15, 2007

Peter W. Sheehan and Meredith C. Atkinson
April 19, 2008

**James Nicholas Paciluyko and Melisa Cristina Torres-
Platon**
May 24, 2008

Joseph John Gaffney and Michelle Christina Strotman
June 21, 2008

Baptism--Adult: For adults we mark a change of basic orientation. This experience of conversion, of setting out on a new path because of insights we have come to value, is one which—we would hope—all of us experience, often more than once. The sacrament builds on our human experience of being “born again” through any deeper perception of the truth and affirms as well that such events are ultimately encounters and re-covenanting with God..

Baptism—Infant: At first glance, infant baptism can almost appear to be a different sacrament than adult baptism. But while infant baptism does not incorporate a choice by the one being baptized, it sacramentalizes a deeper reality which lies at the heart of adult conversion baptism.

Here, again, the holy shines through the ordinary. The birth of a child in itself can be an experience of God in the ordinary. I am reminded of someone who told me that looking down at the newborn in his arms in the delivery room, he knew for certain that God is.

Infant baptism ritualizes our belief that the birth of this child is not a matter of indifference to the God of the Universe. We acknowledge (as we say in one of the Eucharistic prayers) “all life, all holiness comes from You” The life, the goodness of this child—all the life and all the goodness that this child may enjoy and radiate throughout their life, all the ordinary joys and zest for life—come from, and only from, God. There is not other place it could come from.

We acknowledge and ritualize as well the reality that our lives as humans are shaped by the families and communities within which we

May They Rest in Peace

Rose Watkins

Aunt of Dennis Moore
September 1, 2007

Don Pepple

Father of John Pepple
September 8, 2007

Maureen McAfee

Daughter of
Jim & Chris Carow
September 16, 2007

Anne Sicola

Mother of
Geri Sicola and
Terunesh Kassa Ray
November 18, 2007

Glenn Meyer

Brother of Peggy Meyer
November 30, 2007

Tino Pasquarello

Parishioner and Friend
November 25, 2007

John Fayssoux

Uncle of Carolyn MacAvoy
December 28, 2007

Theresa El Jallad

Niece of Theresa Farren
January 2008

Una Creed

Mother of Peggy Shouse
January 24, 2008

Joyce Wallace

Sister of Rita Bacote
February 5, 2008

Lucy Maio

Aunt of Angela Oriente
February 29, 2008

Clare Musmiller

Mother of Sheila Vidmar
March 6, 2008

Marcella Rolandelli

Aunt of Paul and sister of
George Rolandelli
March 8, 2008

Honore Anderson

Mother of Paul Anderson
March 19, 2008

David, Madeleine, and

Megan McGrath

Nephew and family of Charlie
McGrath
March 19, 2008

Sara Mansueto

Sister of Molly Jameson
April 2008

Ken Berger

Our Faithful Superintendent
for many years and
Father of Greg Berger
April 12, 2008

Bill Johnson

Husband of Paula Johnson
May 23, 2008

Joseph Schaffner

Brother of Judy Ulrich
May 31, 2008

Handy Brandenburg

Brother-in-law of
Nancy O'Neill and Betty
Kavanaugh
June 9, 2008

grow up. As they awaited the birth of this child, the new parents very likely discussed and made a number of decisions about how this child would be raised: everything from how they would foster the child's education to what kinds of snacks their preschooler would be introduced to. If they have moved recently, or if they are looking to move, the kind of neighborhood experience the new home will provide for their child will be a significant factor in their choice. It is this human reality that legitimizes their decision to welcome this child into a specific Christian community: this is what we want for our child. It is here that we want them to be nurtured and exposed to the experience of God.

Eucharist: All human experience of community and shared meals prepares us to recognize Jesus in "the breaking of the bread" and to commit ourselves to letting God's kingdom/kingdom come among us. And so we offer all the realities of our daily lives with the bread and the wine; they also become "the body of Christ."

Matrimony: In a true committed relationship of mutual respect, support, love, this couple can experience something of our God-given destiny to be persons who are loved. Nothing else will affect the outcome of their lives as much. The stronger this bond of love, the easier it will be for each partner to open their lives to God. They acknowledge now, at the start, that "all life, all holiness comes from You"

The following three essays grew out of reflections on Pope Benedict's visits that Father Lawrence shared in homilies at St. V's. Later he re-wrote them as reading text and they appeared in three issues of Baltimore's The Catholic Review.

25,000 Miles by 2000 Years

Richard T. Lawrence
Part 1 of 3

To concelebrate Mass with Pope Benedict XVI at Nationals Stadium last week, I had to get out of bed by 4 A.M., a task I do not undertake lightly. But I was sure it was going to be worth it, and it was. When you celebrate the Eucharist with the Pope, you know, not in your head, nor even in your gut, but deep down in your bones, that you are a part of something that is 25,000 miles around and 2,000 years deep.

The Pope, more than anything else, is the sacrament of the unity of the Church across time and space, and nowhere is this more experienceable than at the Eucharist. When Vatican II said that the Church primarily is the Church when it comes together for Eucharist, the bishops were only echoing the scripture and the constant teaching of the Fathers: The Church makes the Eucharist, and the Eucharist makes the Church. This happens for us every Sunday in our parishes. But when one of our bishops comes and presides, it's different: we can feel that we are a part of the Church of Baltimore. And when the Pope sits at the head of the Eucharistic table, we can feel the whole World Church present with us.

For a long time, the church was deprived of this experience. Not only did the slow speed of transportation make international Papal trips infeasible, the 'recent unpleasantness' between the Vatican and Italy in the 1870's left the Pope the 'prisoner of the Vatican.' Recent Popes broke this open a little – who can ever forget Paul VI at the UN crying out "Guerre, jamais, jamais plus!" – but it was Pope John Paul II, with his theatrical background and his rock star personality, who really restored this ancient theology of the Pope as Sacrament of the Unity of the Church to its rightful place in Catholic life.

Not only was he good at it, he loved it. When the kids cried "John Paul II, we love you," he would spontaneously shout back, "John Paul II, he loves you." It was just who he was. Pope Benedict is a very different personality. He is much a more quiet, reserved and private person.. It is said that his idea of a fun evening is getting to sit alone at the piano and play a Mozart sonata.

So I was afraid that he would let this whole re-nascent theology die just because it did not suit who he was as a person. If he had not done international trips the way John Paul did, they could have become just an idiosyncrasy of his predecessor, and definitely optional for his successors.

But he didn't let it die. Despite his age and his private personality, he recognized that his predecessor had rediscovered something very important about the Papacy, and he seems determined to institutionalize that rediscovery. From now on, regardless of who is Pope, these international trips will be an expected part of what it means to be Pope: a major part of the job of the Pope is now to go around the world, preaching the gospel and presiding at the Eucharist, so that people all over the world can have the profound sacramental experience of being a part of the worldwide church.

Of course, being a part of the World Church has consequences. We get to influence the Church in the rest of the world (the topic of Part II), and we have to be open to the influence of the Church in the rest of the world, especially when the Pope carefully calls it to our attention (the topic of Part III).

But for now, let me say simply Thank God for Pope Benedict's decision to let me experience in my bones once more what it means to be a part of something that is 25,000 miles around and 2,000 years deep. Thank you, Holy Father.

"The right to religious freedom"

Richard T. Lawrence

Part 2 of 3

Previously, we talked about the importance of celebrating the Eucharist with the Pope, and feeling deep in our bones that we are a part of the world church.

As a part of the world church, we have a right to influence the whole church, and a duty to let ourselves be influenced by the whole church. To see this at work, look at the Holy Father's address at the United Nations. He talked chiefly about human rights, and stressed "the right to religious freedom."

Not too many decades ago, his predecessors in the Chair of Peter were decrying the very notion of religious freedom as an "execrable heresy." How did we get from there to here? The Church of Baltimore played a major role in the development of this doctrine.

The story begins with founding of Maryland in 1634, when Catholic refugees opened their arms to those of other faiths. It continues with Cardinal Gibbons, whose strong support for religious liberty, American style, was a hallmark of his ministry.

The climax of the story comes in our own time. Fr. John Courtney Murray, S.J., a professor at the Jesuit seminary at Woodstock, just outside of Baltimore, began to think, speak and write about religious liberty. His major book on the subject, "*We Hold These Truths*," was published in 1960. Official Rome was aghast. Murray was silenced, forbidden to speak or write. But he still had friends, including Msgr., later Bishop, Frank

Murphy, who kept his ideas in front of Cardinal Shehan, who stood firmly in the line of Gibbons on this question.

Now Cardinal Shehan was widely respected, and a personal friend of Cardinal Montini, who became Pope Paul VI. So when the pope decided to create a board of 12 Presidents for the Council, he asked Cardinal Shehan to be one of them. Shehan was also named to Cardinal Bea's commission, on Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Activities, because of his reputation as a leader in this area.

In that Commission, Cardinal Shehan found other thought similar to, but not identical with, his own and that of Fr. Murray. It took several years to work out a common position they thought could command a two-thirds majority of the Council Fathers, but by the fourth session, they had the text they wanted, and took it to the floor.

Cardinal Shehan was prominent in the debate, with a lengthy address in classical Latin showing that the position of the draft statement was more in accord with the fullness of the ancient tradition of the church than the more recent Vatican line. By the end of three days of debate, it was becoming clear that they had the votes.

The hard-line reactionaries panicked. They called a meeting of the Council leadership, about 30 people, and took a vote not to take a vote. Without a vote, the draft would die quietly.

Cardinal Shehan was literally livid with rage. He went back to his rooms and began to scribble furiously. Eight pages later, he sealed it up, called in his aide, Msgr. Porter White, a Vaticanologist, a canonist and a Latinist, and said, "Porter, see to it that the Holy Father sees this before he retires for the night." Porter worked his way through the bureaucratic maze, and got the message delivered to the Pope.

The next morning, the Council's executive secretary, Archbishop Pericle Felici, was not at Mass, nor even at coffee-break. Just before the gavel came down to open the session, he came flying in and conferred hurriedly with the presider for that day, who then called the session to order and announced the date and time for the vote on the decree on religious liberty.

The vote, when it came, was overwhelmingly in favor, and paved the way for Pope Benedict to stand before the UN and plead for religious freedom. Thanks to a silenced theologian, a monsignor who kept everyone connected, a Cardinal who had the trust of the Pope, and a little old canonist who knew how to run the Vatican maze, all from Baltimore. We have influenced the world Church in important ways.

"Subordinated to the decisions of a few"

Richard T. Lawrence

Part 3 of 3

Last time, we talked about how our local church influences the world-wide church. But our local church must also be open to the influence of the church around the world, especially when the Pope puts something squarely on our plate. An example of this can also be found in Benedict XVI's UN address.

The Holy Father spoke of a need to develop a "multilateral consensus" on issues ranging from "security," to "reduction of local and global inequalities," to "the environment and the climate." While such problems require all international leaders "to act jointly and to show a readiness to work in good faith," it is a paradox that such efforts are thwarted because everything is still "subordinated to the decisions of a few."

Now the Holy Father is much too diplomatic to enumerate the list of those "few," but is it really necessary? However long or short the list, our country must be placed near the top of it.

What is the Pope telling us? Well, he doesn't spell it out in so many words, so we have to give our attention to the topics he presents, and try to work out the details.

What would a "multilateral consensus" look like in practice and how would we get there? And how are such matters being "subordinated to the decisions of a few?"

Let's look at security first. How should we deal with it? The Pope seems to be suggesting that we should take a leadership role in the development of a real international consensus on this problem, rather than acting on the basis of "a coalition of the willing" that sounds a lot like "the decisions of a few."

That might go a long way toward explaining why the Holy See has made so many pronouncements opposing the current war in Iraq. Perhaps the position of the Holy Father on "multilateral consensus" suggests that no one country has a right to call for "regime change" in another country. If one nation has a veto power over another nation's government, as the very concept of "regime change" seems to suggest, isn't that the essence of empire? Perhaps the Pope would agree with the insight of former President Ronald Reagan, that empires are evil.

Perhaps we should reflect, both as Catholics and as Americans, on whether our recent foreign policy lives up the finest part of our religious or our national traditions.

For another example, let's take the environment and the climate. How does our nation help form a "multilateral consensus" on this topic? Well, to start with, we talk to each

other and listen to each other, both at home and in the international community. We realize that new facts are being developed all the time, and that as a result reasoned opinions about the best course of action will change as well.

But we also realize that we cannot afford to sit around and do nothing until the perfect answer emerges. We have a responsibility to act now, on the basis of the best information we have so far. And when a true “multilateral consensus” emerges on what should be done now, on the basis of evidence to date, it is probably not helpful for any one nation to refuse its assent on the basis of private national interests, saying that it would cost our workers too many jobs or our corporations too much in profits. (Does the word “Kyoto” ring a bell?)

These may be uncomfortable thoughts for American Catholics, bishops, priests and laity alike, but can we be a part of the worldwide church and not listen to the voice of the rest of the church, especially when it is put to us by our Holy Father? I suggest that no one who has experienced celebrating the Eucharist with the Pope and felt in his or her bones that we are all a part of something 25,000 miles around and 2000 years deep can ignore such challenges.

Many people thought of Jesus as John the Baptist’s successor, but, successor or not, Jesus did not baptize. Instead he went to seek out, help and serve the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . . He did not feel called to save Israel by bringing everyone to a baptism of repentance in the Jordan. He decided that something else was necessary.

The people to whom Jesus turned his attention are referred to in the gospels by a variety of terms Jesus generally refers to them as the poor or the little ones; the Pharisees refer to the same people as sinners or the rabble who know nothing of the law. Today some might refer to this section of the population as the lower classes; others would call them the oppressed.

. . . Jesus was “moved with compassion for the crowds. . . .” The English word “compassion” is far too weak to express the emotion that moved Jesus. The Greek verb *splagchnizomai* . . . is derived from the noun *splagchnon*, which means intestines, bowels, entrails, or heart. . . . The Greek verb therefore means a movement or impulse that wells up from one’s very entrails, a gut reaction. . . .

John relied upon a baptism of conversion; Jesus set out to liberate people from every form of suffering and anguish—present and future. . . .

Albert Nolan. Jesus Before Christianity

The following article was published in the Winter 2008 issue of Independent Reader, which focused on housing and homelessness issues. The authors interviewed four residents of the St. V Park community. The article is reprinted with permission.

Life in the Park: A Community of Common Struggle

Excerpts from Interviews with Tye, Walter, Moses, and Carolyn

by Nicholas Petr and Nicholas Wisniewski

What would you like to share about your own experiences with homelessness? How long have you been out here?

Tye: Well, I'm 35 and I'm kind of embarrassed to say, but I've been homeless on and off, about ten years. My story may be a little different than everyone else's. Mine is my own thing you know. I have a problem with self-discipline. The system never really failed me I guess or [pause] well—I followed the rules of society and everything, but I got a little drug problem and if you don't pay your bills . . . nobody's gonna let you stay for free. You [wear on the] patience [of] your family, and they want to see you do well. So they show you tough love.

I know what they were talking about. You know how your parents tell you, "Don't do this or don't do that, you'll ruin your life." It starts ringing in your head later in life. Now I see what they were talking about, but my parents are gone now. I regret a lot.

I'm trying to get myself together, but I'm out here, and I can't get help, because I guess I burnt those bridges. I never did anybody wrong or anything—it's just the choices that I made when I was being hard-headed. But, being out here has

opened my eyes up to a lot of things. You never take nothing for granted. Nothing. It's just the simple things like turning on a light, you know, or going into the refrigerator. There might not be anything in there, but at least you've got a refrigerator to go to. Or man, walking on warm floors. You know it was sub-zero weather out here last night? I pissed on the ground, and about twenty minutes later, I saw it was frozen. And I'm out here sleeping in this mess.

I feel bad about myself, and I know I did it to myself, but I'm trying to rectify it. Only nobody wants to give me a chance. I did this stuff when I was a youth, and people just think you're the same person, but you're not. People do grow, and they grow to understand things.

Moses: You could say some of us are out here by choice, like me. I'm 47. I was in prison for 15 years, and I'm just coming home. Of course, now my family is gone. So I have no one to turn to, nowhere to go but here. Most of my family is dead, the rest are in North Carolina. My mother died while I was locked up—so I'm here.

Here at this park, at least we're protected. The pastor here, he protects us. People try to come and help us out with brand new coats and boots and stuff

like that. We get some work, but you know we have to take what we can get, because most jobs don't want us, especially if you have a criminal record. Nobody's going to hire you if you have a record. So we have to understand that. So where does that leave us? Some people have to break the law just to stay alive.

Have you seen the number of people on the streets change over time? Would you say that the number of homeless people on the streets today is increasing or decreasing?

Tye: Oh man, it's serious. Old and young, there's kids out here! More and more people.

I try to talk to the young people and send them back to their families. I tell 'em to go back to their mom and dad if they can. Even if they're trying to show their kids tough love, you don't want to show your kid tough love like this. It's really terrible. You don't know where your next meal is coming from, how you're going to use a bathroom, . . . where you're gonna wash your face. You get to be glad you're this cold, so you don't stink so bad around people. You know.

Carolyn: There are a lot more people out here because they have nowhere else to go. Most places charge at least \$400 a month, and that's too much. People can't afford that. I get SSI [Supplemental Security Income] and right now, that's \$630 a month. So I finally found something I think I can afford. It's still not much.

Tye: \$630 a month is poverty. Even if you get SSI, you can't expect to live on that.

Moses: Some people only get like \$184 a month. Everyday we wake up to more people out here on the streets. Have you ever seen the Federal Building and all the people sleeping outside there? Or you can look down in Federal Hill, Highlandtown, South Baltimore, East, West—people are homeless everywhere. Baltimore's got a lot of soup kitchens and a lot of missions. There's some social services. It's still not enough, though.

The thing is, I've seen homelessness increase along with crime and murders. The city doesn't pay enough attention to numbers of homeless people. They're too busy counting the number of murders and the drugs. What do they expect? Don't they see that there's thousands and thousands more people homeless than there used to be. What do you think people do when they have no job, no place to live? It's getting worse. I even know a couple of doctors and lawyers who are homeless.

You can try to go to social services for help, but they're overcrowded. You can try to go to Our Daily Bread—they try to help, Health Care for the Homeless—they try to help, or Beans and Bread—it's all the same story. There's too many homeless, and there's just more and more coming.

Do you know any of the people who were recently evicted from underneath the Interstate 83 Bridge, and if so, how are people reacting to that?

Tye: I know all of them. I'm glad for them, because they put them up in hotels and apparently they're giving them housing [i.e. the City of Baltimore].

Moses: The reason they took those people out from under the bridge is because that [property] belongs to the city—this park doesn't. This park belongs to this pastor here at the church. So the city is not going to come by and give us housing like they did for those people under the bridge.

They gave those people a motel room for 30 days, and after that they give them Section 8. But a lot of those people have already had Section 8 and probably won't get it again. So then they'll be right back out here again. Even if they get it, how are they going to pay the gas, electric, and the rent?

Sheila Dixon says she's got a 10-year plan to get all the homeless off the street. 10 years? She's not going to be there in ten years. So how is she going to have a 10-year plan to get the homeless off the street?

I don't believe that any women and children should have to stay over in Code Blue. No women with young children or infants should be homeless in the first place. They should automatically get housing.

How would you describe the community here at the park?

Tye: Like Family. We are a very tight community. That's what we have here is our own community. Nobody bothers us. It may be an eyesore, but we try to clean it up the best we can. We don't have much to do that with—a rake or brooms—but we do try to keep it clean. We feed the animals—the birds the squirrels. We ain't greedy. If people bring food out here, we save some for the others. We get people who come and just stay two nights, three nights. We make them as comfortable as possible. Those two benches right there [points out two benches behind him], those are for guests who come through. We have blankets and tarps for them and food if they're hungry.

What, in your opinion, could be done to end homelessness? Where do you think the city, state, or federal government should start?

Walter: If they want to do something about this, why are they tearing down these houses, all these buildings? It's about money. Look at all these houses here with nobody in them.

Carolyn: There's enough places for these people, just give them a place to go. Use these big empty buildings and everybody could at least have a room.

Moses: Take all these houses boarded up all over the city and turn them into low-income housing so that people can get in there today. How many empty houses does this city have? We don't

even have to talk about the ones Johns Hopkins is buying up and knocking down [e.g. the East Side Biotech Park]. But what about the rest of the city? Let's say its 40,000 houses. Well, that's a good start. East Side, West Side, North, South—we've got abandoned houses everywhere. There's also big buildings like this church. You could house a lot of people in these places. Open those buildings up and divide them up into small rooms or something. They could let these people take that \$184 they might be getting from the government and pay a little each month, gas and electric included. I mean there's a way to do this. The government could turn this around. They could turn it around completely if they wanted to. Give people these houses and let them renovate and turn these places around.

They're all so busy worrying about drugs and the crime rate—you give these people something to do, somewhere to live, and we won't have all that! They're all worried about getting slot machines and fixing up the harbor and making downtown better. Forget downtown. Do you think people on these tours want to drive by and say, "Oh look, there's the homeless people"? They don't want to see that. That's not gonna make them want to spend their money, but that's all these politicians are worried about, just making downtown better. Why not make the whole city better?

All these drugs and murders and robberies, that's called survival. You give these people what they need to survive and the chance to live a good life, and that will all change.

Weeping, in fact, may be the best indicator we have of what life is really all about for us. It may be only when we weep that we can come to know best either ourselves or our worlds. What we weep for measures what we are. What we weep over indicates what others may expect of us in life. It was when Jesus wept over Jerusalem that the die was cast, not for crucifixion, but for the blaze of energy and the boldness of stature that spent everything in him to change what, in the end, though it could not be changed, could not be ignored either. Tears, you see, are more than sadness. . . .

Of all the expressions of human emotion in the lexicon of life, weeping may be the most functional, the mostly deeply versatile. The tears we weep show us our deepest, neediest, most private selves. Our tears expose us. They lay bare both to others and to ourselves. What we cry about is what we care about. What we have no tears for hardens our hearts.

Joan Chittister, *There is a Season*, quoted in
Bevely Lanzetta (ed.) *40-Day Journey with Joan Chittister*

Resources:

From the jacket: "As Elizabeth Johnson notes, Karl Rahner had an abiding concern that much of Christian theology presented a God 'unworthy of belief.' Here Johnson has given us a God truly worthy of our belief, fidelity, and love. Every word breathes with the author's own deep love of God, the church, and the world. Combining her usual theological sophistication with the practical wisdom that comes from a life-long commitment to the life of faith, this is theology as it should be."

- Roberto S. Goizueta, Associate Professor of Theology, Boston College, and past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America

QUEST for the LIVING GOD:

Mapping Frontiers in the Theology of God

ELIZABETH A. JOHNSON

New York: Continuum, 2007. ISBN978-0-8264-1770-1 \$24.95

From the Author's INTRODUCTION:

Since the middle of the twentieth century, a burgeoning renaissance of insights into God has been taking place. Around the world different groups of Christian people, stressed by particular historical circumstances, have been gaining glimpses of the living God in fresh and unexpected ways. So compelling are these insights that rather than being hoarded by the local communities that first realized them, they are offered as a gift and a challenge to the worldwide church. We are living in a golden age of discovery, to the point where it has become customary for theologians to say that we are witnessing nothing less than a "revolution" in the theology of God.

It is not the case that a wholly different God is being discovered from the One believed in by previous generations. Christian faith today does not believe in a novel God but, finding itself in strange situations, seeks the active presence of divine Spirit precisely there, in their midst. Aspects long forgotten are brought into new relationship with current events, with the result that the depths of divine compassion are appreciated in ways not previously imagined. "*O Beauty, ever ancient, ever new, late have I loved you,*" cried the North African bishop Augustine in the fifth century. Since the middle of the twentieth century, people of faith actively engaged in different situations have been questing for, finding, and expressing this ancient Beauty in ever-new terms. The emerging ideas of who God is, how God acts in the world, and what it means to say "We believe in one God . . ." have opened up what amounts to genuine frontiers for faith and action.

This book sets out the fruit of some of these discoveries. Written with a broad audience in view, its aim is to enlighten the minds of those who seek understanding about spiritual

matters; to encourage those who doubt to keep faith with their questions; to give energetic support to those who work for the good of others; and to provide those who teach or preach in the church with food for thought that they can use to nourish others. There is such a hunger for a mature faith in many people today. Women and men yearn for a relationship with the living God commensurate with their aspirations, competencies, and struggles in our perilous times. Stale, naive, worn-out concepts of God no longer satisfy. Insights emerging in various contexts around the world and articulated in theology, however, are setting out rich fare.

.....
 A word about the phrase “the living God” used in the title. This way of speaking runs through the Bible from beginning to end to identify the Source of life as dynamic, bounteous, and full of surprises. When they entered into covenant, the people of Israel “*heard the voice of the living God*” speaking out of the fire at Sinai (Deut 5:26) and knew “*the living God is among you*” as they crossed into the promised land (Josh 3:10). . . . Christians, too, now included in the ancient promise, understand that they are “*children of the living God*” (Rom 9:26) thanks to the marginal Jew Jesus Christ, “*the Son of the living God*” (Matt 16:16).

Living means the opposite of dead. A well that is living never dries up but has water that is always springing up and running; its living water is fresh, alive, flowing. . . . As used in this book, this appellation summons up a sense of the God who is full of energy and spirit, alive with designs for liberation and healing, always approaching from the future to do something new. In addition, the term “the living God” evokes the realization that there is always more to divine Mystery than human beings can nail down. It prepares those who use it for astonishment.

.....
 Signifying the Creator, Savior, and Lover of all the world, the whole cosmos as well as all human beings, the phrase “the living God” elicits a sense of ineffable divine mystery on the move in history, calling forth our own efforts in partnership while nourishing a loving relationship at the center of our being: “my heart and my flesh sing for joy to the living God” (Ps 84:2).

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Note to St. V folks close at hand: I am interested in putting in a bulk order for this book at the St. V Bookstore price and making it available at cost. Please let me know if you're interested.

Folks at a distance: This book is available new from Amazon for \$16.47.

Anne Maura English, eam_english@earthlink.net

What Are We Doing at Mass?

A Continuing Series by Anne Maura English

In the last segment we looked at the Eucharistic prayer as a Thanksgiving prayer, modelled on the Jewish table prayer. In it we summarize briefly the great things God has done for humanity—and for us individually. It is a time to place our “outside church” lives in the wider context of what God is doing in the world and to realize that salvation history moves forward in and through our day to day lives.

This time we look at the multi-faceted mystery of the Eucharist from another angle—that of sacrifice. That word presents a problem for us—nothing new, it’s been doing that for three or four thousand years. The idea of giving something to one’s god or gods is an ancient one. Ancient too are rituals for achieving union or communion with divinity. What understanding of the deity and what relationship between divinity and humans originally underlay these? The precise answers are shrouded in pre-history. Did the practice of destroying one’s gift (whether grain, animal, or human) originate as an attempt to appease an often malevolent god or attract the attention of an indifferent one? Or were these meanings a later corruption of a simple desire to express, “We give these to You totally.” What part did eating some of the burnt offering play in these early worshippers’ spirituality? However these questions worked out in practice, there was an understanding that through the god’s/gods’ acceptance of the offering these ordinary things became holy. Hence our English word from the Latin: “sacrus” = holy (“sacred”), “fice” from “facio, facere” = to make.

Certainly the Tanach testifies that all facets of these understandings—absorbed from the culture within which Israelite religion sprung—were reflected at one time or other in Israel’s practice of offering to God. However, what also comes through clearly is that Israel’s understanding of God grew and developed over the centuries. Gradually Israel came to see that true “sacrifice” to a God of tenderness and fidelity was a life lived in response to such a God. Ritual sacrificial offerings were meaningful only when they expressed the desire of the individual and community to become or be made holy by living in harmony with God.

As the New Testament writers’ wrestle with the meaning of Jesus’ sacrifice, there is little sense that the sacrifice is meant to appease or manipulate God. (This will enter back into Christianity, but it is not there in the beginning.) The vivid experience of a God whom Jesus had mirrored and taught them to call *Abba* did not permit such an image. However, their strongly legal/hierarchical culture did influence theologies of Jesus’ crucifixion that saw it as “ransoming” or paying a debt incurred by sin. (Interestingly, as developed by the theologians of the first centuries, this was often understood as being paid to the devil—to whom humanity had sold itself into slavery—rather than to God.)

As Christianity became the religion of converts from Mediterranean and European paganism, they brought with them the cultural echoes of sacrifice as suffering intended to wring favor and forgiveness from a God reluctant to give it. From this perspective Jesus' sacrifice—and ours—necessarily had to include pain and suffering, the greater the better.

As Christian theology itself continues to grow and bear fruit from its earlier reflections, we are recovering a view of Jesus' sacrifice as essentially his total openness to God and God's mission. Jesus' crucifixion is sacrifice not because it involved tremendous suffering, but because, faced with the threat of torture and death, Jesus refused to step back from his understanding of God and of the mission he had received from that God. In contemporary history we have seen this pattern in others. Martin Luther King, Jr., John and Robert Kennedy, Medgar Evers, Dorothy Kazel, Maura Clark, Oscar Romero did not seek death. It was not the dying that they thought would accomplish something. Rather, faced with death threats, they did not back off, and faced the inevitable repercussions from the forces of evil in the status quo.

In the Eucharistic liturgy, we believe that Jesus is truly present and makes present the sacrifice of his Paschal Mystery. The term "Paschal Mystery" means a "passing over," in Jesus' case, a complete passing over to the God he called *Abb* through his death, resurrection, and ascension. And yet these events are the culmination and the ultimate expression of the complete openness to and response to God which was his entire life; Jesus' entire life was a "passing over" of his humanity into the divine life. As a life completely aligned with God, Jesus' life was also praise of God and perfect acknowledgement of (thanksgiving for) God's love and goodness.

It is not that in the Eucharist Jesus offers himself again, but that he makes present that offering, that sacrifice. It is as if the fabric of time were pulled back and we are in touch with that historical event. (This seemed like a much more poetic concept to me before I began to attend the natural science and religion sessions at the annual Catholic Theological Society of America conference. Contemporary physics seems very comfortable with the idea of time as a fluid reality which, in theory, we ought to be able to navigate backward and forward.)

When we understand Jesus' death in this way, his choice of bread and wine at a meal as a perpetual memorial and re-presentation appears singularly appropriate. Jesus' sacrifice of his entire life (including the Paschal Event) was synonymous with his gift of self to the people to whom he ministered.

You shall love the God of the Name, your God, with your whole heart and your whole soul, and your whole mind, and your whole strength.

And the second [commandment] is like [the first]: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Throughout his life, he had *loved those who were his own* and had given himself to them as their nourishment over and over. At the same time, he had fashioned a perfect praise offering to God by forming a community. He brought together diverse individuals, many of whom had nothing in common with each other, some who had actually been taught to despise each other, and facilitated their becoming a table fellowship. This sharing of a meal together was the most radical and intimate expression of union and acceptance in Jesus' cultural world. In creating such a community, Jesus fulfilled God's own vision for humanity—the way it was supposed to have been, had humankind not rejected God's plan and grace promptings. Jesus' re-presentation of his own self offering *in the context of a meal*, therefore, was an ultimate expression of his "sacrifice," the "becoming holy" which was the totality of his life.

When we are able to let our minds and hearts be inundated by what we say here about God, we can experience a true worship moment. We began with a focused praise-acknowledgment of the Holy One's goodness with "*It is right to give God thanks and praise.*" We enumerated *why* it is right in the Preface prayer and in the opening statements of the Eucharist prayer proper. This retelling of the Last Supper narrative brings that to a climax. "*It would have been enough,*" we chant at the Seder meal and then proceed to add something even more wonderful that God did. We do a similar thing here, calling to mind in this brief narrative the Love which became incarnate, shared our human condition, renewed a covenant of solidarity with us, remained true to us to a bitter, tortuous end, and is Risen in power and promise to be the Way we also return to God.

This is the center of our faith. It is important enough for us to be summoned as an entire congregation: "*Let us proclaim the mystery of faith*"—the reality that we say is present in this bread and wine. And we respond in any number of ways, preferably sung but recited if not, all of which point to that core: "*Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ is leading the world to a fulfillment of God's vision.*" (Yes, I know the last one doesn't say that, but the image of a seated Jesus hovering over a field on a cloud does very little, I've found, to help people articulate the faith we want to proclaim.)

But the purpose of this prayer and ritual is not to lead us into a contemplative moment in which we escape the everyday. Rather it is an action. We believe, in some way we do not understand perhaps, that it is important to "*proclaim the death [and resurrection] of the Lord until he comes.*" Grammar teacher that I am, I urge you to check out your subjects and verbs in this text. This is *NOT* the priest's prayer; he only says it aloud in our name. Check out the subjects and verbs: "*we bring,*" "*we ask,*" "*we celebrate,*" "*we offer.*" This is one of our fundamental responsibilities as baptized Catholic Christians: to gather every weekend and make concretely, physically present in the world, Calvary and Easter morning. How many million Catholics are there in the world? Suppose each one of those millions actually **did** that at weekly Eucharist. Weren't just kneeling or standing there, their minds drifting to other things, but actively, deliberately, trustingly offering to God

the “*making holy*” that was Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection. What would the impact be on our world? Maybe one day it will happen and we’ll find out.

In the meantime, we strive to “*Do this in remembrance of me.*” That’s not just about repeating the ritual of partaking of the bread and wine. *Do this in remembrance of me.* Rather, become Eucharist, make your life a living Eucharist, be bread and wine for the world, be my presence for the world, be a *making holy* for the world.. Let everything you do—from your most generous action of the week to the most mundane drudgery (?taking out the garbage) be a hymn of praise. *Offer yourselves as living sacrifice.*

At the Presentation of Gifts, we had the opportunity to place our lives on the plate, in the chalice with the bread and wine offering of the community. We presented not just the raw materials for the Eucharistic sacrament but the raw materials for the sacrifice of praise which we want this coming week to be. Ultimately as Catholic Christians that is what we believe our life is all about. Will we be mindful of that every moment of the coming week? Of course not. We may not be mindful of it all all. But here, now, in this church, gathered around this altar, we acknowledge that it is so and we rejoice in our opportunity to be the means by which God continues to proclaim the good news to the world.

Throughout history, Catholics have used different words to pray Eucharist. There is even one group—Ethiopian Christians—who celebrated valid Eucharist for 400 years without repeating the institution narrative. But whatever the words or ritual, Catholics have not failed to call upon the Holy Spirit, through Whose power alone, this bread, this wine, our lives become sacrament.

In the current wording we pray before the institution narrative:

Let your Spirit come upon these gifts to make them holy, so that they may become for us the body and blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ. (II)

or And so, Father, we bring you these gifts. We ask you to make them holy by the power of your Spirit, that they may become the body and blood of your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, (III)

or Father may this Holy Spirit sanctify these offerings. Let them become the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord (IV)

And after the Acclamation:

May all of us who share in the body and blood of Christ be brought together in unity by the Holy Spirit. (II)

Grant that we, who are nourished by his body and blood, may be filled with his Holy Spirit, and become one body, one spirit in Christ. May he make us an everlasting gift to you (III) by your Holy Spirit, gather all who share this one bread and one cup into the one body of Christ, a living sacrifice of praise. (IV)

Can we make these prayers truly **our** prayer? What would it be like to pray them with the same longing that we pray for the healing of a loved one or that thing we really really want. There’s one way to find out.

Editor's Note: Parish Council Minutes are posted on the St. V website and are sent out on the parish e-mail tree shortly after each meeting—which is held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month. They are reprinted here for those who do not have access to internet or prefer a hard copy. Formatting has been added for reading ease and is not part of the original minutes.)

Parish Council Minutes

June 10, 2008. *The Parish Council of St. Vincent de Paul Church met on Tuesday, June 10, 2008. Next meeting will be in September. The meeting was brought to order at 7:35 p.m. by Colleen McCabill. Maureen Daly offered a prayer. In attendance: Fr. Dick Lawrence, Audrey Rogers, Graham Yearly, Brian Loughlin, Jim Casey, Maureen Daly, Colleen McCabill, Kevin O'Reilly, Molly Hyatt, Barbara Murphy, Dennis Brown, Ray Heil, Lorna Patterson, Ed Guy, Anne Freeburger, Maureen Fitzsimmons, and Joan Campbell.*

Pastor's Report: No report

Financial Report: Maureen Fitzsimmons delivered the parish financial report. Church maintenance is still up but it seems we will still come in under budget. Charitable donations are up but so are publishing costs for the fiscal year. Parish Council reviewed the income statement through the end of May. Offertory is up for the fiscal year but down for this month.

Park Working Group: Audrey Rogers discussed progress on the park. Steve Bosse has accepted the position of Park Manager and he is going through the process of approval by the Archdiocese. The PWG is meeting weekly to discuss policies that may be proposed to the Park Assembly regarding belongings and drug and alcohol abuse. Ten groups have been identified that provide donations of food and clothing and the PWG would like to partner with these groups to limit the amount of donations and coordinate donations more efficiently.

Common Ground staff assisted city personnel in completing their survey and found a high proportion of very vulnerable residents. The PWG met with the City Homeless Division who requested that St. Vincent reconsider its position on

an open park as a result of the Common Ground survey findings. The City insists we are doing the people in the park no service because the residents are too comfortable and have no incentive to accept treatment and help. The city intends to provide housing to about sixteen of the most vulnerable. The PWG has decided against closing the park but will address the city's concerns point by point. If invited, the PWG intends to apply to the Knott Foundation for funds to purchase case management services dedicated to the park residents. The PWG is also proposing that St. Vincent expand its mission to the homeless through leading an interfaith coalition to provide starter kits to the newly housed homeless. It is possible that coalition members may assist the city in its biannual homeless survey and support homeless advocacy under the umbrella of Beyond the Boundaries and BRIDGE. This coalition would provide direct service in collaboration with Baltimore Homeless Services. The Knott letter of inquiry is being submitted this week for \$40,790 for tree removal, bench replacement, case management, and planning money to establish the coalition. Bishop Madden and Archbishop O'Brien have signed on to the letter of inquiry. The salary for the Park Manager can be accommodated

through current parishioner donations and is not part of the grant budget.

Bill Pearson has been approached by the Bishop Murphy Peace and Justice Initiative to determine how they may help with the park. This meeting will occur on June 25.

There was some discussion about the article in the *Sun* and some of the valid points about the health risks of the folks living in the park. The pros and cons of removing people from the park were again discussed. Many council members agreed that the conditions in the park need improvement but also felt that we need to give the PWG a chance to work.

Audrey requested approval for the Knott Letter of Inquiry. There was consensus among the council to submit the Letter of Inquiry.

Parish Outreach: Colleen proposed to the Council that each member attend a different church over the summer. The idea is for council members observe other parish's ways of ministering to their members and meeting the needs of their congregations. Council members liked this idea and agreed to give it a try to get some insight into the workings of other parishes. It was suggested to check out the websites, chat with parishioners or the pastor, take some notes, and take home a bulletin. Colleen will send out a list of suggested parishes from the Urban Vicar's office.

Peace and Justice: Maureen Daly is going to Nicaragua and will be asking for parish support and she is going with 4 people from St. Ignatius parish.

Education: There were 50 adults and 4 children on the parish retreat. It was a good retreat and many liked director very much as well as the new site. Many wanted to continue the themes that were covered. Speaker series is in place for next fall.

Liturgy: The committee is planning the summer series and it will include the Wisdom books Proverbs, Job and Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes). It will take place over six weeks beginning on June 15. There is a wealth of data being analyzed from the liturgy survey.

Social Action: There will be 20 people from the parish who will volunteer to register people to vote at the Sunday Farmers Market throughout the summer. There will be a social action liturgy on the feast of St. Vincent de Paul in September. Committee continues to work with Bridge on BRAC (Base Realignment and Closing).

Parish Council Officer Elections: Colleen McCahill was elected President of the Council for the upcoming year. Jim Casey was elected Vice President. Graham Yearley volunteered to be Secretary.

Meeting closed with a prayer by Maureen at 9:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Murphy

