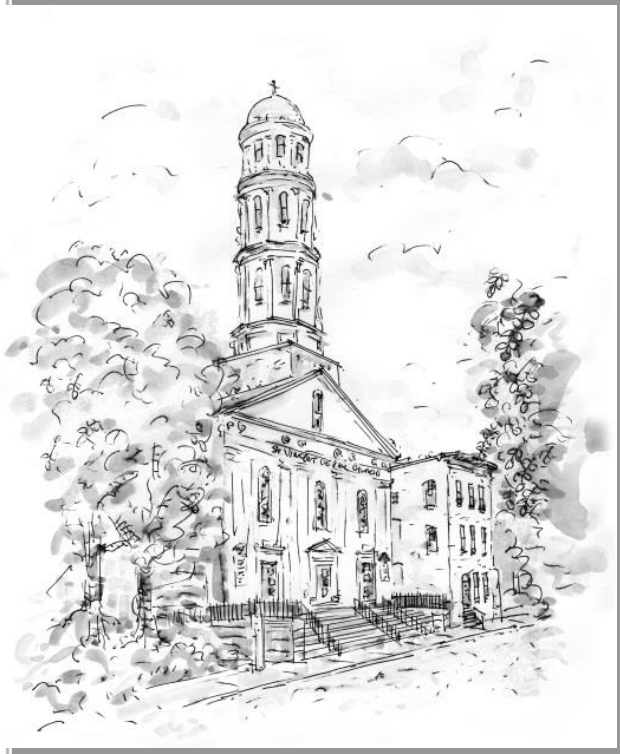
2013

Easter
Together Sharing Christ

In this Issue:

Reflections from The Easter Vigil and the Mid-Atlantic Congress as well as articles from Anne Maura and Audrey Rogers.



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www.stvchurch.org

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Letter from the Pastor

April 5, 2013

Shalom!

Twenty-five years ago, in 1988, we began to plan for the Sesquicentennial of our church. We knew we needed to make some major repairs to keep the building viable and bring it up to building code. We decided we also wanted to bring it up to liturgical code: to adapt it for the Vatican II style of liturgy while respecting its history and aesthetic. We knew that resources were limited, and that we could not do everything at once.

So we created an Art & Architecture Committee to steer the process. They were to dig into the liturgical as well as the building needs, and make recommendations for the work and for the phasing of the work. We fully expected that it would take 10 years or so to complete the work.

Well, here we are, a quarter of a century later, completing the work. Over the course of twenty-five years we have expanded the parking lot and installed the Easter firepit. We have renovated the floor of the church, expanding the gathering space, leveling the floor, expanding the bema, and creating the altar and ambo and the Altar Bible, creating a space for a family gathered around Word and Sacrament. We have renovated the ceiling of the church, restoring the laylight, replacing the HVAC, tempering the acoustics, and restoring the windows. And now, just this past week, we have consecrated the new Baptismal Font, bringing the original vision to completion.

All throughout this process, the Art & Architecture Committee has provided the vision, the direction, the energy and the continuity that has kept this long project on track. Many have contributed over the years: Bob and Pat Ball, Bob Betta, Barbara Hodnett, Mary Otterbein, Bob Reuter and Paul Rolandelli have been constant, and a number of others frequent, contributors to the work. But to one person must go the laurel wreath for devotion, leadership, and dedication to this work: Jerome Bird, who has served as the chair of the committee since its inception. His patience, perseverance and dedication to excellence has kept us together, working, discussing, arguing, negotiating and finally coming to consensus about each part of the project as it has evolved.

With the completion of work, the committee will go into hiatus for a while, and Jerome will retire from its chairmanship. Thank you, A&A members all. Thank you, Jerome.

Peace and Love,

Dick

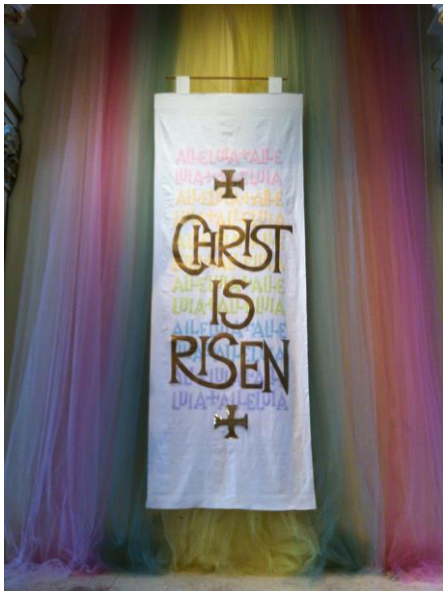
Pastor

Pastoral Associate's Notes

April 04, 2013

Dear Fellow St. V's Parishioners,

Easter Greetings to each of you in this holiest of seasons! After 40 days of preparation for the pivotal event of our faith, -the paschal mystery- we now celebrate with joy for 50 days. I am hopeful that all of you were able to find some time for rest as well as occasion to celebrate. The photo inset is of our Easter banner which was designed and created by our very own Janice Bonner, whose work graces our sanctuary with each season. Thank Janice when you see her for dedication to her ministry of augmenting our liturgical worship space.



In this issue we have some great material, some from our great Easter Vigil as well as other articles on varied topics. Fr. Dick points out the fact that our baptismal font is now complete. He will be preaching a series of homilies this month on the theme of baptism and new life, in light of this addition to our liturgical renovations.

Another thing to note is the restarting of our Vatican II Lecture series. We had two great lectures in the fall and look forward to these upcoming ones on the liturgy and on the church and the impact of Vatican II. Make plans to join us for these remaining lectures.

Our parish retreat is another good opportunity to get to know parishioners and to enjoy one another's company while having the opportunity to reflect and grow spiritually. If you have not gone, consider going. It is a worthwhile experience.

Our parish reading related to the theme of the Eucharist from Fr. Ronald Rolheiser's book Our One Great Act of Fidelity is ongoing. If you are interested in a copy of the book or would like to participate in one of the discussion groups for the book please be in contact with me.

Once again I will note that it is great to see that we have new parishioners in our pews in recent weeks. It is good and important for our life as a community to have you with us. It is my hope that our community provides the spiritual nourishment and the home that is needed for all those who come to worship with us. It is great to work with so many willing souls which do such great work on all aspects of our life at St. V's.

May the Easter experience of God's grace, echo through your life in real and meaningful ways during this wonderful season of joy.

Peace,

Chris

What's in a Word?

By Anne Maura

"Wherefore art thou 'Romeo'? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." Thus Juliet dismisses the unfortunate fact that the young man she loves bears a name which identifies him as a family enemy, someone she should despise, or at least shun.

Many people would agree with her. What you call someone or something doesn't matter. It's the real person or thing bearing the name that matters. Or is it?

This is only one of the questions intertwined in current debate about the language used in religious discourse or community prayer. This article proposes to look at some of those issues from the perspective of language theory. Basic to that approach is the conviction that changes in religious or liturgical language are not simply a matter of placating or doing a favor to those who advocate inclusive or other language changes. Choice of language is not the same as choosing what color to paint the church interior or whether to add lasagna to the annual Spaghetti Dinner menu. Language is an amazingly powerful—if often hidden and misunderstood—cultural factor.

So what of Juliet's lament? Certainly we should try to overcome stereotypes and prejudices. Likewise we should not let previous experiences with someone of a certain category (Asian, teacher, Norwegian, truck driver) taint our encounters with others of the same group. But words and names also take on cultural connotations and sometimes these just cannot be ignored. We can't fault aspiring actor Marion Robert Morrison for becoming "John Wayne" nor *Phantom of the Opera* star Michael Crawford for leaving behind "Michael Patrick Dumbell-Smith."

Our inability to simply ignore the associations in which a word is embedded has an implication in consideration of certain "generic" terms. In workshops I've asked groups of up to 50 people to quickly write down a synonym for "British" and, depending on the age of the audience, "Soviet." Predictably I get "English" and "Russian." No one has ever responded "Welsh," "Scotch," "Latvian," or "Ukrainian." Yet both "British" (from *Great* Britain) and "Soviet" (from *Union* of Soviet Socialist *Republics)* were created to be generic terms. Those words were assigned the task of conveying equality of all to whom it supposedly applied. However, that occurred within a context in which it was patently obvious who the dominant nations were and would remain. The words could not overcome those associations.

For many English speakers—men and women—a parallel situation occurs with the term "man." It is not merely that this word also does double duty as a term for male persons. Beginning with its emergence as a word, "man" always existed in a cultural context in which male persons were seen as the norm—as the genuinely human. A woman was a "misbegotten male" to quote Aristotle and later Aquinas. That attitude could exist even in languages which supposedly didn't have the problem, because there were separate words for "male" and "human." One example is in the gospel itself. Jesus has been criticized for healing someone on the Sabbath and counters by pointing out that the Pharisees themselves would circumcise on the Sabbath. Certainly this is a situation which indisputably refers to male persons. But it did not occur to

the Greek writer to use the specifically male term. Instead he automatically used *anthropos*, the supposedly generic term.

This is not to deny that individual people can simply override the cultural strictures of certain words—or simply ignore them. This is the same dynamic that underlies some people's impatience with politically correct vocabulary. They've always used the terms "crippled," or "retard," or "Pollack" but have managed to take on no scorn for the persons these terms can carry and see no reason to change how they speak. In the same way, some women can "feel" included when they hear "man" or "mankind." Many people seem perfectly comfortable using "Lord" as a word of loving intimacy: "my sweet Lord." But this does not change the fact that these words have a long-standing historical context that has the power to shape attitudes in an entirely different way. I may have a wonderful personal experience with a Grandfather named Chauncey Cuthbert and I may have a warm, wonderful emotional response to those names. This does not justify my naming my son after him and expect the rest of 21st century U.S. to adapt. Ultimately the Red Queen's assertion in *Alice in Wonderland*—"A word means what I say it means"—simply defies reality.

There is more involved here than simply hurting the sensibilities of some people who don't like certain words. In their now classic *Metaphors We Live By,* George Lakoff and Mark Johnson laid out a theory that has become a staple of cognitive linguistics (the study of the interplay between thinking and language). They demonstrated through myriad illustrations how the metaphorical language English speakers use unconsciously "structures our perception and understanding." Here are a few of their examples.

Consider how in English the unconscious metaphor for argument is WAR. We defend our position, attack someone else's position, demolish it if we can. Once we work out a strategy, we marshal our arguments. We find someone's argument indefensible. We target their weaknesses and try to prevent our own rationale from being shot down. They bring on the big guns and we counter-attack. Over the course of out "discussion" we gain and lose ground. Our aim is to win, but if we can't we hope to at least retreat for the time being, lick our wounds and live to fight another day.

But Lakoff and Johnson point out that we don't just use these words. Rather we "structure, understand, perceive and think about"—and thus act out—argument within the framework of military maneuvers. They ask us to imagine how our "discourse" and subsequent behavior in academia and the scientific community, in politics, in families (in Church?) would be different were our overriding metaphor "dance" with each participant looking for ways to contribute to the final product. Our inability to take such the dance metaphor seriously does itself show how seriously the war metaphor has become a "part" of us.

Of course there's an element here of "which came first the chicken or the egg"? Initially the language was adopted precisely to express how humans intended to go about the process of dealing with different positions. Once the language is in general use, however, it functions to reinforce and perpetuate the way in which "discourse" is thought about and acted out. In time alternative ways seem strange; the war model has become the norm.

Spatial metaphors are also common ways of structuring our behavior and thought. Consider the multiple ways we use "up" as positive and "down" as negative. "Down and out," "Cheer up," "We're going to take them down," "Things are looking up," "On the downside . . . ," "We finally made up." The one simple word encompasses an entire perspective.

Again, more than just thinking can be involved. Lakoff and Johnson point out how our civilization itself has been influenced by the spatial metaphors for time. We put the past "behind" us and move "ahead" into the future. While it can be somewhat frightening, this view makes the future something beckoning, challenging and tempting us to see what's next. Ultimately it is a place of boundless possibilities but a place in which one can make choices and shape one's "journey." This is in sharp contrast to a remote tribe for whom the *past* is "ahead" because one can see it. It is familiar and manageable. The *future* is "behind": unknown, waiting to sneak up on the unsuspecting, beyond one's control.

Two fanciful examples may help to demonstrate how metaphors can influence how we "structure, understand, perform, . . . think about" and ultimately shape our behavior in a religious context. Let's imagine there is a Catholic village in a remote valley of the Alps. Centuries ago they were threatened by marauding barbarians and—since it was the Christmas season—the entire community beseeched the Baby Jesus to save them. They were miraculously spared. In gratitude they petitioned the Vatican and received permission to make the Infant Jesus the center of their religious life. Religious artwork, spirituality and theology, all prayer language including Eucharist are centered around this image. The gospels and other Scripture are not ignored but preaching and teaching on those texts draws out the values that are compatible with the Baby Jesus imagery. Over the centuries how would the community's spirituality and values be influenced?

Consider by contrast, the consequences if the attack had come to a head on Good Friday and they had turned to the Suffering Jesus to secure their rescue. Now religious practice and language are filled with references to and imagery of Jesus in his passion and death.

The results of each focus would not be exclusively negative. At its best, the first community might develop a deep commitment to simplicity and gentleness. In the other scenario, there could be a powerful sensitivity to and compassion for suffering of any kind: human, animal, ecological. Standing outside those exclusive metaphors, on the other hand, we can see their limited—even claustrophobic—character. Except for a few "radical" individuals, however, the members of each community would probably not experience it that way. To them it would be familiar and enriching—and largely unconscious.

So what application does all of this have for us? Western religious thought—and Roman Catholicism—is in a process of development and change. Inevitably language choice will be part of this. Vocabulary and language will need to expand to express this. Older forms will feel the strain of new perceptions. The purpose of this article has been to illustrate that tensions in language use and objections to certain language are not nit-picking. They are not inconsequential, nor are they merely outgrowths of a faddish political agenda. The words we choose and the ways we put them together have the potential to shape how we "structure, understand, perceive and think about" and thus act toward ourselves, our community and our God. In the words of 20th century philosopher Martin Heidegger, "We all live in the prison house of language."

Who Do You Say That I Am?

By Audrey Rogers

Who are we? There are a hundred ways we can describe ourselves: all of us are somebody's child, relative, spouse perhaps, employer or employee, friend or neighbor, the list can go on. These are facts about ourselves that indicate how we fit into society. But do they really communicate who we *genuinely* are? Do we satisfy ourselves with this surface way of living or do we ever challenge ourselves to sink into the depth of our existence to discover who is *truly* there? Many of us miss this challenge and never develop a sense of who we *really* are in God.

Jesus had a complete self-awareness born of his spiritual encounter with the Holy Mystery. His whole being was charged with this awareness. It flashed out and drew people to him. Yet he knew that those who followed him were projecting their own ideas of who he was onto him, ideas that were far from who he knew himself to be. When he was alone with the disciples, he asked, "Who do you say that I am?"

What a question. But not just to the disciples. It is a question we, too, are asked, "Who do we say Jesus is?"

Richard Bauckham, the theologian, has noted there seem to be three principal ways in which Jesus has been understood as the revelation of God in modern times. First, Jesus is viewed as illustrating the moral character of God in his practice of love and compassion. Second, Jesus reveals the unique presence and action of God which is Jesus' own history. Finally, Jesus reveals the universal possibility of divine-human union.

Although all of these understandings can be found in our faith tradition, not all of them grasp the fullness of who Jesus is. The first one, for example, would indicate that God also can be revealed in other human lives to the extent they also practice love and compassion. This would denote that Jesus is not as much unique as he is *perfect*. The revelation of God in Jesus in this understanding is a matter of degree, not particularity; and, in fact, would not necessarily require that God become human. This understanding reduces Christianity to a code of behavior and tames its spiritual power.

The other two understandings are more clearly and fully in our faith tradition. Seeing Jesus as the unique presence and action of God in human history is rooted in the *Western* theological view of creation, grace, and sin. God-is-totally-Other and in Jesus becomes the unique act of self-giving love to atone for and redeem all humanity. So rather than Jesus being perfect, he is *singular*. He is the sacrificial lamb whose death puts humanity back in right relationship with God. Jesus is the Redeemer.

The last understanding, Jesus as the revelation of the universal possibility of divine-human union, is more aligned to the *Eastern* theological view of Jesus with roots in patristic thought: recall that Athanasius taught that God became man that man might become god. This understanding sees Jesus, not solely perfect or singular, but views his life as the precedent, the *first fruit* as Paul called him, inviting us into divine life. Jesus is the Way.

These two understandings seem quite distinct. Jesus as Redeemer means Jesus was a requirement; Jesus as the Way means Jesus was a gift.

The difficulty with understanding Jesus solely as a Redeemer of a doomed and helpless humanity is that it makes Jesus 'other-than-us.' This can remove the Christ-event so far from our existence that we lose the capacity to relate to it. It also portrays God the Father as implacable and punitive, demanding bloody sacrifice; far from the inviting experience the Holy Mystery offers. And what would Christ as Savior be saving humanity *from*? More importantly, what *for*?

And yet Jesus solely as 'gift' is not without difficulty. While it is true that the salvation achieved through Jesus is like sunshine on the earth, freely enveloping all creation, gift-giving is essentially relational: it requires a giver and a receiver. We cannot earn it or merit it, but we can ignore it.

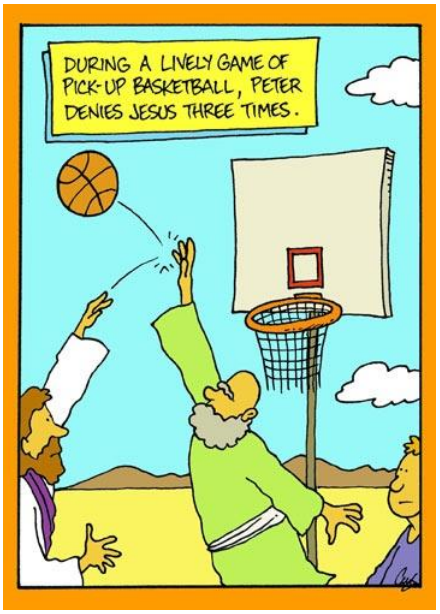
Is there any way to marry the two understandings since both hold truth? Another theologian, Catherine LaCugna, has written: "God goes forth from God. God creates the world, suffuses its history and dwells within us, redeeming the world from within. God makes an eternal gift to the world of God's very self… (so) that we become by grace what God already is by nature, namely self-donating love for the other."

Try this. Jesus as Redeemer is saving us from *ourselves*, our self-delusions and ego-posturing, by showing the Way in how he lived his life with integrity, fully aware of the ground of his Being and how he remained faithful unto death in the obedience of imitation. In Jesus, we see the face of God. In imitating Jesus, we become the face of God.

Richard Bauckham, "Jesus the Revelation of God," in *Divine Revelation*, ed. by Paul Avis, (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 175-181.

Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 353-4.

Bits o' Humor



Saint Kateri Tekawitha

By Anne Maura

Kateri (Catherine) Tekawitha, proclaimed a saint on October 21, 2012, is the fourth Native American—and the first indigenous *North* American—to be canonized. A member of the Algonquin-Mohawk tribe, she lived from 1656-1680 spending most of that time in what is now upstate New York before moving for the last years of her life to a Jesuit village near what is now Montreal, Canada.

During her lifetime, Jesuit missionaries were very active in the region and Kateri was by no means the only convert to Catholicism. Her mother was an Algonquin who had been baptized Catholic and educated by the French in an area near Montreal. She was captured in a raid by the Mohawks, adopted by that tribe, and later married their chief. Both parents (and a younger brother) died in a smallpox epidemic when Kateri was four. Surviving with facial scars and impaired eyesight, they young girl was adopted by an aunt and uncle.

When Kateri was 11, the French attacked and destroyed her village as part of their campaign to secure exclusive rights to the fur trade with the Mohawks (who had previously been working with the Dutch). As part of the surrender settlement, the Mohawks had to agree to let Jesuit missionaries settle in their villages. Kateri's first real contact with Catholic faith was via the two Jesuits who settled in her village.

The presence of missionaries contributed to the social unrest occasioned by contact with Europeans. This included pressure on entire tribes to give up age-old customs that were incompatible with Christian faith. Converts were often shunned by other members of the tribes, including their own families. Despite this, Catholicism did attract a number of converts

The uncle by whom Kateri had been adopted had already "lost" an older daughter to Christianity and was adamant that Kateri not follow in her footsteps. Kateri did, however, have some exposure to Catholicism, working with other young women of the village alongside the priest in ministering to those wounded in a 1669 attach by the Mohicans. Later when her village rallied and forced a Mohican retreat, she witnessed the priest's efforts to convince her village not to torture the several Mohican captives and his attempts to ease their sufferings and eventual deaths when his intervention did not succeed. Two years later, the Mohawk chief who had led that action converted to Christianity and was baptized.

At age 13, Kateri announced that she intended to remain unmarried. It is not clear whether this choice was religiously motivated, since it is unlikely the young woman had come into contact with nuns and had not yet begun any study of Catholicism. Her family was not happy about this but after a period of strong pressure, ridicule, and punishment when she was 17, her relatives finally accepted her decision. The following year Kateri met a Jesuit Jacques Lamberville and began studying catechism. Obviously he was impressed with her sincerity because two years later he allowed her to be baptized on Easter Sunday. (The

Jesuit policy was to wait until there was no doubt about the potential convert's understanding of and commitment to what conversion meant, with many baptisms being postponed until the catechumen was on their deathbed.)

Her conversion was not accepted graciously by her tribe, who became openly hostile toward her and spread rumors that she was practicing sorcery and was sexually promiscuous. Father Lamberville suggested she move to the Jesuit village of Kahnawake, south of Montreal. Other Catholics had moved there, including a large contingent of women. Six months after her baptism, at the age of twenty, Kateri located there.

Once there, Kateri shared a longhouse where her older step-sister and her husband lived, along with other Mohawk converts from her village. The Clan Matron of the longhouse was Anastasia Tegonhatsiongo, who had been a close friend of Kateri's own mother. Most of the converts were women and together with them, Anastasia continued to expand Kateri's knowledge of Catholic Christian practice. In this the Native Americans of Kahnawake (mostly Mohawk but also some Iroquois) welcomed the guidance of the Jesuits in some ways but also maintained their own interpretation and acculturation of Catholicism. A number of converts interpreted the missionaries' prohibition against ordaining native clergy or allowing them to join religious congregations as a sign that religious secrets were being withheld from the converts.

Tekawitha and some of the women with whom she was closest were particularly devoted to various forms of physical mortification. These seem extreme—even bizarre—to us today and the Jesuits themselves tried unsuccessfully to get the women to mitigate their practices. Many of these practices were traditional among male Mohawk warriors as expressions of courage, endurance and commitment and it is possible the women were trying to express their own dedication to Christianity in this way.

From a fellow convert, Marie Skarichions, Kateri learned about nuns and their role in Catholic religion. She and Marie eventually gathered a group of women who practiced simplicity, poverty, charity, and extreme physical mortification and fasting. They sought but were denied the opportunity to become an actual religious order.

Jesuit Claude Chauchetiere arrived to do missionary work in Kahnawake the same year Kateri moved there (1677). He was particularly impressed by the young woman, writing in his journal that he had not expected to find Native Americans so pious. He seems to have been a man very open to learning what the converts were really like. He openly acknowledged that his work among them changed some of his presuppositions about Native Americans and about differences between cultures. He came to believe that Kateri was a saint and became her first biographer.

Kateri Tekawitha, who became known as the Lily of the Mohawks, died on Wednesday of Holy Week, 1680, at the age of 24. For some time after her death she was considered the honorary patroness of Montreal and of indigenous American peoples. In 1730 the first convent for North American nuns was opened in Mexico; the sisters there were devoted to Kateri and supported her canonization. Her cause for canonization was instituted in 1884 initially by U.S. Catholics who were quickly joined by Canadian Catholics. She was canonized on October 12, 2012 by Benedict XVI.

St. Vincent Parishioners At Mid-Atlantic Congress

St. Vincent's was well represented at this year's Mid Atlantic Congress or "MAC" as it is called. Committee Chairs, staff persons, choir members and parishioners made up our attendees. The following articles come from sessions attended by the authors on social media, long range planning and *Lectio Divina* for children respectively. They share pieces of their wisdom from those sessions. Though they are just three reflections, much wisdom was gleaned as a result of St. V's attendance, not the least of which was from a presentation given by Ronald Rolheiser who authored the book Our One Great Act of Fidelity which we are reading as a parish and discussing in this Easter season. —*Christopher McCullough*

New Evangelization, Social Media and Parish Marketing

By Laureen Brunelli, Communication & Outreach Committee Chair

The subject of the "new evangelization"--which is evangelization led by lay people and directed toward those already familiar with Catholicism or Christianity--was woven throughout the presentations in the three workshops I attended. Each of the three, "Use of Social Media in Parishes," "New Media, New Evangelization," and "Marketing 101 for Parishes," took on the subject, to one degree or another, through the lens of digital media.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sponsored the session on social media. As St. Vincent prepares to venture into social media, the presentation was extremely useful in that it covered some of the broad strokes, i.e. creating a social media policy, choosing outlets, and setting goals, as well as details about setting administrative privileges and assigning moderators. It offered practical tips on managing dialogs in social media in ways that encourage constructive participation and discourage negative exchanges.

The "New Media, New Evangelization" workshop focused on social media interaction more on the personal level, rather than at the parish level. However, the presenter's insights about how to impart messages that resonate with others of different viewpoints in the sometimes polarized world of social media will inform our approach to St. Vincent's social media efforts, which the committee intends to be conversational as well as informative in nature.

The final workshop was decidedly less technological in its approach than the other two, focusing on more traditional marketing techniques--print advertising, branding, signage--as applied to parishes. Yet, it did offer insights on how to tie those efforts into digital media and most important how to pull together communication goals into a comprehensive marketing plan.

The ideas and information I gained from the three presentations will help guide the committee as we work to take what is unique about St. Vincent and showcase it to a wider audience via social media and other forms of digital communication.

Long-Range Planning:
Gaining an Understanding of the Whole Parish Systems Approach

By Audrey Rogers, Liturgy Committee Chair

This workshop was conducted by The National Leadership Roundtable on Church Management. Our parish constitution and committee structure make us somewhat unique. Our parish staff is limited and much of our mission is implemented in committee work so that questions might arise of how this planning process could work for us. In her report, Audrey has inserted parenthetical notes to show how this process could be adapted at St. Vincent's.

What is parish planning?

In this process, the community discerns God's desire of and for it in how the community lives out its mission. It differentiates among ministries, programs, and services and addresses the whole system of parish life with a focus on sound practices and transparency around the parish's temporal goods; viz. facilities and finance.

The parish planning produces a plan that is not blindly predictive but *adaptive* with feedback loops and continual change. The parish plan is *thin*. Its function is simply to define the "why" and the "what" and lets parish staff (and committees and working groups) determine the "how."

How does parish planning work?

Under the leadership of the pastor, (pastoral associate, and the parish council), the parish staff (and committees) develop the "how" using set goals and periodic assessments with transparent reporting to the parish community. A *whole system view* examines the whole and interdependency of three core components of parish life: culture, organization, and work.

<u>Culture (Our Purpose, Our Story, and Our 'Right Ways')</u>

- Mission and Purpose
- Vision and Values
- Images and Intents
- Norms and Attitudes
- Relationships

<u>Organization (Structures, Systems, Networks, Policies)</u>

- Systems and structures
- Policies and Procedures
- Viability and Sustainability
- Communications and Linkages
- Networks: Internal and External

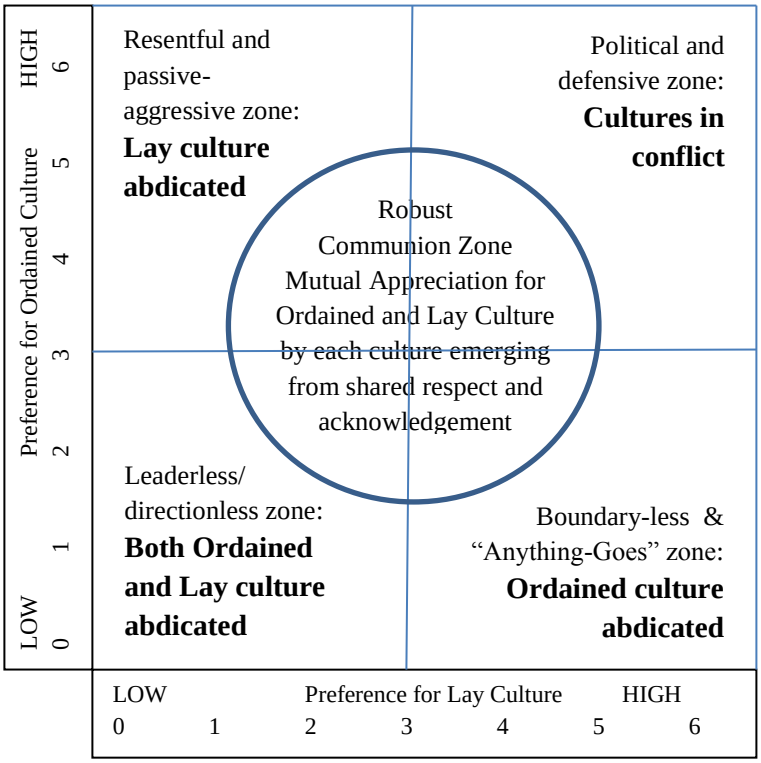
<u>Work (Resources, Processes, Products/Services)</u>

- Resources: Human, Financial, Physical
- Products, Services, Programs
- Raw Materials
- Distribution of Goods and Services (Does the budget reflect the ministries?)

What kind of time and tools does it take to do parish planning?

The process for this whole system planning should begin with one-on-one conversations with as many key influencers as possible for a period of 6-9 months, followed by focus groups over 2-4 months, and culminate in a parish-wide survey. The survey should have a ministry or faith experience/journey focus. Its intention is to appraise and help develop responsive ministries and programs that make service-committed disciples of parishioners—not simply consumers of parish products.

The workshop discussed several evaluation tools for assessing the core components. One addressed the "culture" of the community specific to its ordained or laity orientation:



This evaluation would be an assessment made by all key players in core mission areas: liturgy, education, social action, facilities, communication, and finance.

What are the patterns that work in parish planning?

Pastoral Leadership: The pastor, (pastoral associate and parish council) must lead, not delegate or ignore responsibility for leadership; the case for change must be clear and in writing; the hope for the future must be compelling and specific; and the current reality needs to be grounded both in data and story.

Data, Analysis, Insight: Present the current reality: demographic change and pastoral resources—presented in numbers and graphs—sacramental reality, trends, and future needs.

Integration of Finances and Assets: Needs a 5- to 10-year view of all revenue and expenses; allows for modeling of the parish planning; clearly aligns staff positions and expenses to parish planning; presents a clear articulation between the *theological* (why), the *pastoral* (what), and the *temporal* (how).

Take-home thought: "Habit rules the unreflecting herd." —William Wordsworth

Scripture and Personal Reflection for Children

By Anne Gibson, Minister of Education for Children

My experience at the Mid-Atlantic Congress, MAC for short, was a very positive one. My main focus was religious education for children, and there were many excellent sessions being offered in this area but two stand out. In a session called "Creative Ideas for Enlivening Scripture with Children," we explored how bringing Scripture to life for children not only can, but should, be filled with joy and enthusiasm. Our focus was on creative ideas and techniques that could be used immediately in the learning setting with elementary-age children.

Another excellent session was titled "Learning to Love the Word of God: *Lectio Divina* for Children". In this session we discussed ways to invite children to hear God speak personally to them through reflection. We explored faith formation for children that is rooted in the hearing, unfolding and living of Sacred Scripture.

Another advantage of being at the MAC was that there were many publishers all in one place. I found them to be very helpful, and they were always willing to speak with me about their programs and how the needs of our parish could be met. They were very generous with their samples of books and other components of their various programs.

I plan on making my attendance at the MAC an annual event!

This Life is Full of Blessing

By Linda Kruschke

This life is full of blessing
You have offered more
I have a lovely dwelling
And family I adore

This life is full of blessing
Delicious foods to eat
Trees and flowers growing
Their beauty is so sweet

This life is full of blessing
More than I really need
Love and peace abounding
It's time to plant a seed

This life is full of blessing
Enough for me to share
With those who have nothing
To let them know You care

This life is full of blessing
Freedom in Your grace
My soul is ever soaring
I wait to see Your face

This life is full of blessing
To You I give my praise
For the gift of life everlasting
I'll savor endless days

Eternal life is the best blessing
To dwell with You on high
With all the saints worshipping
As Your feast draws nigh

The Great Easter Vigil

What follows here are several reflections from our great Easter Vigil. Our vigil is a sacred overnight watch by the tomb of our Lord, waiting for the joy of His resurrection. As we watch, we recount and celebrate the history of our salvation: the creation, the patriarchs & matriarchs, the covenant, the torah, the prophets and wisdom. Keeping the vigil is the oldest and most widespread custom of the Church. It eventually fell out of the general liturgical practice of the church. In 1988 St. Vincent's decided to revive this ancient custom. We do not expect people to stay in church all night long. People take breaks and refresh themselves in the undercroft where food and drink are provided. Sleeping space is available in the balcony of the church as well as the rectory for those who wish to partake of slumber. It is a sacred time. Enjoy these reflections!

Exodus

By Gerry Fialkowski

Miriam's Prayer *(from Women Wisdom by Miriam Therese Winter)*

We leave our chains behind
As you deliver us from bondage.
O One who parts the waters
Never again will we be slaves
…We are crossing over into hope
And into a new world order,
Singing, dancing celebrating
The gift of our liberation
As the daughters of Shaddai Amen.

Like our foremothers and forefathers, we are free, free at last as long as we remember…. recall what God has done and will continue to do for us. There are many walls in our lives. Walls that may keep us from moving on in life and being the whole persons we can be. There are great walls like the Sea of Reeds and smaller, albeit not less painful ones. Perhaps these are not walls of water, nor bricks, nor armed men, but walls of grief, anxiety, fear, doubt, mistrust, disenchantment with faith or loved ones…and so on.

God tells us..I Am….I AM Your Advocate, You are mine.

As it was with God's people, the Jews enslaved in Egypt, the boils and locusts, the aggressive armies of despair and losses in our life need not have ultimate power over us. Our God sends us what we need to be free of those walls that keep us from living a life of meaning. We can be - free at last and choose to be whole and holy persons. Notice… the opportunities, the prophets and the saints among us, all who

challenge us to go ahead, do it, really believe and act as if.. God is choosing you as God's beloved. Now believe that God does choose you, us, and will teach us to stretch out our hands so that like Moses, we can face our adversities and not be forsaken.

Like Moses, Aaron, Miriam, we can set our faces like flint and believe our Savior desires that we cross safely through the perilous passages before us.

Like Miriam and Moses: we remember, WE ARE GOD'S. We are loved. Thus, we need to allow the walls that keep us from this intimate relationship with God to separate and as we pass through, unharmed, like Miriam it is time to pick up our tambourines and dance! We are free at last!

Work and Faith (inspired by Leviticus 19)

By Graham Yearley

Most Americans believe that the workplace is where the Christian message they heard on Sunday gets put aside for another five days. My father, a stockbroker, and my mother, who never held a job outside of the home, taught me that the workplace, whether in the home or outside of it, is exactly where our Christianity must be practiced. My father believed that his work was service to others; in his case, a service for people who did not understand the workings of the stock market. He was horrified by the changing milieu of Wall Street in 1980s and 1990s that put all its emphasis on personal gain. He taught us that every service offered willingly and honestly in an effort to better our neighbors and this world was adding one brick at a time in the foundation of God's kingdom on Earth.

I have worked for thirty years in the theater as a box office manager, as an actor and now as a house manager. When people ask me what I do for a living and I tell them I work in the theater, their response is usually, "That sounds like so much fun!" And the truth is-it is fun, for the most part. I love filling up seats with patrons for a good show, I enjoy dealing with their concerns and helping to make their experience better, and I revel in the half hour of power when it is up to me to decide when the show begins.

But I also change the toilet paper in the restrooms and haul out the garbage. The latter task may be the hardest for my younger co-workers who are in their twenties. I feel their resistance to pulling out wet, dripping garbage bags in full view of the actors and senior staff relaxing at the bar after the show and then disappearing to the back of the theater to toss the bags into the dumpster in the alley. I remind them that everybody does this at home and I think of my parents and know I am adding another brick in the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Doing volunteer work feels good (and I do a lot of it), but nothing makes me valued quite the way receiving pay for my work does. I was unemployed for the better part of a year and I remember how overjoyed I was at getting a call to come into work and grateful I was to receive a paycheck again. I don't have to live on the near minimum wage my job pays; I work because working is good for me. But the young people I work around do have to live on this. Moreover, to work in the world of the performing arts, they are obliged to take two or three part time jobs just to make ends meet. Some of them are still on their parents' health

insurance, but most of them have no health insurance at all. And, most sadly, they don't ever expect that their employer will ever give them insurance or help them with health insurance.

I worry that my employer prefers to hire five part-timers (who are grateful to work in the place of their dreams) than hire one full timer that would receive benefits. Part-timers who work performances don't get paid at all when the theater is not producing shows. To add to the uncertainty, when we are working, schedules are often are given only a week or two in advance, so planning becomes difficult. And this culture of uncertainty and insecurity has become standard practice in the American workplace.

I believe this not an economy Jesus would endorse and we must work as people of faith to build an economy where health care is a right, where job security is a benefit of doing good work, and where every human being gets a chance to offer as much as he or she is able to give. This kind of economic system is not a fantasy whose time has passed, but a realizable living out of our life in Christ.

Lamentations

Jim Casey

As child and infant faint away
In the open spaces of the town
They ask their mothers: "where is the cereal?"
In vain
As they faint away like the wounded
In the streets of the city,
And breathe their last
In their mothers' arms

Like the Jewish people at Passover, we don't just recall our history, we relive it. We relive our history in two ways.

We sit in Vigil at the tomb. It's 4:30. It has been a long night. In this darkest hour, it is easy to fear that we won't make it to dawn. Only faith and hope keep us going.

Through the night we also relive the history of our people. We explore the Jewish Testament from Geneses forward. During this dark hour we explore a painful chapter in that history – Lamentations. We suffer along with our people.

Lamentations is a poetic work consisting of five poems. It was written during Jeremiah's time, perhaps by Jeremiah, after the fall of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. It describes the terrible aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction.

The entire world view of the Jewish people shattered when the Chaldeans destroyed the temple. Destruction of the temple should have been impossible. This was God's house. God would never allow it to be destroyed.

Only the prophets could make sense of this total collapse. Their message was bitter: the Jewish people got what they deserved. They had ignored the covenant at their peril. They earned this fate.

Israelis were killed. They were enslaved. Women were raped. Children were taken. Homes were destroyed. Land was confiscated. People were forced to pay for wood and water that had been theirs. The nation ceased to exist. Others ruled Israel now.

The Jews felt guilt and humiliation, grief and despair, sorrow and contrition.

Most haunting was the famine. Children died of starvation in their mothers' arms. The parents were helpless, feckless, impotent. They had no food. Others ignored their pleas for help. The parents could not take food by force from their conquerors. They couldn't find work. Some were forced to work without pay. The children were bewildered. "Why won't our parents feed us?" They became lethargic. They faded away like living ghosts. The children stopped living before they died. The text asks "Must women eat their offspring, their well-formed children?" Apparently this sometimes happened when people starved during sieges.

I want to look away from this suffering. I want to discuss what we can do to end such tragedy. I want to feel outrage. I want to do something.

Not tonight. Not now. Our task this hour is to relive this misery. We must sit with the suffering. We must become helpless parents who watch their children slowly fade away.

I'm not very good at this. When I feel pain, I take medicine. I avoid suffering. I avoid being present when others suffer. I can't bring myself to experience the impotence of watching Moe or Jacinta starve to death. I can no more comprehend that than the Jewish people could comprehend the destruction of the temple. It is outside my world view.

Our people suffered. They felt grief, guilt, humiliation and despair. They were children feeling anguish and abandonment. They watched other children die. They knew they were to be victims of the same fate.

This hour I ask you to experience this suffering. I ask you to feel the onset of despair. I ask you to experience death not in a flash, but over hours and days. We need to know just how far our people fell. We need to sit by the tomb wondering if the dawn will come.

This hour our senses conclude that we will die a meaningless death. Our senses offer us no aid. This hour we learn to hope and to believe even when all evidence points to despair.

There will be other hours for light and redemption. The dawn will come. God will comfort her people. This hour we lament.

Wisdom for our Journey

Cathy Bunting

The Book of Sirach is believed to be written by a Jewish scribe Joshua Ben Sirach, or Jesus son of Eleazar, son of Sirach from Jerusalem, around the year 200-170 BC. There is a prologue of the one who translates it from Hebrew to Greek stating he did so because of its valuable teachings of how to live a more perfect life in accord with the law of God. It is also referred to as the Ecclesiasticus or the church reading book because of how frequently it was used then.

It is not part of the cannon of Judaism because of the rabbi's beliefs that the period of Divine Inspiration ended after the 5th to 4th century B.C. But numerous quotes from this book are included in rabbinic literature. It is also not contained in the Protestant Bible. But it is in the Anglican, Eastern Orthodox, and Catholic Scriptures, and was found to be canonical by the Council of Trent.

It is written in poetic form its final Chapter is a Syriac canticle in alphabetical acrostic. The author has a philosophical bent. He has traveled far and has learned a lot from what he has witnessed and experienced in life. He also shows knowledge from the Patriarchs, ancestors and leaders of Israel. It is like the other Wisdom Books, Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastes' but Sirach is the longest and most comprehensive of the wisdom literature. Like the Old testament, it teaches that God is one, eternal, living and there is no God but him. This God makes himself known in the wonderful works of nature. He is creator of all things which are good and fill the earth with blessings. Humans are his choice handiwork. He created them from the earth, in the Divine Image. He made them, giving them wisdom and knowledge of good and evil. Therefore, they will be held accountable for their deeds. God is merciful to those who turn to him. Their creator looks on them with favor, cherishes their goodness, and makes an everlasting covenant with them. God will reward virtue but condemn hypocrisy. The duty to pray must be united with works of charity. He praises the virtues of patience, forgiveness, humility, mercy, trust in God and especially obedience to his commandments.

There is no mention of Messianic Hope. He sees that salvation is by the good works that a person does. One must seek to do God's will which is made known in the Law of Moses and to seek God's forgiveness when you fail.

Jesus, son of Sirach had a profound knowledge of the human heart. One should be grateful for the gift of wisdom and the Mosaic Law which is a priceless treasure. The beginning of wisdom is fear of the Lord and only those who are pious and obedient will obtain wisdom. This book contains a collection of moral counsels, ethical teachings and maximums applicable to all conditions in life. The three main topics are religion, morals and manners. There are valuable lessons about relationships in human society: husband and wife, parents and children, the family, the rich and the poor and oppressed for which sympathy and almsgiving are recommended. They are to treat servants as brothers and as they themselves would like to be treated. But the reason is so that they in turn may help us in the future. So it is far from Jesus Christ way of giving without any expectation of anything in return. The author does not have a very high regard for women. He states "a birth of a daughter is a loss" for that society it seems that only boys are valued.

Pursuing wisdom is central in this Book of Sirach. The description reminded me of the The Song of Songs. He thirsts and longs for her like a lover longs for his beloved. Like a young bride he embraces the law that leads to wisdom. "My whole being was stirred, burning with desire for her and never turning back. Wisdom came to me in her beauty and I cultivated her and was devoted to her as a prized possession. I will never forsake her and I will always declare my praises of the Lord."

Educational Opportunities

Our Vatican II Lecture Series resumes later this month. Mark your calendars and be sure to be with us for these three remaining lectures.

Vatican II- Lecture Series: In Celebration of 50 Years

Lecture IV: *On The Church* Presenter: Dolores Leckey	Monday, April 22 at St. Alphonsus	7:30 -9:00 PM 114 W. Saratoga St.
Lecture V: *Vatican II: Then and Now* Presenter: Rosann Catalano, PhD	Tuesday, May 28 at The Basilica	7:30 -9:00 PM 409 Cathedral St.
Lecture III: *On The Liturgy* Presenter: Catherine Combier-Donovan	Monday, June 10 at Corpus Christi	7:30 -9:00 PM 1316 W. Mt. Royal Ave

All Lectures will occur in the Church sanctuaries with a reception to follow each of the presentations.

Annual Parish Retreat
June 7-9
Camp Nawakwa

Our annual parish retreat will be led by Jack Buchner, the pastoral Associate at Our Lady of Grace Parish in Parkton, MD. He will be picking up on our theme of the Eucharist and using Ronald Rolheiser's book Our One Great Act of Fidelity, as a starting point for the retreat. You do not have to read the book to participate.

This is a great time to get to know other people in the parish and recreate, as well as have an opportunity to have some time for spiritual reflection. There are formational programs for children which relate to our retreat theme to help occupy our youngest members constructively and so that parents can be free to enjoy the retreat as well.

Look for the sign-up sheets in the back of the church or for more information, go to our website and click on the Committee link for the Education and Enrichment committee.

Pentecost: What will we confirm from Holy Week?

By Anne Maura

The Death Penalty in Maryland was repealed a few weeks ago. At St. V's we applauded when Father Dick noted that at Mass. As we move toward Pentecost I find myself asking myself, "What was I, what were we, applauding?" On the one hand the action seems a true carrying out of our Pentecost mission to bring gospel values to our world. On the other . . . . Why did I support this repeal? Was it simply that our human justice system is not infallible and I don't want to see an innocent person executed? That was certainly a powerful argument that was used politically. But is it enough for a committed follower of Jesus?

This leads me to consider what more I have to learn from Holy Week, and specifically Good Friday. As a pre-renewed theology Catholic, I know there were elements of what I was taught about Calvary that I am happy to leave behind. I no longer see this as God's vengeance on sinful humanity. But I also discover more positive elements as well in that heritage. I find it did a good job of using Good Friday to teach me that my own personal suffering is an opportunity to suffer *with* Christ and is not, therefore, a punishment, a sign that God is displeased with me. My own personal suffering is not meaningless but joined with Christ can become an offering by which God's grace is allowed to enter the world. As a corollary, I learned that Jesus is always with me in my personal suffering and in the suffering of others.

In the last year, however, I have found myself thinking beyond those understandings, important though they are. On Holy Thursday, one statement from Jesus that we focus on comes at the washing of the feet. "I have given you an example, that you should do the same thing." Is it possible I'm meant to extend that beyond Holy Thursday? Renewed theology teaches me that Jesus' "sacrifice" on Calvary, the "making holy" that occurred in that event, stemmed not from Jesus' paying the price of the wrath of an angry God. Rather the power of Jesus' sacrifice, the power that forever changed history and human destiny, was that in the face of the most brutal opposition he remained faithful to *being* the image of God, to acting out of God values.

In the words Father Dick used repeatedly in Holy Week homilies, Jesus **is** the liberating compassion of God. For the most part, we accept that this is part of our call, part of our "doing the same thing." This can be hard. There is no question that sometimes opening my eyes to see demands genuine conversion. I need to remember and notice that not everyone enjoys such "luxuries" as my daily food, clean water, life outside a war zone. Opening my eyes to that may not be easy, nor may it easy to face my helplessness at the enormity of suffering in the world. But *wanting* to be liberating compassion? That's easy. That desire burns within me as I am confronted with the pain of people I have come to see share my own humanity.

Is that all Calvary teaches? We see Jesus' imaging the *liberating compassion of God* again and again in his actions through Holy Week, but we see it most dramatically perhaps on Golgotha. "Father, forgive them." What of that?

"I have given you an example that you should do the same thing?" If I truly want to follow Jesus, if I truly want to live the graced God-life within me, am I called to this? Am I to practice "the liberating compassion of God" not just to those whose pain touches my heart but to those who in ignorance or in deliberately chosen malice try to hurt me, try to extinguish those gospel values I say I espouse?

For me, the most powerful witness of the repeal movement was not the argument of those sentenced to death row and later exonerated, dramatic as that was. It was the calm witness of the families of the murdered who took a stand against the death penalty. In the face of the often brutal murder of a loved daughter/father/friend, I am humbled by their decision, their commitment, to love and forgiveness rather than blood lust and revenge.

From the outside looking on, the non-violent stance "I shall not be moved" appeals to me in other ways as well. I am humbled by the Amish families who forgave and comforted the families of the gunman who shot their children in the schoolhouse. I am impressed by the mothers of 911 victims who reached out to the mothers of the Taliban suicides. Theoretically, I thought Michael Dukakis missed an awesome opportunity during his campaign when he was asked what his response would be if someone raped and murdered his wife. Imagine if he had answered, "Yes, I realize my first response may very well have been blood-lust. I'd want to beat the *.%4** to death with a rock in my own hands. But we're called as humans to be more than that. My own Christianity calls me NOT to descend to the level." (Unfortunately, such a response probably wouldn't have picked up any votes from his supposedly Christian audience but what a witness to the gospel.)

I am the first one to admit, on the other hand, that *practicing* non-violence does not come easy to me. I was raised in a militantly Irish family. In the 50's Church, there were nine choirs of angels who supposedly stood just beneath the raised throne of God. They were arranged by rank, with the Seraphim first and the just-plain-ordinary "angels" in the last row. I always took it for granted that members of the Irish Republican Army who died in that cause stood right up there after the Seraphim, but before the Cherubim. I remember my profound shock the first time I heard a newscaster refer to the IRA as "terrorists." Every other group on earth might rightly be condemned for using homemade bombs and targeting civilians as a political tactic but surely this cause was just! In addition I have 4 years of childhood medical abuse fueling a decidedly "don't mess with me" attitude and a hot, and often trigger-ready, temper.

"I have given you an example that you should do the same thing." Surely, Jesus, can't be serious. But it's possible he is. It's possible that "take up your cross and follow me" doesn't mean just trying to be patient with the unavoidable trials of my life: illness, aging, death of a loved one, disappointment. Maybe it doesn't mean if I had to accept martyrdom I would. Maybe it means I accept opposition, persecution, all the effects of human stupidity and malice, as the early martyrs did going singing into the arena. Maybe it doesn't mean it's sufficient to protect a serial killer from the barbaric anachronism of execution. Maybe it means I don't

let the greed of the society I live in, the obtuseness of politicians, the close-mindedness of church hierarchy, the just plain orneriness of people around me lead me to give up my Christian commitment.

That doesn't mean I stop proclaiming the truth as I see it. It doesn't mean I stop being angry. As I've written forcefully in these pages in the last several months, anger can be a powerful grace to motivate us, inspire us, fuel us in our commitment. That doesn't mean I give in. Jesus didn't give in. He didn't "lose" the struggle (the fight, if you will) with the high priests and Romans, because he didn't accept their definition of what was at stake. He didn't let them change him. He didn't exchange being the "liberating compassion of God" for the chance to "show" them, to get even, to pay them back. Rather in regard to his message *and* his own personhood, his actions proclaimed, "I shall not be moved."

And here's a scary thought. It was exactly that willingness to remain grounded and filled with a liberating compassion toward his enemies that brought about the Resurrection. Perhaps the reason society, the world, and the church are in the state they are is not that I haven't raged enough, not that I haven't thought up enough clever arguments to show them how wrong they are, not that I haven't bad-mouthed them enough, not that my sarcasm isn't acerbic enough. Rather, perhaps, I haven't trusted God enough to embrace being "liberating compassion," forgiveness,--love. Perhaps it's not enough to sing "Alleluia" and enjoy the lilies. Maybe I have to live *into* Easter Resurrection.

Trust me, if there's another way—one perhaps that involves going after that servant of the high priest with sword after all—I want to sign up. But Pentecost is coming. On Easter Sunday morning I renewed my baptismal promises. Caught up in the ambience of Holy Week, I let myself re-commit to being a disciple of Jesus, to accepting that it is God's life I am gifted with if I choose to accept it. And now Pentecost is coming—and with it the question of whether I am ready to re-*confirm* that commitment—not primarily from the perspective of what it means for my personal relationship to God but from the perspective of the mission it calls me to take on in the church and world. Pentecost is coming—and with it the question whether I am willing to put not just my money but my attitudes, my action, my life where my mouth is.

"I have given you an example that *you should do the same thing."* Pentecost is coming. Do I bar the doors or let the Spirit in?