

2013

SUMMER TOGETHER SHARING CHRIST

IN THIS ISSUE:

Reflections on the Eucharist by John Donahue, SJ and Anne Maura English as well as thoughts harkening back to Trinity Sunday and looking forward with thoughts about our independence.

Pastor's Letter	Page	1
Associate's Letter	Page	2
The Psalms and Eucharist	Page	3
Cup or Chalice? The Large Implications of a Small Change	Page	6
Why the Trinity?	Page	9
Thoughts on the Triune God	Page	10
Eye for an Eye	Page	11
We Hold These Truths: A 4 th of July Meditation	Page	12
Bits O' Humor	Page	14
Approaching Prayer	Page	15
Parish Council Minutes - May	Page	18

COMING IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

Fr. Dick's 40th anniversary celebration, the last midnight mass, the annual parish retreat, & Eucharist - What are we eating?



CHECK OUT ST. V'S WEBSITE AT:
WWW.STVCHURCH.ORG

EDITED BY CHRIS MCCULLOUGH
CHRISM@STVCHURCH.ORG

VOLUME 33, NUMBER 6

Letter from the Pastor

June 6, 2013

Shalom!

If you are looking for my swan song, I'm sorry to disappoint you. I'm not anywhere as graceful as a swan, and my singing is better known for its enthusiasm than its tonality.

Seriously, you have probably heard, even if you are one of our out-of-town parishioners who hasn't been able to actually be here in a while, that I'm going to celebrate my 40th anniversary as Pastor of St. Vincent's at the end of this month. Rumor has it that I am then going to retire. Rumors of my retirement, like the rumors of Mark Twain's death, are greatly exaggerated. I will remain pastor, and hope to celebrate my 50th anniversary here in 10 years.

I am going to reduce my workload to half time, about 30 hours a week, and our pastoral associate, Chris McCullough, will assume more and more of the workload. But I will remain pastor. Chris, the Parish Council and I will constitute the decision making team for the parish, and I will still have full canonical responsibility for our decisions. I will still be here on Saturday and Sunday, and some of the weekdays, to preside at the Eucharist, and to preach. And I will still contribute to every issue of these pages. So you haven't heard the last of me.

But I will be working less, as befits my increasing age, and I will, with the permission of the Archbishop, be moving out of the rectory to a condominium at Scarlett Place, just down the street at Pratt and President Sts. Once I am moved in and have the furniture arranged, I would be happy to have you come to visit and see my new view of the inner harbor.

This is an old way of doing things with a new twist. In the old days, pastors never retired, but you saw less and less of them as they grew older and less vigorous, and the "first assistant" (the next oldest priest on the parish staff), effectively ran the parish. Well, today we don't have the clergy to have first, second, and perhaps even third assistant pastors, but we do have lay ecclesial ministers and lay leadership, both staff and volunteer. So it's an old idea, in that I will remain as pastor but do less as I age, and a new idea in that our pastoral associate, parish staff, council and committees will be the ones to pick up the slack.

It's therefore something of a new model, and it is therefore sure to have growing pains, but it offers great potential not only for us, but also for the church as a whole. Stay with us, help us make it work, and look forward as I do to some exciting times and continued growth for our parish.

Peace and Love,

Dick

Pastor

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE'S NOTES

May 31, 2013

Dear Fellow St. V's Parishioners,

Our Spring of lingering cold seems to have vanished in a blast of heat as I write to you today. Our 90-degree weather may not last but for a few days at this point in the year, but this heat, as does the opening of area pools, signals the approach of summer. Summer can be a treasured time of getting away on vacation to be with family. It is a time to get outside of our daily routines and visit family and friends who are geographically at a distance. Part of our time in those situations of respite and reunions involves eating meals with our loved ones. It can mark the specialness of the gathering where favorite foods or dishes are shared in that eating ritual. Old familiar family recipes have the power of conjuring up fond memories of days gone by or of "home."

As Christians we gather weekly for a meal which has the power to do more than simply conjure memories. We gather as a family of believers who eat the Eucharist--the Body and Blood of Christ--to feed our Spirits with life giving food. Our God is real-incarnate and is made present to us in the bread and wine. Those common elements are transformed into the loving, reconciling sacrifice of his son's body and blood. In this sacramental meal we are nourished with the grace provided by the mystery of our celebration which beckons us to become what we eat--to be formed and transformed.

I would be remiss if I did not mention that our journey as a community--that formation and transformation--has been touched and lead by the ministry of Fr. Richard Lawrence, who 40 years ago on June 30th celebrated his first Mass at St. Vincent's. That was 1973. Remember those days? Think of how far this community has travelled in that 40-year time span. It is just a piece of our overall 173 year history. But it is significant because it is proximate to our experience and is indeed presently who and what St. Vincent is as a community. Let us thank him for his service.

Because this meal is so central to our lives and who we are as Christians, we are taking time this year to reflect on the meaning of the Eucharist. During Lent our Faith in Film series focused on the theme of Eucharist. During the Easter season we read and discussed in small groups Ronald Rolheiser's book *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*. We will continue that reflection on our annual parish retreat whose theme is *The Eucharist: New Life for You and for the World*. Our Summer Sermon Series will also focus on the Eucharist, taking three weeks in July this summer and next to dig deeper into its meaning.

This issue of *TSC* will touch on this topic with the reflection from John Donahue, SJ entitled "Cup or Chalice?" in addition to Anne Maura English's article "The Psalms and the Eucharist." This issue covers a host of other topics harkening back to thoughts on Trinity Sunday and forward to thoughts about our independence.

While we move into the heat of the summer and as you sit by the pool or beach in the sun, I hope you can take a moment to read through these offerings and grow in your understanding of our faith.

Peace,

Chris

THE PSALMS AND EUCHARIST

BY ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

Following the establishment of Christianity as the formal religion of the Roman Empire and the consequent end to persecution of Christians, thousands of converts joined the Church. Unfortunately many who did were not motivated by genuine religious commitment and thus many Christians felt the general depth and vibrancy of being a disciple of Jesus had become watered down. In response a movement in which a number of Christians sought a way to live their faith more intensely sprang into existence. Going out into the barren places outside the cities, they became hermits, devoting themselves to prayer and asceticism and providing spiritual counsel to those who came requesting it.

This movement, however, was predominately a lay one. Consequently, as devout as the hermits—the Desert Fathers (and a few “Mothers”)—were, they had no, or only rare, access to the Eucharist. The Psalms became their substitute, and they spread out recitation of all hundred psalms through the course of a week. As the hermit experience evolved into the monastic life, this psalm tradition accompanied it, even as Eucharist became available, becoming the Liturgy of the Hours, or Divine Office. This ancient perception of the resonance between psalms and Eucharist provides a perspective that can deepen understanding of Eucharist.

Since Vatican II, much religious writing and reflection has been focused on the Eucharist. Among Catholics there is much more attention to and appreciation of such things as the Liturgy of the Word, the community aspect of Eucharist, the importance of continuing our worship in the way we live when we leave church, as well as a continuing focus on the magnificent mystery of Christ’s gift of self in communion. However, there seems to be much less time or attention on the Eucharistic Prayer itself—the prayer that begins with the presider’s “Lift up your hearts” and ends with the congregation’s great “Amen.”

Culturally, participating in this prayer presents some obstacles. This isn’t a culture that has much skill at listening—especially when there is very little action to watch, minimal interaction, and much repetition. Even though there are changes in the Preface and a few (limited) Eucharistic Prayer’s proper, the basic format is the same. St. Vincent is fortunate to have a presider who puts real effort into expressing what the words mean. However, the priest shortage means that the congregation always hears the same voice, the same intonation. No matter how good it is, that familiarity becomes another factor in the tendency for minds to wander.

It doesn’t help, of course, that the Eucharistic Prayer itself has not received the amount of attention that other elements of the Mass have. Its basic format—aside from the institution narrative—is not always appreciated as integral to the whole celebration. Many Protestant churches which have restored the frequency of Communion services, shorten or eliminate it entirely, except for the institution narrative. This is where the Psalms come in.

Most Catholics know that the word “Eucharist” is derived from the Greek word for “thanksgiving” or “thank you.” (English-speaking visitors to Greece are often startled to hear sales clerks cheerily say

“eucharistie” as they hand a customer their purchase.) Given that origin, it may seem strange that the word “thank” or “thanksgiving” never occurs in the prayer itself. The reason for that is that the Eucharistic prayer grew out of the Jewish prayer before meals. Both Eucharistic prayer and the Psalms, then, share a common source in the Hebrew language.

And the Hebrew language has no word for “thank” or “thanksgiving.” In Hebrew, gratitude is expressed by acknowledgement. The English language also has that option. Consider how often an “Acknowledgements” page is included in the back of an event program. Here are listed—as a gesture of gratitude—everyone who has helped the event happen. Sometimes there is a brief description of what they did: Annie Adams—Table decorations; Bruce Brown—Music; Cathy Carson—Food coordinator; etc. Or the person at the mike may go into more detail: “Let’s give a big round of applause to Don Dickens. He spent hours constructing this wonderful backdrop.”

Both Eucharistic prayer and the Psalms share a linguistic heritage in the Hebrew language. Neither uses the specific word “thanks.” (Occasionally it appears in an English translation of a psalm, but that is a translation of the intent, not the actual vocabulary.) Instead they rely on acknowledgement.

The psalms are full of praise of God. The poets and song writers who composed them delighted in retelling the wonders God had worked: in nature, in the history of the Israelite people, in the writer’s own life. Even psalms that arose from anguish or cried out in anger and frustration to God at some point detailed examples of God’s goodness. This was their way of giving thanks to God.

Hebrew meal prayer followed the same pattern. “Blessed are You, Oh God of the universe, through your goodness we have this bread to eat. . . .” It is that model which was taken over by Greek speaking Christians from the original Hebrew or Aramaic.

There is one more key element of Hebrew thinking that underlies both Eucharistic prayer and Psalm. For the Israelites, the recitation of something God had done was more than a looking back. A line from a religious ed. filmstrip of the ‘70’s captures it well: “We ask, *Did this happen?* The Israelites asked, *Does it happen?*” For them God’s action in the past serves as an illustration of who God is and continues to be. God continues to act now, in the present, in the same way—doing the same things as they need to be done in the current time. It is largely through the Psalm texts that two qualities emerge as the most frequent descriptors of God: *hesed wid emeth* – fidelity and loving-kindness. Even the turn to praise in the anger psalms was a way of reminding God, “This is Who You are” . . . a gentler, somewhat more respectful version of the formal English admonition, “You forget yourself, sir.”

Petition flows not only from the psalmist’s pain, but just from the delineation of God’s goodness. Because the psalmist knows Who God is and how God acts, s/he feels confident to ask for continued help. Just as importantly, a psalm often leads to a commitment to some action. The psalms have served (and serve) as a reminder to those who pray them of who *the pray-ers* are: the recipients of the blessings and actions of a loving God and that calls out for a response. “I will extol You among the nations.” “I will pay my vows to the living God.”

These same elements appear in the Eucharistic Prayer. “Lift up your hearts.” “We have. . . .” “Let us give thanks and praise.” “It is right and just.” The *justness* alluded to here is biblical justice. This is more than

fairness in one's dealings, although that is one element of biblical justice. For the Bible, "right" and "just" are two facets of the same reality. *Justice* occurs when life is aligned with God's vision, God's dream for creation, and thus unfolding as it should. Contemporary language might say, "It's obvious, it's as plain as the nose on your face. It fits."

There follows one of the dozens and dozens of "Prefaces" to the prayer itself. Each liturgical feast and season has at least one. Granted the language is formal—and in some cases, due to the "new" approved translations horrendous English—but the intent is to draw attention to the specific ways this feast or season demonstrates God's action and goodness. And, true to its Jewish origin, this includes an exhortation—implied or stated—to consider how this affects life today. The congregation responds by the "Holy, holy," a response that is "right and just," *fitting*, given who God has been shown to be.

The Eucharistic Prayer proper, from its opening through the institution narrative, gives a mini-summary of God's action, demonstrating why it *is* "right and just" to be glad God is Who God is, for example, "From age to age You gather a people to Yourself." The abbreviated narration of the Last Supper is part of this summary. It was never meant as a quasi-magical ritual in which a presider "channels" Jesus. Rather, it is a culminating point drawing attention to Jesus's (and God's) ultimate love for us via both Calvary/Easter and the self-offering under the appearances of bread and wine. (There is one mid-Eastern rite, which does not use the telling of the Last Supper ritual in its Eucharist, but is recognized by the Vatican as valid Eucharist bearing the "real presence.")

The Eucharistic Prayer, like the Psalms, also includes petition, petition which has a "therefore" or "and because of this" quality. In the light of what the Church has just reminded itself about the majesty of God's fidelity and loving action, it prays for its members living and dead. Again, like the Psalms, the Eucharistic prayer includes the pray-ers' action. The Church, present in the worshipping communities, joins itself to the Calvary/Easter event; they offer "this sacrifice," that is Jesus, present in the transformed bread and wine and themselves and the "sacrifice," the "making holy" of their own lives. Their petition, then, includes a plea for help in living out that commitment. That commitment will be sealed at Communion, in which individuals' reception becomes an acceptance of Jesus' (and God's) intimate love and presence in their lives, of the community which is his Body, of the covenant in his blood. That commitment begins, here, however in the Eucharistic Prayer and its culmination in what is meant to be a vigorous "AMEN" to the assertion that it is "through [Christ], with him and in him" that humankind and all creation achieves its fulfillment, living the vision God had in creating. (Augustine's community knew how to do this; he described their response as "the thunderous roll of the great Amen.")

In seeing the intense Eucharistic character of the psalms, the desert hermits were definitely on to something. The psalms served (and serve) as a commentary on human life and history. They reinterpret the events of that life and history in the context of the deeper—the "real"—meaning of those events. In the same way, the very sameness of the Eucharistic Prayer can call the community back to an awareness of the meaning of their own lives. The events of this week, the one that has brought Christians to this Eucharist and the one that begins now, are part of the action of God described in the Eucharistic prayer. Attending to that, reflecting on that puts the events of those weeks in their true context. "It is right and just." *It fits.*



Cup or Chalice?

The Large Implications of a Small Change

Published on *Commonweal* magazine (<http://commonwealmagazine.org>)

John R. Donahue

Six months after the imposition of the new English edition of the Roman Missal, the volume of dissatisfaction has moderated. People seem resigned to the wooden and literal translations (“people of good will,” “enter under my roof”), archaic vocabulary (“dewfall,” “consubstantial,” “oblation”), and inflated language of prayer (“holy and unblemished,” “graciously grant,” “paying their homage”). Such language, so different from the plainspoken words of Jesus in prayer and parable, is in contrast to the directive of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* of Vatican II: “In this restoration [of the liturgy], both texts and rites should be drawn up so that they express more clearly the holy things which they signify; the Christian people, so far as possible, should be enabled to understand them with ease and to take part in them fully, actively, and as befits a community.” We have also become accustomed to hearing presiders stumble over the convoluted syntax of the prayers and watching them hurriedly turning pages as they wend their way through the labyrinthine new missals. Yet, there is one new expression that involves a significant translation error with serious implications for a proper understanding of the Last Supper as a Passover meal, along with implications for continued Jewish-Christian understanding. In the final analysis, it enshrines poor pastoral theology in the Sunday liturgy.

“Traduttore, Traditore”

All translators are familiar with the caution that translations often distort or even betray the nuances of the original language. This is dramatically true in the substitution of the term “chalice” for “cup” in the words of institution in the Eucharistic prayer from the 1970 missal approved by Pope Paul VI:

When supper was ended he took *the cup* [*chalice*].
 Again he gave you thanks and praise,
 Gave *the cup* [*chalice*] to his disciples, and said:

Take this, all of you and drink from it;
 This is *the cup* [*chalice*] of my blood,
 The blood of the new and everlasting covenant.
 It will be shed for you and for all
 So that sins may be forgiven.
 Do this in memory of me.

In the Greek original of all the New Testament accounts of the Last Supper, after the blessing of the bread, Jesus takes a cup (*potērion*) and says that this is the blood of the new covenant (Mark and Matthew), or “this cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood” (Luke) and “this cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1 Cor 11:25). Though Hellenistic Greek had a word—*kylix* (the basis

of the Latin *calix*)—that suggests a larger ceremonial vessel often used in religious rites, the New Testament authors chose *potērion*, the normal term for an ordinary drinking cup in daily life.

When St. Jerome translated the New Testament from Greek to Latin he chose the Latin term *calix* (from which “chalice” derives) to translate *potērion*, but he did not intend it to mean a liturgical vessel. In both the secular Latin of the time and in Jerome’s translation of the Scriptures, the term *calix* meant primarily an ordinary drinking cup. In Matt 10:42 Jesus says, “And whoever gives only a cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because he is a disciple—amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward.” While the original Greek has *potērion* for “cup” of cold water, the Latin translation reads “*calicem aquae frigidae*.” Given the context it would be absurd to translate this “a chalice of cold water.” Similarly, to translate “my cup overflows” in Psalm 23:5 (Vulgate 22:5) as “my chalice overflows” would be ludicrous.

Although there were early translations of the Bible into English beginning with Venerable Bede, John Wycliffe (1328–84) is credited with the first complete translation of the Latin Vulgate, and here the translation of Jesus’ action over the wine (Matt 27:26) reads “And he took the cuppe,” while the earliest English translation of Mark 14:23 from the Greek, by William Tyndale (1494–1536), reads, “And he toke the cup gave thankes and gave it to them.” Simply put, in neither Jerome’s translation of the Greek into Latin nor early translations of the Latin into English nor the early Greek translations into English was “chalice” treated as a proper translation of the words of Jesus at the Last Supper. “Chalice” was first substituted for “cup” in the Catholic Douay-Rheims translation from the Latin (1582–1609), where it functioned as a post-Tridentine marker of Catholicism against Protestantism—a role it may again assume.

The Last Supper as a Passover Meal

The words of Jesus shape the context of our Eucharistic liturgy today. Jesus sends his disciples to find a place where “I may eat the Passover with my disciples” (Mark 14:12–14). The narrative of Jesus at table with the disciples is portrayed by the evangelists as a Passover meal that highlights clear elements of the traditional Jewish Passover celebration (see 1 Cor 5:7, “Christ our Paschal lamb has been sacrificed”). Though no mention is made of the central act of eating the sacrificial lamb, the blessing, breaking, and eating of the bread and the blessing and drinking of the wine have clear parallels in the Jewish feast. Again of particular concern is the rendering of *potērion* as “chalice.” The key point is that the liturgy describes Jesus *after the supper* taking a cup, giving it to the disciples, and saying,

“Take this, all of you and drink from it;
This is *the cup* [*chalice*] of my blood.”

Though scholars differ about certain details, we know the Jewish celebration of Passover involved prayers and blessings over four cups of wine, two drunk before or during the main course and two *after the meal*. The third cup, “the cup of blessing” after the meal, is the cup in our Eucharistic prayers today, “when supper was ended.” St. Paul notes explicitly that it was “after the meal” (1 Cor 11:24) and earlier writes, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:16).

The cup that Jesus drank *after the meal* therefore evokes memories of the Jewish Passover ritual. To call this cup a “chalice” disguises the relation of the Christian Eucharist to an *anamnesis* (enacted memorial) of the Paschal Meal celebrated by the Jewish Jesus as he approached his suffering and death. The events surrounding the Passion of Jesus have caused great difficulties and sorrow in Jewish-Christian relations. The suppression of the memory of the Jewishness of Jesus in the Christian Eucharist is another example

of “de-Judaizing” Jesus, and will erect another barrier to appreciation of our Jewish heritage, to mutual understanding, and to a proper liturgical catechesis.

Challenges to Pastoral Theology and Pastoral Care

Among the achievements of the Second Vatican Council, especially in the *Dogmatic Constitution on Revelation (Dei verbum)*, was a renewed focus on Scripture as, in St. Jerome’s words, “the soul of theology.” In the life of the church, people were encouraged to “gladly put themselves in touch with the sacred text itself, *whether it is through the liturgy*, rich in the divine Word or through devotional reading, or through instructions suitable for the purpose and other aids” (emphasis mine). In the apostolic constitution *Missale Romanum* (1969), Pope Paul VI noted that the “*formulas* of consecration have been restored to a purer form reflective of the biblical sources” (Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy 1948–1975*). In the decades since the council, through exposure to the liturgy in the vernacular and through opportunities at all levels for deepening knowledge of Scripture, Catholics have become a Bible-reading, Bible-praying church. The traditional representation of the book as the symbol of Protestantism and of the chalice as a symbol of Catholicism had virtually disappeared. Is it now making a comeback?

The introduction of the English word “chalice” at the most solemn moment of the liturgy not only obscures the original biblical and historical context of the event but also evokes an image of Jesus that distances him from the disciples of his own day and of ours. In contemporary English a “chalice” is a liturgical vessel, and people are likely to think of gold or jewel-encrusted chalices found in museums or seen in artistic portrayals. At the Last Supper, Jesus was a Jewish layman using the drinking cups of the world around him, which were to bear the deepest mystery of his life. “Chalice” obscures this transformation of the ordinary by the power of God and distances the celebration from the lives of the participants. Indeed in the new translation of the Roman Missal, the priest says “This is the chalice of my blood,” but one of the optional responses for the people is, “When we eat this bread and *drink this cup*, we proclaim your death, O Lord, until you come again.” Chalices are for priests; cups for laypeople. This suggests a return to the understanding of a priest as a sacral person separated from the community rather than offering the Eucharist as a member of “the Body of Christ.” Finally, I often celebrate liturgy among parents who, like many others, are instructing young children in the meaning of the Mass. They have told me that some of the arcane language in the new translations has made their efforts to explain what Jesus was doing at the Last Supper more difficult. The reference to a “chalice” has proven especially confusing.



Throughout history changes in the liturgy arose from the faith and practice of the people (“from below”) and from decisions of church leaders (“from above”). I can only hope that “cup” will again rise up to replace “chalice.”

Source URL: <http://commonwealmagazine.org/cup-or-chalice>

WHY THE TRINITY?

BY AUDREY ROGERS

If you have ever had the great gift of viewing Michelangelo's David, you can never forget it. The statue is housed in a domed area at the end of a stately, marbled hall at the Uffizi gallery in Florence. It towers above you as you enter, occupying the center of the space so visitors can walk around its splendor. Its perfection is breathtaking.

Michelangelo had talent. But what made him an artist was the outward expression of his talent, transferring a part of his very self into the stone, giving it form, and breathing in life. One cannot be an artist without art.

And God cannot be God without creation, without us. The very definition of being God involves *relationship*. We see it echoed throughout the Jewish scripture in God's commitment to the covenant: I will be your God and you shall be my people. The doctrine of the Trinity encapsulates this essential divine relationship: within God and for us.

As Christianity developed and made the jump from Jewish Christian communities to a Greco-Roman world, the human experience of the Holy Mystery through Jesus and in the Spirit began to require some explanation in order to be understood, taught, and believed. The lived encounter with the Trinitarian God was put into writing as the doctrine of the Trinity in order *to help people believe*.



The ensuing thousand years saw much theological speculation about the nature of the Trinitarian God in language so complex that it clouded people's understanding. Augustine speculated on the essence of a Trinitarian God. Aquinas produced two volumes in his *Summa Theologica*: one on God and then one on the Trinity, somewhat compartmentalizing the One Mystery. In reaction to all this needless complexity, Luther and Calvin moved theology almost exclusively to the salvation delivered by Jesus. In fact, actual *anti-Trinitarian* movements began in some 16th century Protestant circles rejecting the doctrine because it lacked a scriptural basis, was contrary to reason, and seemed irrelevant to the practice of faith. For us Catholics, we were trained to blindly accept the Trinity as a mystery, not to be questioned. So paradoxically a doctrine developed to help people believe had morphed into something beyond contemplating.

In the 20th century, the Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner noted that if the doctrine of the Trinity were to be dropped entirely from our creed, it would make little practical difference in our faith: We Catholics had become *functional monotheists*. He concluded that the approach of both Augustine and Aquinas, focusing as they did on the nature of God *separate from us*, was deficient. He said in the final analysis all we as limited creatures can know about God is what God has chosen to disclose to us.

But what God has chosen to disclose to us is more than enough.

The Unbounded One, the Source of all Being, as *artist* voiced a Word, through which creation like *a work of art* came into being, and breathed a Spirit of Life into it so that this creation could make the Unbounded One, the Word, and the Spirit--*God indeed*--because it placed God in relation to us. This creation of which we are a part is the act of a self-emptying Love: abundant, relational, creative, and vulnerable. We can scarcely imagine the nature of this Love; in our most perfectly pure moments we barely touch its surface. Simone Weil remarked once that God is Love like an emerald is green; *love is God's very nature*.

This Love desires for creation to be its perfect manifestation. Yet this Love also bestows freedom. And in this--our human freedom--we often choose to ignore our relationship to the Mystery. When we do, we lose our sense of One-ness, our relationship to the very ground of our being. Our creation, which is meant to be the perfect manifestation of God's love, is broken and wounded by our failure to embrace and imitate the Divine life offered to us. Because of this, creation has become a cipher with the manifestation of God within it, only visible to those who accept the grace to see. And as graced awareness increases so does our responsibility; i.e. our ability to respond. Our hearts grow and our circle of compassion expands to accept the suffering of the world. This is what it means to take on the mind of Jesus the Christ and to allow the divine to flow through us. It is how we bring all creation into the relational, abundant, creative dance of the Trinity. Through incarnating Jesus and living among us, God brings humanity intimately into the very nature of God. And because we are utterly precious to God, the same destiny is offered to us. We are to become through grace what Jesus is by nature. When we do, we will melt into Love itself and our existence will be God's true art, the mirror of all our hearts can imagine.

Thoughts on the Triune God

God's truth and love pervade all things
As the light and the heat of the sun.

The only One who can teach me to find God,
Is God alone.

It is God's love that speaks to me in the birds and the streams
But also behind the clamor of the city.

The desire to find God and to see God and to love God
Is the one thing that matters.

Thomas Merton

Taken from *God Hunger* by John Kirvan

AN EYE FOR AN EYE

BY ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

When English knights first encountered the Irish early in the Middle Ages, they were scandalized by the penal system of the residents of the Emerald Isle. Ireland had a complex, extremely detailed system of penalties—almost all involving monetary reimbursement to the offended party or victim. To the English, settling insults or injury by financial settlement was barbaric. “Civilized” men turned to sword and devastation to wreck vengeance.

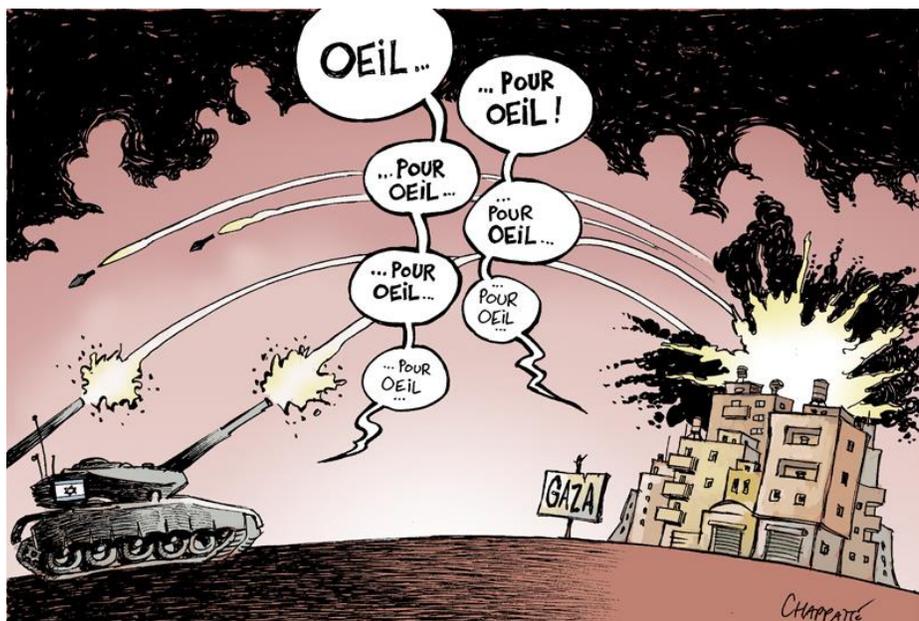
This was precisely the reason the Irish had adopted this system. Feuding and warfare in the name of revenge were devastating the population. The intricate system of payback was their solution.

“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” may well be the most misused—and most frequently quoted—line in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. For numerous Christians it is the first response that comes to mind when an injury is incurred or a crime is described. Said Christians have no difficulty dismissing statements from the same time period requiring them to avoid seafood and pork products or to avoid mixing different kinds of fabric in the same garment (to say nothing of Jesus’ later statements on forgiveness or treatment of enemies). Rather this one sentence is enshrined as ultimate authority.

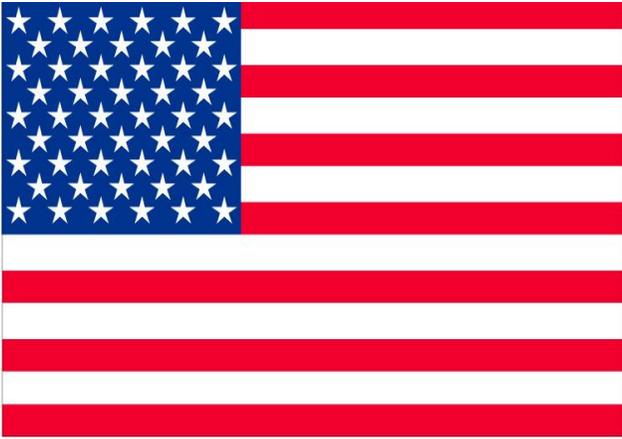
In the original culture in which it was written, however, this injunction was never intended to permit and justify vengeance but to restrain it. Like the Irish a millennium or so later, the ancient Israelites had a bloodthirsty approach to wreaking vengeance. If someone knocked out an eye or a tooth, their relatives might very well retaliate by wiping out numerous males of the perpetrator’s family, attacking the women,

kidnapping various relatives and selling them into slavery, slaughtering all farm animals, and setting fire to the fields. This saying served as a way to stem the mayhem. It was a model, a standard, prohibiting overkill—an uncontrolled wallowing in revenge not just when eyes or teeth were involved but in all situations of personal injury or insult.

In light of the later development of moral sensitivity in both Jewish and Christian faiths, “an



eye for an eye” cannot claim status as an enduring norm. Although the desire for revenge is understandable in the face of personal hurt or outrage at some horrendous act, this line from the Bible does not authentically be called on to defend it. In the face of its continued and prevalent use, it might be wise to heed another biblical maxim: “The devil can quote Scripture for his own purpose.”



WE HOLD THESE TRUTHS – A 4TH OF JULY MEDITATION

BY ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights governments are instituted among Men. . . .

For the past two centuries countless people—in this country and elsewhere—have felt a thrill in reading these words. They seem to resonate with something fundamental deep within us. But are we done with them? Are they done with us? The approaching Fourth of July seems a good time to ask those questions in the light of faith.

ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL

Most likely we have no trouble relating to this sentence. Our Christian tradition has always maintained that all persons are called to salvation. That grace is offered to every human being. Consequently, when faced with the pull of human sinfulness to despise and subjugate other human beings, we have been forced to justify those actions by proclaiming the “other” as subhuman, not fully human, or demonic. Certainly among the Founding Fathers there were some for whom it was not all *self-evident* that women or non-white men were among those *created equal*. In the ensuing years, most of us in this country have expanded our definition of who fits in that category. The sentence itself has slowly, but almost inexorably, drawn us to that expansion. It has proved to be—in a phrase coined by theologian Johann Metz—a “dangerous memory,” which has refused to go away or to let us rest with a shallow understanding.

Perhaps it is time to reflect more deeply on what “danger” may be waiting in what comes next in that passage. The document expresses a belief that *they*—that is, all those who have been created equal—have *certain* rights. Those rights are not bestowed by a government, or any human agency. They are *endowed by the Creator. Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness* are included in those rights. However, these are not the only Creator-given rights; the ones named are simply *among* those rights. Furthermore these rights are *unalienable*, that is (according to Webster’s) “incapable of being alienated, surrendered or transferred.”

What does that mean for us, within the context of our Catholic faith’s commitment to justice? Once we move beyond that *all . . . are created equal*, is the rest of that quotation true in a wider religious context? Or is it merely a purely secular statement, a cultural artifact which may be beautiful— as an opera or a painting may be—but which holds no claim to any genuine authority or truth? Given current events, this is no trivial question.

Obviously, we believe that some rights are bestowed by the government and we accept the government’s claim to limit or take them away. Imprisoned felons aren’t allowed to vote; children are removed from parents who abuse or molest them; age limits are set for driving, marrying, drinking. Additionally, all of our criminal law can be seen as corollary to the old adage, “Your rights end where the other fellow’s nose begins.” Consequently, no matter how much *liberty* or *happiness* it might bring me, I have no right to break into your house and steal your plasma TV, or to forge your identity and empty your bank account, or to just go ahead and get rid of you.

UNALIENABLE RIGHTS TO LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

So what does it mean to have an *unalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness*? And what are the other unalienable rights *among* which these three exist? Which “rights” are *endowed by the Creator* and therefore can’t be touched, and which ones are given by society and thus can be taken away? Where should society and its government draw the line? When rights—even *unalienable rights*—are in conflict how should they be prioritized? What place does the right to pursue happiness by owning property and amassing wealth hold in that prioritized list? What about the right to have our nation acknowledged as Number One? How exactly are these rights to be enshrined in law and honored in our judicial system? Finding the answers to those questions is something we as a people and as individuals have wrestled with for over two hundred years. The Bill of Rights was an initial attempt to provide some answers, but those ten constitutional amendments came nowhere near settling all the issues. Over the years the questions have continued to be raised and our answers have at times changed.

If we take the Declaration seriously, the answer to those questions is absolutely crucial; for it is only *to secure these rights* that we can justify our government in general and our existence as a nation in particular.

And the questions are by no means over. In a society in which adequate resources exist, does every human person, by virtue of being human, have the right to at least minimally adequate food and shelter, or does that have to be earned? If you are a child do you have that right only if your parents have earned it? Is basic health care a right? Is there a right to a living wage? What about an education? The further we move from leaving the cave to scabble for food, the harder these questions become.

What about the line between *unalienable* and government-bestowed rights? Is the right to be free from “cruel and unusual punishment— and perhaps, by extension, torture—something that is granted by the U.S. government and therefore something that the government is free to deny to some citizens or to non-citizens. Or was it included in the Bill of Rights because it is a fundamental right arising from one’s status as human? What about due process when accused of a crime? Does upholding the principles of the Declaration permit us to treat people in other countries in ways we would not be allowed to act toward our own citizens? In the conditions of factories we finance, for example. Or in diverting water needed for drinking and farming to supply a soft drink bottling plant?

Under what conditions can rights—even unalienable ones—be lost? Does every human corpse have a right to a decent burial or is that a privilege society extends only to those who do not commit horrendous acts?

These questions—and many more—continue to confront us and will not disappear simply because we ignore them. They provide a dark and disturbing undercurrent to our flag-waving, parades, and fireworks.

ENDOWED BY THEIR CREATOR

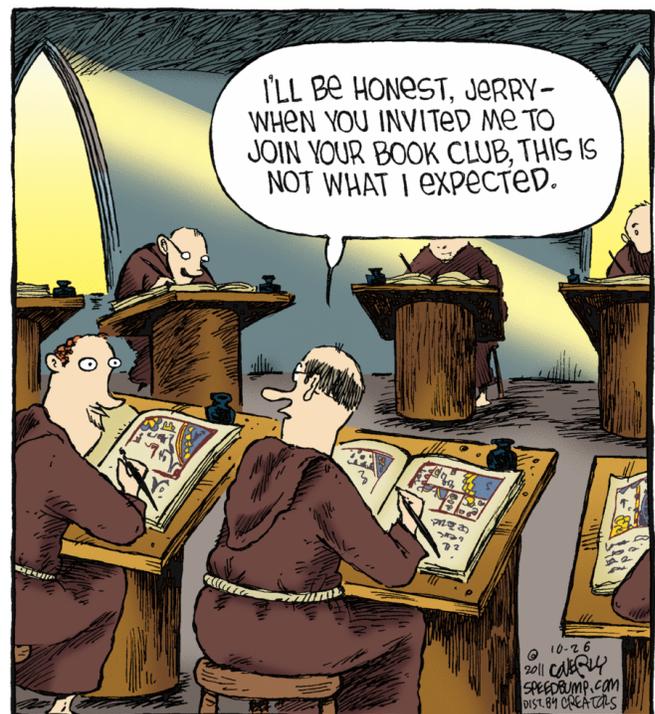
For those of us who hold to a faith tradition, these unresolved issues hold a special importance. If we take the Declaration of Independence seriously, there are certain rights that are *endowed by [the] Creator*—that is, God-given. Discerning the answers to the questions above—and to others like them—cannot be for those who believe in God merely an exercise in political science. The protection and maintenance of *God-given* human rights is not a matter of political or economic pragmatism. It is a matter of discerning and responding to God’s will. Catholics have a particular responsibility in this. A basic characteristic of Catholic Christianity is the belief that revelation comes through creation as well as Scripture. Creation, we hold, is sacramental, revealing both God and God’s call to us. If human beings have rights that are grounded in their creation by God, that are undeniably theirs by virtue of being human, how do we justify ignoring them and still call ourselves God’s faithful?

The easy out—so far as the Declaration is concerned—is simply to ignore these opening words of the document. Our celebration of July 4th then becomes a commemoration of the result of its being written, divorced from any meaning the words themselves may carry. Unfortunately for us Catholics, this basic belief in human rights given by God has become a staple of Catholic papal, conciliar, and episcopal teaching over the last 125 years. One would think that would make it harder for U.S. Catholics to ignore, but the evidence suggests that is far from the case.

On the other hand, for U.S. Catholics who are “into the justice thing,” those developments in Catholic social teaching may provide another reason to celebrate the Fourth. Americans like to take pride in the fact that the Declaration of Independence has had a major impact on the history of the world, one that initially influenced Europe but continues to have an effect around the globe. There is no evidence that the Declaration, per se, inspired the various papal encyclical or Vatican II documents. Is it possible, however, that the climate—the ethos—engendered by that document contributed to Catholicism’s rediscovery and development of the “dangerous memory” of its own tradition and its reading of the gospel? The Declaration drew its philosophy from the Enlightenment, which was fairly—and sometimes thoroughly—anti-religious. Would it not be typical of the Holy Spirit’s devious sense of humor to use it to deepen the “papist” faith? Jefferson would be thunderstruck—and probably horrified—but our own Bible carries ample testimony to the strange paths of revelation. (Be careful what you wish for, Thomas J.)

Catholicism’s embrace of a human rights philosophy unfortunately (or not) does not mean it has answers to all those sticky questions posed earlier. So the questions remain. The challenges remain. This article is, as the title indicates, a meditation not a proposal. The Fourth of July is, after all, a holiday. Bring on the picnics! Bring on the fireworks! (Just be careful what you celebrate.)

BITS O' HUMOR



APPROACHING PRAYER

BY ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

It is commonplace for spirituality books about prayer to advise calming or recollecting oneself and “placing oneself in the presence of God” as a first step in prayer. In today’s hectic—and noisy world—that deserves some consideration.

We all have numerous demands for our concern and planning. When we quiet down to pray, we may find that all those demands jump at the opportunity to hijack our full attention. One thing that can help is creating a structure for ourselves: the same chair, the same place, the same surroundings, if possible the same time of day. If ritual is appealing, we can add gestures, light a candle, sip a cup of tea or water. If we are going to use a book, Bible or notebook, we can open it and place it in its “regular” place. Granted there’s nothing “mystical” about any of this. It’s simple conditioning. But our tradition is “grace builds on nature,” and we are body people. Conditioning works. Over time these simple traditions can signal our body that it’s time to pray.

Taking a few minutes to acknowledge the stressors and demands that await us can also help. For some people it may be enough to deliberately and consciously tell myself that I am separating myself from those concerns for now. If that doesn’t work for me, writing may. There’s good research that the physical activity of writing helps us work through anxiety and put things in perspective in a way that merely thinking cannot. If it’s concrete responsibilities that are clamoring for attention and I already have a written to do list for the day (or for the next day, if I pray in the evening), I can read it calmly (out loud, even if that has to be a whisper). Alternately I can set a brief time and quickly but calmly list all the concerns (concrete to-do’s or general worries) that are on my mind. This doesn’t have to be a formal notebook; a piece of scrap paper that I toss in the recycle bin later can work just fine. Then consciously and deliberately I set it aside, reminding myself that I will return to it but for now it’s not my concern.

Some people find a few moments of mindfulness practice is helpful: concentrating on a few deep, slow breaths, focusing on one sense at a time—being aware of what I’m feeling through touch, what I’m hearing, what I’m seeing. The point here is to here become aware of myself—as myself; to become aware that I am more than my thoughts and my feelings; to become aware that it’s just me, right here, right now.

This may seem like too much “getting ready” for some people—and for some it may not be necessary. The point is to settle myself where I can be attentive, as attentive as its possible for me, to this God with Whom I’m about to spend some quality minutes.

The spirituality books often tell us to “place ourselves in the presence of God” at the start of prayer. That’s good advice, as long as we realize that’s a change in our consciousness, not a change in the reality. Probing more deeply the mystery of God’s presence can be a prayer all in itself—and a spiritually nourishing one.

Using the mindfulness suggestions can be a place to start. I focus on my breathing, on what I sense with touch, on what I hear. I let myself become aware of myself. This is me, this is real—at the source of my thoughts, my projected feelings, my plans, my fantasies—there’s just me. But the reality is also God. To begin with, I am a “contingent” being. I am totally dependent on God—moment to moment—for my very existence. My faith teaches me that God has created *ex nihilo*: out of nothing. As a consequence, I continue to exist only because God wills me to exist. This is God. Unlike me, God doesn’t do things absentmindedly or go through the motions on “automatic pilot.” God consciously and deliberately chooses to create me nanosecond to nanosecond (as well as, of course, the time that is marked by the nanoseconds). The fact that God is also actively doing this for every other person and thing in the

universe is mind-blowing. I can't imagine it, which is one indication that it marks a key way in which God is different from me, from us. This isn't the time to speculate on that, however. It is enough to sit in the quiet and inner stillness and allow myself to be attentive, as totally as I can, to the God who is choosing to keep me in existence. This is real. It's not an idea or a representation; it's truth; it's real.

My faith also teaches me that God is love. As I sit here trying to be aware of the God Who is with me, I need to let that become real also. God's love is not some bloodless, theoretical definition. It's real, as real as the strongest love I have experienced in my own life. I can use a concrete memory of loving and of being loved to try to enter more fully into the realness of God's love. What is a moment in my life in which I loved someone? Relive that. What was it like? Can I imagine God having that love for me? I know that human experience doesn't do justice to God, but I need to make sure I don't use that as an excuse to imagine God's love as pale in comparison to mine. The difference in God's love is that it's like mine only better, but it is at a minimum at least as good, as strong, as real as mine. It's *my* love that's the pale comparison. That has to be my starting point. Can I be aware of God loving me with *at least* the same tenderness, intensity, concern as I have felt? Can I let that enrich my understanding of God as Creator? Actually, it's not enough to say God chooses to, wills me to, exist moment to moment. Rather God loves me into existence, loves me into existence with *at least* the same tenderness, sense of connection, concern I have experienced. I let myself be with this awareness. It's true; it's real--as real as my breathing, as real as my sensing of my body touching this chair, as real as myself. I may want to say something to God in that awareness, or it may seem enough just to be present within it.

Let me move away from an editorial "I" to a personal one. I was seventeen when my youngest sister was born. While she was still an infant, our family adopted a Sunday schedule in which the rest of the family would go off to Mass, and I would stay at home to give the baby a bottle and put her back to sleep, taking the car to a later Mass when they returned. One such morning I was seated in the rocking chair, holding her, while she slept. In our large family the house was never this still except on Sunday mornings. I could hear her breathing. I was filled with an overwhelming tenderness and love for this baby. It was an entire body sensation. It seemed to fill me and expand me, almost as if I were going to outgrow my skin. For an instant I felt as if my love was strong enough to really accomplish what it wanted: to fully care for her, to keep her safe. I had a sudden insight that if my love could really do that, really make what I wanted happen, I would know what it was like to be God. I continue to struggle to let that insight transform and "flesh out" Who God is for me.

Again, a personal reflection. I have been very involved since their births with my nephews who are now 14 and almost 12. Occasionally I will say, "Do you remember when you were a little boy and we used to . . ." And they don't. It's a bittersweet realization that this memory, which is clear and precious to me is something they've lost track of.

God remembers. All the ins and outs of my life—all the moments that lie buried somewhere in whatever section of my brain houses them—these are fresh and clear, treasured and delighted in by God. (I like to think that heaven will include God's sharing those with me.)

Consequently, God understands me better than I understand myself. I understand some of the factors that have made me who I am. Sometimes I can name the roots of what I value, what I like or dislike, what I find easy or very difficult, what constitutes my strengths and my weaknesses. I can trace at least some of the influences to a parent, a coach, a friend, an experience I had or a choice I made. But God knows me better than that. For each and every feeling, reaction, idea, desire I experience, God could map its origins and development for me—back decades if necessary. God, of course, has no need for the map. Every influence, twist and turn, growth and loss—God knows

them, knows me, is always aware of them with delight and, where necessary, compassion. This also is real; this is Who the God is Whom I want to spend time with in prayer.

I need to spend some time—what I can, letting that—letting God—be real to me, savoring that, savoring the realness of God’s presence.

I can also use my own experience of being loved to enrich my awareness of God. Sometimes our human understanding of God’s love gets caught up in a rather gray, oppressive feeling that acknowledging and accepting that love will result in all kinds of duties and “sacrifices,” an alien “holiness” that will deprive us of what’s most unique and meaningful to us. What was my experience of really being loved by another human person? Feeling safe? Feeling awed and humbled at this precious gift? Feeling giddy with the delight of it? Feeling enlivened and set free? Feeling as if I could accomplish anything? What was my experience? Do I dare to believe that my own journey to sainthood is a journey to experiencing that in response to God’s love? I may not get anywhere near that this side of the grave but the journey is definitely not intended to take me anywhere near oppressiveness and grayness.

If we have been fortunate enough to be gifted with human unconditional love—or to have offered it—we know that genuine love means, truly means, “I only want what is best for you.” God won’t ask us to jump through hoops to “prove” our love. Knowing we are loved by God, means coming to trust that God really is “on our side.”

My faith further teaches me that God wants to reveal God’s own Self to me. The old catechism had it right, “Why did God make me?” “God made me to know [Him], to love [Him]. . . .” I don’t have to worry about this praying thing. God “wants this relationship to work” with far greater longing than I do. Better yet, God knows exactly how to make it unfold (one of the advantages of knowing every twist and turn of my psyche).

In all of this I may need to remind myself that it is precisely the fact that God is infinite that insures that this is not “too good to be true.” All too often we dilute our appreciation of God by diluting it with human projections. A U.S. president taking the oath of office may be stirred by feelings of concern and protectiveness for the thousands of people crowding into the area below the Capitol steps. That image doesn’t come close to capturing what it means to say, “God loves us.” We can love more than one person but ultimately our own finiteness limits the number to whom we can give unique, personal, deep love at its greatest intensity. God doesn’t suffer from that limitation.

God is able and committed to giving us precisely what we need and desire, as we want it, when we want it. We long for that kind of uniqueness. From childhood, through sibling rivalry, on to the desire for a “best” friend and ultimately a committed lifelong partner, we long to be “special” to someone, to be “first.” God’s infinity means that God is able to offer that, to covenant that to every individual human being. Again it is mind blowing but only because we are not God.

These various reflections may be something I find helpful to use occasionally before moving into some other prayer. They may be something I want to stay with over several days or more. I may find another path to an awareness of God’s realness. Praying is not just thinking about God, not stuffing messages into a bottle and tossing them out into the universe, not even making a phone call. It is about letting a relationship grow. If that is to happen, the important thing is to let God become real to me, as real as my breathing, as real as what I am touching and hearing and seeing, as real as my-self in this time and place.

MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH

MAY 14TH, 2013

The meeting was brought to order by the Council Vice-President, Jack Bonner, at 7:31 pm with an opening prayer by Fr. Lawrence. As the Council President, Jim Casey, is in Spain on vacation, Jack Bonner, our Vice President, chaired the meeting.

In attendance: Fr. Richard Lawrence, *Pastor*; Chris McCullough, *Pastoral Associate*; Jack Bonner, *Vice President and 9:30 Mass Rep.*; Graham Yearley, *Secretary, 12:15 Mass Rep. and Corporator*; John Kober, Sr., *7:15 Mass Rep.*; Sara Kelley, *9:30 Mass Rep*; Pete McDowell, *11:45 Mass Rep.*; Lauren Brunelli, *Communications and Outreach Committee Chair*; Audrey Rogers, *Liturgy Committee Chair*; Maureen Fitzsimmons, *Finance Committee Chair*; Pat Ball, *Facilities Committee Chair*; Peggy Meyer, *Social Action Committee Co-Chair*; and Anne Marie Freeburger, *Corporator*.

Absent: Jim Casey, *President of the Parish Council*; Rosie Graf, *9:30 Mass Rep.*, Kathi Jeffra, *Education and Enrichment Committee Chair*

Pastor's Report

1. The refurbishing of Fr. Lawrence's new apartment at Scarlett Place continues with the library shelving being built. Fr. Lawrence's book collection will make up the biggest portion of his move, but he also has personal furniture to move. He will either hire some helpers and borrow a truck or engage a small moving company closer to the moving date.
2. The budget for the next fiscal year is being worked on with sufficient money for providing for an administrative assistant. The transition is proceeding smoothly.
3. Our new pope, Francis I, continues to give us signs of new life in the church; we can hope that these signs will become new realities.

Finance Report

1. Maureen Fitzsimmons reported that in general our finances were in reasonable shape; there is a fair amount of cash in our bank account but this is owing to an annual large donation that must stretch into the next fiscal year. The next fiscal year will add new expenses in personnel and facility work (see Facilities Report). While the average offertory is down very slightly, average attendance is up.
2. Maureen asked that committee chairs submit any cost estimates for the next fiscal year to her in the next week or two, so that those needs can be worked into our budget planning process.

Restoration Update

The remaining church restoration projects include the restoration of the unfinished stained glass windows in the church and painting and wood restoration of the church exterior. We had hoped to attend to the exterior restorations in the next fiscal year; however, the funds available in the Historic Trust Fund could not be stretched and Chris looked into the costs of just painting and refinishing the front of the church. The front church estimate Chris received also included repointing and cleaning the granite steps and amounted to approximately \$72,000. If we choose to delay work on the steps, the project would cost \$52,000. Unfortunately, inspectors have discovered major structural issues with displaced joist in the church and rectory (Fr. Caterna's bathroom is collapsing) that require immediate attention. This may defer the exterior church restoration project. The Archdiocesan insurance company is disputing the earthquake as the cause of the displacement so the cost of the joist correction in the church may be entirely ours.

Rectory Space re-allocated

Chris had presented proposals for facility use to Council several months ago. These were not discussed in any detail. Any final planning will have to await a more strategic examination of parish needs and available space. Some decisions have been made, however. Fr. Lawrence's bedroom will become a new parish library, perhaps with conference room capacity. The nursery will be moved to the first floor parlor to make it more accessible to parents. The pastor's office will remain where it is.

Administrative Assistant Position

The job of administrative assistant was posted with the Archdiocese's employment listing and also put on Craig's List and on our website and email mail tree. The start date is July 1st. Applicants will be interviewed in the near future.

Summer Parish Council Meetings

With the transition in progress and new parish council members coming in, it was thought having a July and August meeting would be advisable. The July and August meetings will be held on the usual second Tuesdays of the month at 7:30 pm.

Old Business

1. Colleen McCahill asked that the park be put on the parish council's agenda because the past plan for the park was not working. It is unclear precisely what this means. Audrey Rogers added that a comprehensive review of our policies on the park should be undertaken for the issues may be larger than finding replacements for people who have been volunteering in the park for weekend cleanup. Sara Kelly offered to speak with Colleen and get the park re-planning started and to add this matter to next month's agenda.

2. Chris added that excrement had been thrown on the front exterior of the church both last Monday and Thursday. It was placed too high to have been "an accident".

New Business

A celebration of our Pastor's forty years of service to St. Vincent's will be held on the exact weekend forty years ago that his ministry began here, June 30th. There will be only one mass on Sunday morning at 10:30 am with the reception to follow. June 30th will also mark the last regularly scheduled 12:15 am mass at St. Vincent's. It is hoped that many will join this small congregation on that night to celebrate the passing of this historical mass.

Committee Reports

Facilities Committee Report [Pat Ball, Chair]

- 1 Another break-in occurred through the nursery window off the roof over the offices. The individual was caught in the church and police processed him. In addition to breaking the window it is evident he tried to get in by way of the elevator as the pad for the button was damaged and the key slot had been tampered with. It appears the exterior elevator door was unlocked.
- 2 We are waiting for the restoration of the stained glass windows to begin again. The middle window on the south wall has not been done and the two west windows will also be done.
- 3 Baltimore Trades Guild was out to replace the caulk on the exterior the stained glass windows on the north side of the church. It was observed that some of the issue with the leaking is that the windows were never painted on the exterior.
- 4 Painting of the Church. Baltimore Trade's Guild submitted another bid for just the front of the church. They were asked to do this so we might see if we could start with part of the church this summer which would mean a much smaller cost for us. Their bid is attached for review. It amounts to nearly \$70k. If we do not refurbish the front steps then it is even less. That would amount to just over \$52K.

- 5 We received bids for the Upper Croft joist repairs from contractors. We also heard back from the insurance company who has denied coverage of the repair, because they have determined the need for repair was caused by the 1990 air handler installation rather than the earthquake. That means a \$18k repair for us. Tom Alban from the diocese is trying to see if they will pay for part of the repair.
- 6 A representative from the health department came by just after Easter to check on our status. He instructed us not to serve any food until we had our permit. In conversation with Deacon Ed, he said the old health inspector had come to the Friday night feeding program, saw what we are doing and approved of it. At this point Chris is managing this process and will see if he can arrange a meeting with the new health inspector.
- 7 We have received bids on our extra, older, unused liturgical items. That list is attached for review.
- 8 We have signed a maintenance contract for our HVAC system with Harford. Our contract year began on May 1.
- 9 Peggy Meyer has been looking into the possibility of having solar panels installed on our rectory roof.
- 10 The roof of the rectory offices (aka potential roof deck) was discovered to be leaking. The north east corner of the church roof is also apparently still leaking. These leaks are being examined for repair.
- 11 Structural repair of joist under Fr. Chuck's tub will happen after Fr. Dick moves in July. This will cost +/- \$10k.
- 12 We are still waiting on Harford to get heating system improvement prices.
- 13 The approved BG&E lighting upgrades will begin later this month/June.
- 14 Rectory doorbell still does not work. Chris is going to contact an electrician to do the work.
- 15 Some of our homeless clientele have taken to decorating the front of the church with human excrement. This has created another issue in the maintenance of the church facility.
- 16 Jerome Bird has retired as chairperson of the A&A working group and declared that the work of that group has been completed with the consecration of the baptismal font. Chris and Pat are working on a restructuring plan for the Facilities Committee to incorporate issues that may previously been designated for the A&A group.

Communications and Outreach Committee [Lauren Brunelli, Chair]

The C&O Committee met on May 12. In addition to the items below, the Committee decided that Lauren Brunelli will serve again as Chair, and Jackie Range will become Vice-Chair.

Survey Results

These results were distributed to Council members. The Committee plans to further condense these results and publish them in the upcoming issue of *Together Sharing Christ* as well as publish small items about the survey in the bulletin. The attached summary will be available on the website.

Below are a few points about the survey, and in italics are summaries of the Committee's discussion for each point.

- Many people who are not on Facebook seemed to be mistakenly under the impression that social media would replace current lines of communication and were very negative about its use. Most who do use social media, however, seemed positive about its use. - *Social media is meant to be an outreach tool as much as an internal communication tool. Since most people actually using social media are in favor of it and those not using it won't be affected by it, we still plan to create social media outlets for the parish.*
- New parishioners are often unaware of the email tree and/or *Together Sharing Christ*. - *To increase distribution of the email tree among new parishioners, the Committee plans to announce its existence and how to sign up in the bulletin periodically and to add a more expanded explanation of it in the new parishioner welcome materials. For TSC, newly registered parishioners will be sent the most recent issue with instructions on how to access it online.*
- After-Mass announcements were generally favored by people. However, there was a vocal minority who would like to see the practice stopped or improved. - *At a later date, the committee will explore ways to ensure that information conveyed in announcements is appropriate and is also sent out via other channels*

(bulletin, email tree, website). In the meantime, the Committee will remind announcers to identify themselves and their organization; speak clearly, slowly and loudly; and be brief!

- While most people (80 percent) have used the website and, of those, 91 percent are satisfied with it, 83 percent of people use it monthly or less frequently. *Sending out new website content via the email tree and social media as well as generally improving and adding to the website's existing content may increase the frequency of use by parishioners.*
- Of the 65 percent of survey respondents who receive the email tree a large number--83 percent--were satisfied with it. *See more below on email tree discussion.*

Email Improvements

Though there is a generally high level of satisfaction with the email tree, there were several types of information being sent out on the email tree that the majority of those people don't want, e.g. product recalls, secular news, etc. Also for respondents under 50, 33 percent were *not* satisfied with the email tree. Overall, though, email was the preferred method of communication for the most people.

Because email is preferred by so many respondents in the survey and 1/3 of respondents under 50 were unsatisfied with the email tree, the Committee thinks it's important to consider improvements to the email tree by segmenting types of information sent into different lists and possibly eliminating some types of information from it. Since segmenting the email tree by topic could make it more work intensive for Terri, Jackie volunteered to investigate the cost and ease-of-use of email services such as *Constant Contact*. A service like this would allow parishioners to opt-in for only the topics they prefer.

Signage

The sign for Fallsway and Fayette is at the printer and will be ready this month. The C&O Committee will form an ad hoc committee to work on how to create and keep up-to-date sandwich board signs for the parking lot entrance.

Social Media Policy

The Committee discussed a draft of a social media policy, created by Laureen. The draft is a good start but further work needs to be done, specifically the Code of Conduct and Social Media and Children sections need to be further developed. The Committee decided that the policy should remain fairly broad--not giving specifics for any given medium--but that plans for individual social media outlets would be added as addenda as they are launched. This social media policy in the future will be one part of an overall external communications policy that the committee will develop.

Next Meeting

In July, we plan to schedule a meeting that focus on the website.

Added at Parish Council Meeting

Voting for Parish Council candidates will be available on line. In House voting will take place Sunday, May 19th. Short biographies of the candidates are available on line and at the back of the church. There are two positions open for the 9:30 am Mass and one for the 11:45 am Mass; the 12:15 am Mass representative's position is being eliminated and John Kober still has another year as representative for the 7:15 pm Mass.

Social Action Committee [Peggy Meyer, Co-Chair]

Peace & Justice Subcommittee:

We want to develop a relationship with a local mosque and are looking to work together on a "gleaning" day. We joined BRIDGE in a leaders' retreat, planning a candidates' night in the fall to discuss raising the minimum wage and affordable housing, and working to change the "source of income" discrimination on rental applications in Baltimore County. We attended the signing of the law to repeal the death penalty and training for the fair development initiative with *United Workers*. We joined and worked with *Pax Christi DC* for their meeting at St. V's. We are still working to get solar panels for the rectory. We are working on funding for San Juan de Limay. After a meeting with the President of Loyola, they are considering starting classes for peace or integrating it into existing classes.

The Resource Exchange:

We supplied 7 individuals, whom *Healthcare for the Homeless* placed in apartments, with furniture and starter kits in April. One was a mother with 2 small children and we gave them 3 beds.

Jonestown Planning Council:

(1) Two developers attended and gave updates on the properties at 921-923 E. Baltimore Street and the Hendler redevelopment. The Hendler group is talking to *Ronald McDonald House* about space for them. The city rep also said they think they have permission from the holdout owner for access in the alley behind 1000 Baltimore Street which will help development. Businesses in the neighborhood attended and relationships formed that will help solve space issues. The Principal of City Springs Elementary/Middle School talked about building an athletic complex this summer and the *SquashWise* leader was very interested.

(2) Johns Hopkins had space for a year in *Helping Up Mission* for drug treatment. Because of its success they are looking for space in the GBMC building for this and a medical center for recovery for women. Pressley Ridge's rep shared info about their Treatment Center and Foster Care on Caroline Street.

Emergency Services:

We gave groceries to about 100 families and spent about \$83 in April. The men's program gave clothing to 57 men in April and spent about \$550.

Friday Dinners for the Hungry:

We continue to serve 150-250 guests each Friday evening.

Homeless Youth:

We delivered clothing for young adults to the *Youth Empowered Society*, a drop in center for any youth without a home or at-risk of homelessness.

Liturgy Committee [Audrey Rogers, Chair]

The Liturgy Committee last met March 4, 2013; next meeting May 20, 7:30 pm.

Training: Lectors

We have finished the first phase of training which included a review of the ritual and individual taping. Nine separate sessions were offered to 58 individuals who speak at the ambo in various ministries. There were 39/48 (81%) individuals attending from 9:30; few invited to attend from other Masses responded to the invitation. Second sessions reviewing the tapes with individual feedback are underway. This has been a massive undertaking and the committee is grateful to Don Henderson for his efforts and Jerome Bird for taping.

Survey of Lenten Services

As of May 7, there have been 64 surveys completed online using *Survey Monkey* (and an additional 5 in hardcopy). May 12 is the lockdown after one month's availability. We hope to have some results available for review at our May meeting.

Eastertide Events

Fr. Dick completed the Baptismal Exegesis Series (April 14, 21, and 28). Up next are our usual May services for First Communion (May 12); High School Seniors (May 19); and Marriage Vow Renewal (June 2).

Forty Years of Service Celebration

Fr. Dick became pastor on the last Sunday of June in 1973. Our parish community celebration of his 'King David-Reign-Equivalent Tenure' with us will be at one Sunday 10:30 AM Mass on June 30, followed by a reception in the Undercroft.

The Last Midnight Mass in the Archdiocese

The last weekly midnight Mass will be celebrated here at St. Vincent's at 12:15 AM on June 30 followed by a small reception for attendees.

2013 and 2014 Summer Series

The themes have been set and the format designed for incorporating the *Dimensions of the Eucharist* into a Summer Series for July 7, 14, and 21.

Education and Enrichment Committee [Kathi Jeffra, Chair]

No report.

The Parish Council meeting was adjourned at 8:37 pm with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Minutes submitted by Graham Yearley, secretary to the Council