

2014

TOGETHER SHARING CHRIST EASTER/PENTECOST

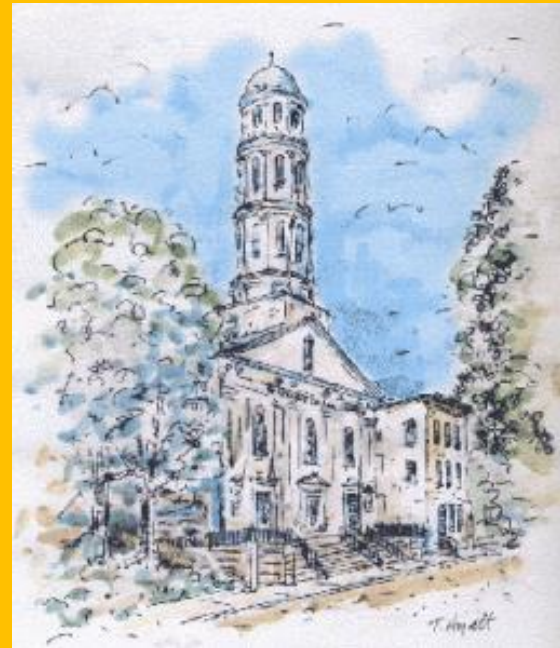
IN THIS ISSUE:

We continue to reflect on the “now what?” of our faith life in this Easter Season as we are commissioned and sent with the Spirit at Pentecost. We review where we have been as a people of faith with Vigil reflections and where we are going.

- Pentecost and the Spirit - the mission is now ours
- Creation and Creating our own story
- The Two Trees of Eden
- Understanding the Beauty of our Altar Bible
- The Violin as a way of understanding the Trinity
- Our Liturgical Addition - The Resurrection Cross
- Parish news, including our strategic planning process, new family-oriented ministry

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Pastor's Letter	Page 1
Parish Council President's Letter	Page 2
Pentecost, Confirmation and the Danger of Francis I	Page 3
Easter Vigil Reflections	Page 6
On Creation & Cosmos by Hemker & LaCount	Page 6
Two Trees by Gohn	Page 9
Exodus by M. Daly	Page 13
Poetry by Barbara Bowles + Humor	Page 14
Altar Bible Illuminations	Page 15
The Violin as a Trilogy	Page 18
The Resurrection Cross	Page 19
Parish Council Minutes Summary	Page 20



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

EDITED BY CHRIS MCCULLOUGH
CHRISM@STVCHURCH.ORG

VOLUME 34, NUMBER 4

Letter from the Pastor

May 20, 2014

Shalom!

Easter is over too quickly. Poinsettias stay in bloom for weeks and weeks, and a well-tended Christmas tree can outlast Lent. But Easter is over in a flash. Easter lilies are dead as doornails in about ten days – they will rise again next year, and live in your garden forever, but for this year they are finished. Easter candy is gone before the bunny is out of sight. Even the liturgy runs out of real Easter gospels after only a couple of weeks, and starts using stand-ins like the good shepherd stories.

The Easter Season, of course, is actually seven weeks long. (They don't call it 'Pentecost' for nothing: it's on the fiftieth day.) It just doesn't feel like Easter for that long.

Which is unfortunate, because it takes more than a few days for the Easter message to sink in.

It's really not as simple as "Jesus is alive again. He has conquered death and restored life." All of that is true, and it is a magnificent starting point for human hope, but it does not even begin to deal with the reality of Easter or with the dimension of the hope it opens for us.

To begin with, it is important to see Christ's death as more than just the end of his life, and even more than just his giving of his life for us. It is the completion of the incarnation: he has now become completely one with us. Once we really get this point, we have more access to the meaning of Easter.

Jesus, who is completely one with us, shares fully in the life of God. As the second person of the Trinity, he has always shared the life of his Abba. But now he shares in that life while retaining the fullness of the humanity he has acquired.

And it works. His humanity doesn't disappear, or get totally subsumed into something else, or dissolved like a drop in the ocean, or even change its character. His humanity is capable of sharing the life of the Trinity. His humanity is our humanity. So our humanity is capable of sharing in the life of the Trinity.

That is such a mind-blowing idea that I cannot fully grasp it. And I can't even begin to deal with it in only a couple of weeks. It would take continued thought and prayer over an extended period to really enter in to the implications of the idea that my humanity is capable of sharing in the divine life. Not just of living forever, not just of having my human life go on without end, but of actually sharing in the divine life.

I wonder if it would be allowed to ponder this mystery in my mind, to marinate my soul in this possibility, to stretch the bounds of my hopes to this degree, even after it no longer "feels like Easter?"

Peace and Love,

Dick

Pastor

LETTER FROM THE ST. VINCENT DE PAUL PARISH COUNCIL

MAY 2014

Dear Parishioners,

The work of the 2013-2014 Parish Council is coming to a close. As I look back over what we hoped to accomplish this past year and what with God's grace we were able to actually do, I find myself profoundly grateful. We undertook the first comprehensive strategic planning effort in a long time. It involved the efforts of a number of people participating in various formats: the self-evaluations of the standing committees; assessment of our finances, facilities, and growth trajectories; and surveys of our perceived opportunities/risks and characteristics of our spiritual journey as a community of faith. During all that, the Council conducted three Town Meetings and posted various documents for parishioner review.

There are many people to thank. Our pastoral associate, Chris McCullough, and administrative assistant, Laureen Brunelli, went the extra mile in the strategic planning effort: always available and always supportive. Much gratitude, too, is owed to the generous members of all the Council's standing committees and numerous ministries. The members of the Ad Hoc Committee for Strategic Planning deserve special mention: their careful consideration of all the collected data helped produce a plan that may take us successfully into the future.

The community needs to thank the Council, particularly those whose terms are finished: Sara Kelley and Rosie Graf (9:30 Representatives), and chairs of committees- Maureen Fitzsimmons (Finance) and John Helie (Liturgy). Continuing onto the 2014-2015 Council are Denise Hamilton (11:45 Representative), John Kober (7:15 Representative), Bethany Gregg and me (9:30 Representatives); Peggy Meyer (Social Action), Laureen Brunelli (Communications and Outreach), Peggy Shouse (Education and Enrichment), our pastoral associate, Chris McCullough, and our pastor, Fr. Dick Lawrence. Also continuing in their oversight function are the parish corporators, Graham Yearley and Anne Freeburger. Matt Hill, the new vice-chair of Liturgy will attend and we await the appointment of a new chair for Finance. This year we were blessed with a wonderful slate of candidates to fill the two vacant 9:30 positions and we will welcome Joe Yingling and Peter La Count as new Council members with appreciation to the other candidates, Lee Krempel and Brenda Smith. The real work will begin as we flesh out the strategic plan to achieve its vision. Our parish staff and committees will do a lot of this work but their efforts will have to be complemented by the talent that sits in our pews. Consider your talents and what gift you can give to the community. Please thoughtfully pray over what may be asked of you (I am not shy in recruiting!)

Finally, I'm reminded of the story of Benjamin Franklin leaving constitution hall and asked by a citizen what kind of government they were giving us, he said: 'A republic if you can keep it!' In many ways, the sentiment rings true for the Strategic Plan: it's ours if we – all of us- can make it happen.

Keep us in your prayers.

Peace and blessings,

Audrey Rogers for the Parish Council

PENTECOST, CONFIRMATION, AND THE DANGER OF FRANCIS I

BY ANNE MAURA ENGLISH

Here we are at Pentecost, a feast that seems to be a climactic conclusion to the liturgical journey we began in Advent. We have celebrated his birth, his ministry and finally his death, resurrection and ascension. We seemed to have reached the endpoint. But it only seems that way. After all, at any point of this unfolding we could have sung (as we do at the Seder), “Da-da-daynu. It would have been enough: Had You just sent Jesus, had Jesus just preached, had Jesus just given his life . . . It would have been enough.”

Each of those significant moments was an ending, but also a beginning. Pentecost is no exception. What we celebrate is the “changing of the guard.” Jesus has done his job. Now the work of salvation is in *our* hands—but not on our own. The evangelist John expresses that by having Jesus promise at the Last Supper, “I will not leave you orphans. . . . I will send you Another.” Paul speaks of Christ continuing to live in our community as Jesus’ “mystical body.” And Luke gives us Pentecost coming alive in fire and wind. It is the time of the Holy Spirit and of a risen Jesus who as Christos continues to live in and through us.

We live in the time of the Spirit, and consequently it is fitting that after Pentecost we have a few months of no spectacular feasts or dramatic seasons. The Spirit is the everyday worker. In John’s gospel, Jesus simply breathes on the disciples saying, “Receive the Holy Spirit.” However one imagines the giving of the Spirit, the “Now what?” of the post-Jesus-on-earth season is lived out in day to day, “ordinary time” fidelity. Theologian John C. Haughey has called the Third Person, the “conspiracy of God” with all the hidden and subtle activity that phrase implies. But this time is no less important in the divine work than the big feasts. In fact, it is exactly the point of, the reason for, those feasts.



This reality is reflected in our sacramental system as well. What we call “the sacraments of initiation” (Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist) provides us with another way to reflect on this reality of our lives as Christians. Baptism, the beginning, in a sense replicates for us the experience of the first disciples, none of whom were baptized. They did not need to be. They were welcomed by the historical Jesus himself into the community he formed and responded to his physical call to follow him. They opened their lives and began to see God differently—as Abba—and themselves differently as God’s beloved sons and daughters, living by God’s life.

But experiencing the reality that one is saved, made new, is only the beginning. There is always a “Now what?” That is evident even in the pre-Pentecost season. Jesus, for example, speaks of not putting one’s light under a bushel basket; he sends the disciples (72 of them) out in pairs to preach and heal. There are similar hints in the baptismal ceremony. While the main focus of that sacrament is *life*, opening oneself to the possibility of life which God offers us within community in relationship to the divine self, we are baptized as “prophet, priest, and king”—not exactly passive roles.

And so, our “Christian initiation” has always included this second step, emphasizing the “Now what?” We have celebrated it—and within the worldwide Church still celebrate it—at different times, but the meaning is the same. Our baptism needs to be “confirmed.” The ordinary meaning of that word is perfectly relevant here. You can line

up an airline ticket, you can make a hotel reservation. But if you really want to fly to Denver and stay at the Hilton, you will at some point need to “confirm” those reservations. It is not enough, in the Catholic tradition, to “accept Jesus as my Lord and Savior.” You need to be about the work of the Triune God.

So what might it mean to celebrate Pentecost/my own Confirmation? One way to reflect on that is to look at those three roles in the baptismal rite. (The roles are drawn from a prophetic promise centuries before Christ that one day the People of God would be graced with these roles.)

Prophet – We often sum that role up as telling the future. Yet the word in Scripture means “mouthpiece,” in contemporary language, *spokesperson*. We are called to “speak for God.” Sometimes that may mean speaking up and speaking out. More often it may mean what Francis of Assisi meant when he said, “Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary.” Certainly it might be appropriate sometimes for those words to be about God and faith life. Other times they might simply reflect the truth we see, like that consummate prophet in the works of Hans Christian Anderson: the small child simply stating, “But the emperor has no clothes.”

Priest – How might the world be changed if every Catholic at every Sunday Mass really believed that we are *doing* something in that liturgical action, if they sincerely offered themselves with Christ to Abba and then spent the rest of the week living that out?

King – Not all of us are called to head an organization or department, chair a committee, much less run for elected office. But most of us get some opportunity to exercise leadership, if nowhere else within our families or one-on-one with a good friend. During the times of the kings in Israel the king was seen as the one ultimately responsible for widows and orphans. Thus, our “kingship” also involves a charge to look out for the poor and marginalized of our society.



It is with the gifting of the Spirit, then, that Jesus’ mission becomes our own. This has implications not just for our participation in overtly “religious” activities but for the entire way we participate in God’s ongoing “creation-ing” of the world. In the words of the 1971 world Synod of [Catholic] Bishops: “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.”

As important as it is to share what our experiences have taught our minds and hearts, however, we can never be satisfied with that. We are called to enter the very work of God. This in turn calls us to deeper prayer, reflection on the Scriptures and on the Spirit’s work in our own lives, sincere dialogue with others, and ongoing remembering/practicing that focus in Eucharist. If we are to be prophets, priests, leaders, we must constantly be about the work of becoming more conscious of our own biases and blind spots and of entering more deeply into a relationship with the God in Whom and with Whom and through Whom we exercise this ministry.

All of that is very idealistic, very uplifting. Imbibed freely, it can leave us as spiritually giddy, as those disciples bursting with fervor

from the locked room that first Pentecost morning. In one sense that spiritual gaiety seems particularly pertinent this year—the first in which Francis I has held the office of Bishop of Rome. Like others I have been cheered by his example and his words. Unlike many others, perhaps, my rejoicing has been bittersweet. I’ve been here before. I’m old enough to remember the sense of new and renewed life following shortly after Vatican II. I remember the aptness of that event’s description as a “new Pentecost.” The gift of Francis’ coming to us has been—if not the thunderous wind of Pentecost—at least a breath of fresh air.

But Francis is, after all, 77; his tenure as Bishop of Rome will most likely not be extensive. He is also not perfect, so some of the changes some Catholics hope for may not happen. When his time is over, then what? Disillusionment, anger, back to spending our energy ranting at what “the Church” is doing, or failing to do?

Can really hearing and accepting the message of Pentecost keep us from making the same mistake twice? As I reflect on that event—and on my own experience of 50 years’ worth of trying to foster that Vatican II vision—I wonder about those euphoric disciples on that Pentecost morning. How did they handle the disillusionment, the reality of a community which—as witnessed by Acts—incarnated both charity and discord? How did their Pentecost enthusiasm stand up to persecution and the ongoing, day-to-day struggle to live the Easter promise?

The danger of Francis I is that we will not use him to inspire our determination to be “prophet, priest, king.” Rather, with a sigh a relief, we will decide, “Oh, good, someone has come along to take care of this.” What I have learned in the past 50 years is that, for all our insistence that “we are the Church,” we all too often translate that word *we* I’ve used in the first two pages of this essay into “we if we get the leadership we deserve.” And when the burden falls on us instead, we can spend much more energy venting our anger than embodying the “joy of the gospel.”



Those first disciples were not exuberant because Peter had finally become the leader they thought they needed. *They* were each filled with the Spirit and committed themselves to being the gospel community among themselves and for the world. Ultimately it would not matter whether the group’s leadership was dynamic, anemic, or just pathetic. In the last 2000 years we’ve had all three—with the “dynamic” being the vast minority. Yet “the Church” is still here and the gospel has not been stifled. Perhaps the Spirit is deliberately *not* sending us great leader upon great leader precisely to force us to pick up the slack.

Perhaps Pentecost challenges us to see ourselves truly *as* the Church, in the words of Vatican II “the *People* of God.” In the words of the group Sweet Honey in the Rock maybe it’s true that “We are the ones we’ve been waiting for.” The Spirit entrusts the gospel, the ongoing presence of Christ in the world, the coming of the kingdom to *us*. Now what?

REFLECTIONS FROM THE EASTER VIGIL

1ST HOUR: REFLECTION ON THE CREATION OF THE COSMOS, THE WORLD, OUR COMMUNITY AND OUR FAMILIES

BY KEVIN HEMKER AND PETER LA COUNT

- Kevin:** So exactly how was our world created? Ask a simple question and you'll get a simple answer. Should we take the Genesis story literally and believe that Yahweh created the world in six days? There are many that do, but history suggests that the creation stories in Genesis were written around 500 BC - after the Hebrews had been conquered and exiled to Babylon. When they returned, the Jewish people who had heard the Babylonian creation story reproached their leaders saying, "The Babylonian god Marduk created the world, what has Yahweh done that can compare to the great and powerful Marduk?" Not willing to be out done, the Jewish people wrote not one but two creation stories, which with time became Genesis Chapter 1 and Genesis Chapter 2.
- Peter:** In point of fact, creation stories are a common form of myth. They develop first as an oral tradition and can be found in many different cultures. A creation myth is regarded by those who subscribe to it as conveying profound truths - although not necessarily in a historical or literal sense. As Joseph Campbell says in The Power of Myth, "Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry. It is metaphorical. Mythology is the penultimate truth – penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words.
- Kevin:** The question of who created the world also begs the question of what world? Cosmologist report that the creation of our universe happened fourteen billion years ago when all known matter was contained in a very hot dense core that exploded--commonly referred to as the Big Bang. The universe expanded rapidly but it took over 1,000 years for the first atoms to form. With time gravity pulled those atoms together to form stars, planets, solar systems and galaxies. Through it all the cosmos keeps expanding and changing. Stars collapse to form white dwarfs or black holes and others have exploded to form the extremely beautiful and colorful supernovas that we saw in the Hubble photos. Galaxies are attracted to each other by gravity and collide to form new galaxies, and over billions of years solar systems are absorbed into their stars. Scientists used to think that the universe would eventually stop expanding and collapse back on itself, but a Johns Hopkins Nobel prize winner has suggested that invisible dark matter will continue to pull the universe apart until it is so diffuse that no matter or energy will be detectable.
- Peter:** So the overarching message from the creation of the universe seems to be one of continual change?
- Kevin:** That's right and it's not just the universe that is changing. Most creation stories tell of the separation of the waters and the sky, but my son James recently told me that the earth has had three separate atmospheres. The first was hydrogen, which was turned into nitrogen and carbon dioxide by several billion years of volcanic eruptions. Oxygen was then produced by photosynthesis only in the last couple of hundred million years. So the atmosphere that sustains life as we know it has only been around for a fraction of the earth's lifetime, and is changing faster than many would like to believe.
- Peter:** As we thought about what we wanted to say tonight, we quickly realized that the creation of our community and our families was as powerful and important to us (and our children) as the cosmic events that formed the universe. The creation stories describe the formation of a very static world – there was chaos and then our God created the world as we know it. Perhaps it is worth exploring whether our more

immediate worlds are static or whether they are changing and evolving with time. The Hebrew Scriptures and stories that we will be reading and retelling tonight remind us of the great journey that our ancestors embarked on. Their life was anything but static.

Kevin: What about the Catholic Church – it does not seem to change.

Peter: Maybe in the short term, but I believe that we have some say regarding the “creation story” of our Catholic Church – just listen to what Pope Francis is doing and saying. St Vincent’s is an oasis and over the years our families have been active at St. Vincent’s. The fact that we are all baptized, confirmed, worship, marry, and go through the sacraments is part of the creation story for both the community of St. Vincent’s and for our families.

For instance, when Susan and I decided to get married we actively looked for a church that could provide a foundation for our yet to be born children. We visited many, but none seemed to fit our notion of how people should worship together. On our first visit to St. Vincent’s, the homily was Father Dick performing a ‘one act play’ with him as a naked woman about to be stoned. We knew immediately that this was the place for us.

Kevin: My St. V’s story involves walking through the snow, in April, with my Mother. I had flown back from Switzerland to interview at Hopkins and asked her to join me for the weekend. Being a good Catholic she insisted we go to church and found St. V’s in the phone book. Her sense of direction was not so good and we wandered lost through East Baltimore in the snow, but everyone we met knew of and revered the big white church behind the post office. A former parishioner named Lester welcomed us when we finally arrived. Although I don’t remember a naked homilist - the warmth and sense of community was palpable, and I have been coming to the big white church behind the post office for over 20 years now.

Peter: We have been here for 17 years (I guess that makes us both newbies), and I firmly believe that an important part of our world at St. Vincent’s has been the support and care we have for one another in the congregation. This was especially meaningful for us when my wife and I were married; at the baptisms of our children; at my confirmation (and my fear after staying up all night with Kevin during the Easter Vigil that I would fall asleep while lying on the floor at the altar); when my father passed away; and most particularly when I experienced a 21st Century role reversal as I was left to care for a three-year old when my wife went off to war for a year. For Susan and I, our creation story regarding our world at St. V’s has been formed by these experiences.

Kevin: Fr. Dick married Maria and I, and although we have not forgiven him for sending us on a 16th century Pre-Cana marriage encounter, we have enjoyed his homilies and have greatly benefitted from his empowerment of the laity within our parish. We have participated in countless: Seder dinners, Easter Vigils, and Christmas pageants (... “Come I will show you the way.”). And we are much richer for the experiences and especially for the close friendships that have ensued.

Peter: Ours seemed more like a 17th century pre-cana experience - we must have gotten the more modern experience.

We can also talk about the creation stories of, perhaps, the most important world of all – our own families. When the Oliva-Hemker’s and La Counts talked about doing this tonight we both agreed that our families had one thing in common. Our creation stories included extended family members who somehow came together from thousands of miles apart. The La Count – Oliva-Hemker families were created and blessed

by many cultures. We share our past with Africans, Belgians, Chinese, Cubans, French, Germans, Italians, Native Americans and Spaniards. We are proud of the richness this has brought to our lives.

For Susan and I, one trait that both of our families of earlier generations had in common was that they all married and had families at a young age and with someone who lived nearby all their lives. They created their families at ages that, as a father to two daughters, I would consider far too young to consider starting out together. In fact, an age at which I would gladly pay this potential spouse a handsome sum to simply disappear. Hear that girls? The La Count –Sancilio creation story involved getting married and having children later in life. My wife and I had careers, interests, separate mortgages, four demanding cats (in a Canton row home), separate life-long friends, possessions and all the ‘baggage’ one has when collecting ‘life’s stuff.’ Creating our marriage meant negotiating in which house we would live and which possessions we would keep (although as the years went by my pre-marriage things became endangered species).

Kevin Maria and I had completed a combined 50 years of education (we were slow learners) and were fledgling assistant professors by the time that we met each other. I was raised in a small Ohio town that was founded by a German Catholic priest. My great, great, great grandfather Matt Hemker accompanied that priest to Ohio in the 1840’s and my family has lived in that small town ever since. Never in my wildest dreams did I imagine that I would one day grow up to marry a beautiful Cuban senorita, in the oldest Catholic Church, in the oldest diocese in America. Maria was born in Cuba, exiled to the US as a child, moved from army base to army base with her parents and eventually settled in Washington DC before coming to Hopkins for medical school.

Peter When it came to the decision to create a family, the La Counts also departed from the way our ancestors’ families created theirs. Our lovely daughter Grace is our oldest. We had her ‘the old fashioned way.’ She is an artist, a singer (as you will soon hear), an actor, a great student and a wonderful person. Our youngest daughter, Maddie, who you just saw skillfully kicking a soccer ball with her equally skillful buddy Michael came to us from Yue Yang City, a sleepy Chinese town of only two million people. Maddie is a drummer, a soccer and basketball player, a great student and an equally as wonderful person. Like many of the families and children that I see in our congregation right now, we don’t look like the family of our grandparents or great grandparents. One of the strangest encounters I remember was carrying Maddie while in a grocery store and man coming up to me and asking without any sense of intrusion, “Is she Chinese or is she yours?” My response was... “Well...yes”.

Kevin: Our boys James and Michael were born in Baltimore and have grown up on Faith-Fun-Fellowship. When we moved to the county they insisted that we keep coming to St. V’s. Like your girls, our boys have grown up bi-racial and bi-cultural; with a mid-western father and black Hispanic mother. They have enjoyed very much spending time with their Abuelo and Abuela as much as with their Gram and Grandpa Tom. It has been noted that Sunday mornings are the most segregated hour in America, but we too enjoy and celebrate the diversity that St. Vincent’s offers.

Peter: For the La Counts and Oliva-Hemkers, our creation stories have enriched us in so many different ways. We invite you now to take a minute or two to reflect on your own creation stories with relation to St. Vincent’s community and within your own families. And we invite you to share them with us throughout the vigil tonight.

Hour 2: Two Trees

BY JACK GOHN

In Genesis 1 and 2, God gave us a world that was bursting with everything good. Then in Genesis 3, He kicked us out of it. My mother's diary reflects that Thursday, September 8, 1955 was my first full day of elementary school. I believe that was also the day I received my first religious instruction. I recall how I and twenty-five or so boys and girls sat at our little desks in a basement classroom at St. Thomas the Apostle School in Ann Arbor, Michigan, listening to Sister George Ellen, a sweet-tempered and benevolent young woman, teaching her opening lesson. It was the story of Adam and Eve.

Appalling

And she proceeded to tell a bunch of impressionable and easily frightened first-graders all about how Adam and Eve disobeyed God and so He told them that they were going to die, and so would everyone else who would ever live after them. I was appalled. At six I didn't really grasp that I personally was going to die; and I hardly knew anyone who had. But that just made it worse. Death was this exotic terrible thing, it was almost inconceivably rare, and now God was saying that it was coming for me and my parents and everyone I'd ever loved, just because two people I'd never heard of had disobeyed one lousy order long, long ago.

I mean, so what if they disobeyed? I'd been known to do that too. I certainly didn't think I deserved to die for doing that. And even if I had deserved it, what about every other human being who had ever lived or would ever live? Just 'cause I disobeyed one time?

Now, as a child growing up in the Fifties, I trusted authority. If Sister George Ellen said God was a good guy, then I kind of had to take her word for it, because I sure couldn't work out for myself how that could be. I wasn't much of a profound moral thinker at Age 6, and I don't think I'd ever heard the word "disproportionate," but I did know that good guys don't go around wiping out millions of people because of any one person's sin.

Forestry

Later on, in my adolescent years, when everything was about sex, I remember hearing from non-Catholic sources that Adam and Eve's sin was about sex, and being relieved that the Catholic authorities at least didn't preach that, because if God made inherently sinful the activities necessary for Adam and Eve to produce Cain and Abel and the rest of humanity, it would certainly ruin *my* chances of salvation. But if that wasn't the key to the story, what was?

By the time I got to college, I started studying the Bible as literature and as historical artifact, and recognized that the heart of the story was the two trees: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Tree of Life. Whatever it means, clearly Adam and Eve get the benefit of the Tree of Life only so long as they don't seek to add the benefit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

Presumptuous? Or Mission Statement?

For now let me focus on that second Tree. In the world of Genesis, knowing the difference between good and evil seems to be a bad thing. Adam and Eve develop what in English we call modesty, the sense that some things should stay private, which they experience as embarrassment. And somehow that makes them God-like. And even more confusingly, God treats this as a bad thing, objecting as if He were afraid of the competition.

What a thematic mess, at least for a modern-day Christian! We're always told to be perfect as our God is perfect. We can't succeed at this, but we can try. For us aspiring to be like God is precisely the description of our mission, not some kind of presumptuousness. And surely an aspect of perfection is distinguishing good from evil. Jesus spends a great deal of time, after all, teaching us the difference between good and evil. So we have to accept that either Genesis Chapter 3 has it backwards or Jesus does. Well, I am not prepared to say Jesus has it backwards.

Still, Genesis 3 is part of Scripture. We're supposed to know it, supposed to derive something from it. Well, what? – and note by the way that I'm leaving to one side all the insane stuff with the serpent.[1]

Stick with the Questions

The conclusion I've reached, after obsessing over this tale for about three weeks, is that what Genesis 3 is useful for is not the answers there, but the questions. This is the very beginning, Bronze Age stuff. The community that wrote it was just starting to come to terms with a bunch of propositions anyone of faith is going to have trouble reconciling even today, and this was just a first draft, and a rough one at that.

But I think one thing they got right was that good and evil can be known. As the name of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil suggests, these things can be known, they can be distinguished. They are real.

Bare Naked

Now, I'm not sure I'd start illustrating that the way Genesis does, namely with Adam and Eve's shame about their nakedness. My own attitude on the subject was summed up by a seven-year old girl in a lake cottage one summer's afternoon when I couldn't have been more than ten myself, and four of us kids were all getting out of our swimsuits and into warmer clothes. She gave a moment's thought to doing something to be more modest but then shrugged and slipped out of her suit saying "It doesn't matter if you're bare naked." My attitude precisely. If it matters that you're bare naked, it matters only because of the cultural attitudes surrounding it, not because it's inherently bad.

But there are a lot of things that really are bad. And a lot of things that really are good. And we humans know it. That's part of what it means to be human, is to have that knowledge. Sometimes we call it a conscience.

Think about that for a moment. Conscience tells us, so we *know* it, that certain things ought to be or ought not to be. And it's elementary philosophy that you cannot reason from "is" to "ought." There is no set of facts, no information from what *is*, that can prove morality, what *ought* to be. There is no way to *know*, just from information about the material world we occupy, what is right or wrong. But we *do* know.

Disagreements Illusory and Real

And mostly we agree about it. Oh, views may vary some from individual to individual and from society to society, but that can be deceptive. Differences tend to fall in the areas where one principle, say, devotion to the well-being of the society, conflicts with another principle, say devotion to the value of individual human lives. That's why we have debates over the morality of war and over the morality of the death penalty. Those who think war and the death penalty are permissible don't think human life is of no value, and those who think war and the death penalty are unacceptable still do care about the security and well-being the societies they live in. The only difference is in how they balance those considerations. But there are remarkably few basic considerations to balance. C.S. Lewis, in his book *The Abolition of Man*, listed only eight of them.

In the last century there were many committed philosophical materialists (and by the label materialist I mean one who thinks that there is no transcendent world, but only the one we occupy daily). The militant atheists of today, the Richard Dawkins types, also usually fit into this category. These materialists argue that we only have those few core values because evolution has programmed us to hold those few core values, and that evolution resulted in that programming because those values were most conducive to the survival of societies and of the individuals who made them up. But to really believe that, to hold that our values are simply the outcome of our breeding, is to hold that our values are arbitrary – including, of course, the values of those who say that our values are simply the result of our breeding. Their values by definition must be as worthless as everyone else's. They're sawing off the branch on which they sit.

The existentialists who also bloomed in the last century were at least more consistent. Their position was that all values are arbitrary, including their own. There is no objectivity to our consciences, they said. We each decide whether to have a code, and what that code is. But, said the existentialists, we have to accept that it comes from within us, and there is no objective right or wrong to which we can refer.

But it's almost impossible to hold this position for long. Every day, all day long, we make choices and decisions based on our sense of right and wrong. It doesn't feel a bit like something arbitrary. Indeed, I would submit that we can't consciously choose our values any more than we can consciously choose our own idea of the color yellow or the law of gravity or the sum of $2 + 2$. Our values don't really meet the definition of values unless we consider them to be true, meaning they make demands on us regardless of what we choose or don't choose. If we're the ones doing the choosing, they're not values.

Valuing Values

And sane human have values. They may be taught, but only the way math is taught. You may not start out knowing what $2 + 2$ is, but once someone teaches you, you recognize that it's objectively so. It's a glorious aspect of humanity, that we know these things. So, let's get back to that roomful of horrified first graders.

The Tree of Life may have some positive meaning, but for us it mainly comes down to the fact that we were sent away from that Tree, and in the process life was taken away from us. We're mortal now. In fact, not merely mortal but sentenced to painful childbirth and hard labor up to the point at which we *do* die. Rapper NAS sums it up for us in words we all know: "Life's a bitch, and then you die." Comedian Woody Allen opened the classic *Annie Hall* with the same idea: "There's an old joke; two women are at a Catskill mountain resort, and one of them says 'The food at this place is really terrible.' The other one says, 'Yeah, I know, and such small portions.'"

The Bible tries to blame the small portions on Adam and Eve, which again raises the proportionality question. Okay, Adam and Eve. We'll give you Adam and Eve, 'cause they ate the forbidden fruit. But *all of us*? Later thinkers, like St. Augustine, tried to justify the unjustifiable by saying that somehow we all participate in Adam and Eve's sin. As the New England Primer succinctly put it: "In Adam's fall/We sinned all."

Not Taking the Fall or the Credit

But the linkage Genesis draws between sin on the one hand, whether Adam's or anyone else's, and death on the other, is a non-starter once you know modern science. We didn't cause death. Death had been part of our universe for billions of years before there were any humans to commit sins of any kind. All the metal in our world was cooked for us in exploded stars, long deceased. The metals are vital to our bodies and our lives. All animals – and there were animals for eons before there were humans – from the very first have survived only by dint of the death

of the other creatures, the plants and animals that they eat. In other words, our universe is designed so that there is no life that does not owe its existence to earlier deaths. And there is no life that does not end.

In other words, death enables life, enables death enables life ... ad infinitum. Whatever else we may think we know of the Divine plan, therefore, death must be an integral part of it, integral to its creativity, and we can't claim the blame or the credit.

A Good and Painful Thing

And indeed it's hard to imagine how social life would progress if there were no death, if all the people that ever lived were still with us. If older workers never retired and made room for younger ones. Think of the pileup. Prince Charles wouldn't just be waiting for Queen Elizabeth to go so he could get his crack at the throne. He'd be waiting for the first Queen Elizabeth to go. He'd be waiting for William the Conqueror to go. It would be a nightmare.

Of course, while death may be on balance a good and necessary thing, that doesn't mean we like it. How could we like something that in the end rips every friendship and every love apart? How could we like something that hurts so much? How could we like something that so mocks all human aspirations? For, make no mistake, nothing we build and nothing we achieve will ultimately survive. Death awaits our species, our planet, even our universe, thanks to the Law of Entropy. Adam didn't cause this and we didn't cause this. That part Genesis has wrong. And Then You Really, Really Die.

But at least Genesis confronts it for us. It tells us that whatever we finally decide about God, we have to reconcile our idea of him, and our idea of morality, with the fact that we die. And this is an uncompromising view of death at the outset of Genesis. It's more definitive than that, even. For the community that gave us Genesis, once you die you're dead. There's no eternal reward or punishment to serve as some kind of basis of morality. You're just outta here. And God doesn't care. Having decided to banish us from the Tree of Life, God seems to have turned his back.

Of course further on in Genesis, we'll hear of a significant change in the perceived Divine response to the human plight. He un-turns his back by promising immortality of a sort to Abraham, but it's not personal, only tribal.

We're hundreds if not thousands of years away still from the answers the New Testament provides, that death is not the end, that there is justice and proportionality in the Universe, that God didn't just throw us out of the Garden and turn his back. But what we have at the end of Genesis 3 is still simply what NAS promised: Life's a bitch, and then we die. And that God is okay with that.

Not Okay

And that, I would submit, is something we humans can never be okay with, even if we believe it to be true.

[1]. To me, the serpent's name will always be not Satan but Rollo. Back in law school we had two professors who drew up their exams as a joint project. You'd encounter the same characters in both professors' exams. One of these joint characters was Rollo the Snake, personal property in one exam, a dangerous, liability-creating pet in another, an instrumentality of crime in a third. I've always felt that the serpent here was Rollo the Snake, who had crawled out of my professors' exams and taken refuge in the wrong story.

More seriously, Rollo has the feel of a refugee from a different folktale doing a cameo role in this one.

HOOR 4: EXODUS CHAPTERS 14-15 MAUREEN DALY, GRAHAM YEARLEY, JAMIE JAMESON

BY MAUREEN DALY

All the Christian world reads these Chapters from Exodus in the Easter Vigil service. Scholars think this portion of the Bible is one of the oldest segments to be recorded. I like participating in a vigil reading that is read worldwide and that is one of the longest repeated stories of our tradition. The segment ends:

When Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea, the LORD brought the waters of the sea back over them, but the Israelites walked through the sea on dry ground. Then Miriam the prophet, Aaron's sister, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her, with timbrels and dancing. Miriam sang to them:

*"Sing to the LORD,
for he is highly exalted.
Both horse and driver
he has hurled into the sea."*

I know that some listeners are troubled by those passages in the Bible that seem to exult in the death of others. I asked listeners to focus on the Israelites deadly peril and to hear this song as an expression of their utter amazement that they had been saved.

I also value this passage because it names a woman -- Miriam -- as an early leader and prophet. Women in history are often invisible. It saddened me to see that the approved Catholic lectionary reading stops before the line that names Miriam. Thus, in our official Catholic lectionary the song is attributed only to Moses. This editing which eliminates the presence of women seems to me gratuitously cruel. Perhaps our church leaders do not realize how much it wounds women that our presence is erased. We forgive again and again, but we wonder how long this will go on. Former President Jimmy Carter recently wrote to Pope Francis and asked him to lead the Catholic Church in reevaluating church treatment of women. I continue to hope that our church will improve in its treatment of women. When I spoke of this hope I surprised myself by how deeply I was moved. I began to cry while speaking and I had a difficult time completing my remarks. Clearly, I do feel this injustice very deeply. I hope I will see real change in my lifetime.

POETRY

BY BARBARA BOWLES

SIFTING

Sifting through ashes
Of quandary, desolation
Reveals key treasures
Nuggets of lifetime wisdom
Leading to consolation

PERSPECTIVE

Roses seven
Reach to heaven

Brownish tones
Of disguised pinecones
Changes point of view
Opens newness to you

KOI

Darting in young schools
Or mature leisurely glides
In calm or foment
Remember, mindfully swim
In the now current moment

FOR LAUGHS



St. Vincent's Altar Bible Illuminations



Fifteen years have passed since St. Vincent created its 40-volume Altar Bible which resides alongside the Tabernacle on the altar. And though, we often hear the Word read from it, rarely do we see the exquisite illuminations bound within its covers. These nine illuminations, modeled after the illuminated manuscripts of medieval times, include a set of four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and a set of five books of the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy).

In 1999 when St. Vincent's Altar Bible was created, 250 sets of full size, full color prints of these pages were made available for sale. These limited-edition prints are signed and numbered by the artist, printed on the Bible paper, and interleaved with acid-free lens tissue and housed in a labeled cover-stock folder. St. Vincent is making the remaining sets available for purchase—first to parishioners and friends of St. V then to the general public. Read more about the Altar Bible in the following excerpt from Father Lawrence's introduction to the sets. At the end, see details about how to purchase these illuminations.



THE ALTAR BIBLE

All the fathers of the Church, East and West, agreed that Word and Sacrament were the twin pillars on which the Church rested. In the West, even the beginning of the Reformation did not disturb this agreement. Luther and Leo both believed in the critical role of the Word properly preached and the Sacraments properly administered. As the Western Church separated, however, the community property was divided up: the Catholics took the Sacraments and the Protestants took the Scripture. Even today a practiced eye can tell the denominational family of the church by the relative size and prominence of its furniture.

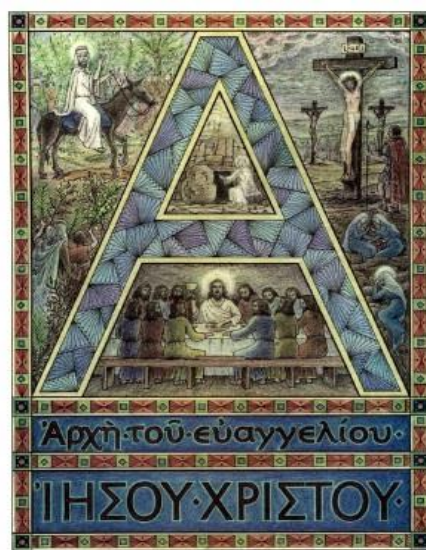
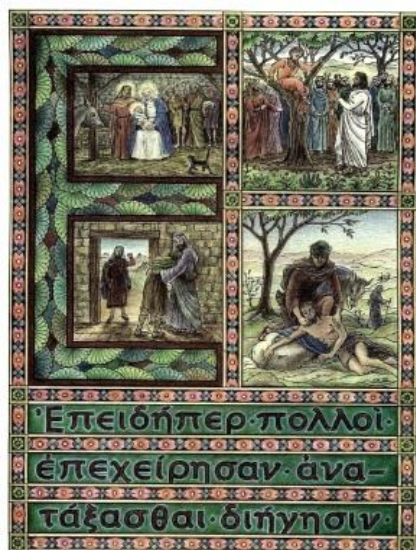
Over the past century we have each begun to recover the missing half of our own heritage: there is much more emphasis on Scripture in the Catholic Church and much more emphasis on the Liturgy in many Protestant Churches. Our churches have changed. Our church buildings, however, remain largely the same. We have made our buildings, and now, if not actually making us, they are at least resisting our attempts to remain ourselves.

In an effort to restore the traditional balance of Word and Sacrament, our parish, St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, in Baltimore Maryland, has produced something we believe to be very new and yet very old in our tradition: an Altar Bible. Our Altar Bible is a set of 40 folio-sized (12" X 17") volumes with the scripture on one page and a translation on the facing page both set in 30-point type. Bound in buffalo calfskin and set between marble bookends, the Altar Bible sits on the Altar of Reservation with the 12 volumes of the New Testament and the 6 volumes of the Apocrypha on the viewer's left of the Tabernacle and the 22 volumes of the Tanakh on the viewer's right of the Tabernacle. We believe that this visual image restores,

iconographically, the balance between Word and Sacrament that was the tradition of the undivided Church. During the Liturgy, each lector comes up into the Reservation Chapel at the time for their reading, takes the volume for their reading from its place, carries it to the Ambo, proclaims the Scripture, and then returns the volume to its place. This simple, repeated movement, we believe, restores the balance between Word and Sacrament choreographically.

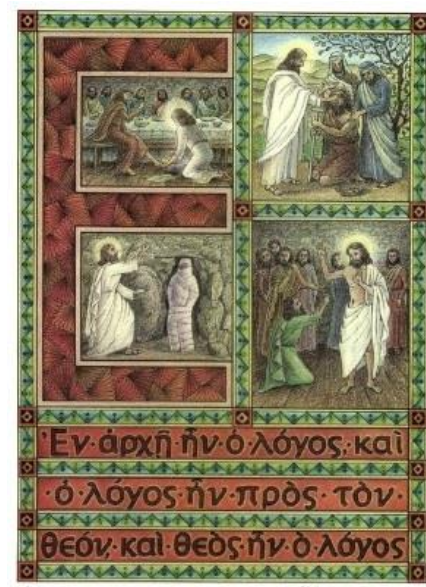
THE NINE ILLUMINATED PAGES — Five of the Torah and Four of the Gospels

These have been designed and executed by Sheila Waters, internationally known calligraphic artist, illuminator and teacher. She was trained at the Royal College of Art and was elected a fellow of the prestigious London Society of Scribes and Illuminators in 1951. Her work has been widely exhibited and is owned by royalty, private collectors, libraries and institutions worldwide.



The Four Gospels:

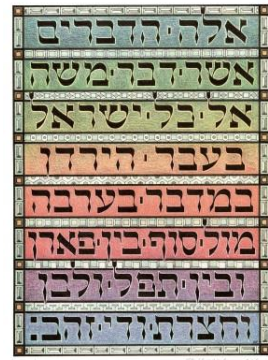
These were completed first and are based on the traditional openings of Christian illuminated manuscripts with a large initial letter filled with, and surrounded by, figurative illustrations set within decorative borders. For the New Testament, every double page spread shows the Greek text on the left page and the English translation on the right, each volume reading from front to back. So the illuminated page of the opening Greek words of each Gospel appears on the first page of the text, with the Greek text continuing on its reverse. All the illuminated pages were executed on the actual text paper of the whole Bible (Monadnock's Caress, a fine paper of neutral pH), instead of on heavier watercolor paper. Therefore water-based paints could not be used without buckling the paper. Instead, a waxed-based artists' medium was chosen.



The Torah (Pentateuch):

Each double page spread shows the Hebrew text on the right and the English translation on the left, each volume reading from the back to the front. So the illuminated page of the opening words in Hebrew of each of the five books appears on the first page of the text, with the Hebrew text continuing on its reverse. To avoid human depictions, each illumination is composed of bands of the opening Hebrew words, alternating with bands of decorative patterns, within surrounding borders.

Father Richard T. Lawrence, December, 1999



Full sets are currently \$150. Sets of the four New Testament or five Old Testament books are \$100. Individual illuminations may be available for purchase, but supply and selection may be limited. These prices are subject to change. To purchase, email Mary Otterbein at motterb@jhu.edu or call the parish office at (410) 962-5078. To see the illuminations in color or for more information, go to our website at www.stvchurch.org.





THE VIOLIN: A TRILOGY

BY DEACON BILL PEARSON

All good things come in three's. Take for example a string instrument like the violin. Its three main parts, the Body, Bridge and Bow represent humankind's theological connection to the Triune God and have qualities that are not only pleasing to the human ear, but have value in defining a human beings relationship with divinity.

The Violin replicates the desire to live a life that makes, pristine, beautiful, music that pleases God. Three conditions are necessary to achieve this goal. The parts must work in harmony; you must be instructed as to how to play; and the instrument must be made by a craftsman skilled in the art of violin design and instrumentation.

The Body is **God** because it produces sound. Its major internal organs, the sound post and bass bar, help create the sound and shape its tonal quality. There are some minor support parts like the skin, strings, finger board, and tuning pegs which are necessary. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12-26 that "the parts are all required to act as a whole."¹

The Bridge is the linchpin and most resembles **Jesus Christ**. It is only through Jesus that the harmonics are transmitted to God the Father. The bridge, like a priest or minister, is an essential guide in this quest. Not only does it have to be made of the right material, and properly shaped, but its position must be exactly set to pass on the sound as it is intended. St. Paul further clarifies our need to be *Christ-like* in 1 Cor. 12: 27 "[we are required and have] a part to play in the whole."²

The Bow is the crucial external component and resembles the **Holy Spirit**. Without it, the strings do not vibrate and the melodic tone cannot be produced. God's Spirit is the leavening element. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the "Bow" represents God's presence through the rainbow—a sign of God's providence and care. The instrumentalist must use the fingers and work the bow with precision and sensitivity to generate a beautiful sound.

As a theological image, God the Father, the Body, is the receiver, the reservoir, from which beautiful music emanates. Once the vibration is transmitted by the bridge—Jesus, through the bow stroke—Holy Spirit, it is shaped and molded by the sound post and bass bar to produce that sound, a spiritual life, so pleasing to God. Even though God is omnipotent and can make beautiful music without any external influence, God wants our human input in living a resonant and majestic life that is in harmony with the Divine Presence. If our input is faulty, the output is faulty, i.e. sin. The instrumentalist is predisposed by God's design to make delightful music. If the musician is not well trained, or the violin is not finely calibrated to make attractive music, it will not be pleasant to hear.

God created everything in the universe to make beautiful music. Playing the violin with the skill intended may take a lifetime to achieve. People are created in the Trilogy's eye and mind as a gifted entity like the violin. Eventually that entity becomes fully human and fully alive. Then, in the Spirit's time that entity becomes one with God's divine nature as God has ordained. As God's chosen instruments, we humans, imitate the violin in pleasing God when we allow Jesus to be our bridge to the Father, and we live in the providence of God's loving Spirit the "Bow."

¹ The New Jerusalem Bible, 1985, American Bible Society 1992, pp.1333,1334

² Ibid., p. 1334

THE RESURRECTION CROSS

BY CHRIS MCCULLOUGH



Our new Resurrection cross was revealed on Easter Sunday morning. Though we gained the baptismal font last year and proclaimed it the completion of our liturgical renovations, the addition of this new cross is the completion of our liturgical renovations. Conceptualized over fourteen years ago, the idea has laid in waiting for this day. Money was put aside for it in honor of Jack Connolly, then, and has remained in reserve until now. An additional contribution was recently made in honor of Patty Flynn.

Darcy Meeker of Blacksburg, VA, was commissioned to do the work of creating the cross for us. Darcy is the artist who crafted the lid to our baptismal font and thus the cross bears a resemblance to font in the technique used. The body of the cross is made up of copper sheets that are textured with different abstract designs and motifs and fired to give it some variation in color all to indicate the movement of the Spirit. The central cross band is made out of pewter with similar abstract markings. These thin sheets of metal are mounted onto plywood and attach to a wood frame which gives the cross rigidity and the ability to hang.

The cross is intended to hang during the Easter season, just as our Christmas star hangs during the Christmas season.



CONDENSED MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
ST. VINCENT DE PAUL CHURCH
MAY 13, 2014

To see the full minutes, go to our web page www.stvchurch.org

Pastor's Report:

Fr. Lawrence shared several anecdotes to illustrate how the Holy Spirit works within the Church. He stressed the importance of cooperation and maintaining links as a means of accomplishing our tasks.

Pastoral Associate's Report:

Chris McCullough announced that the Catholic Churches of Central City will be participating in the Dragon Boat Race to help raise funds for Catholic Charities. Each boat will need 25 volunteer crew members, five or six from each of the parishes. The Race will take place in the Inner Harbor on September 6. Emalee Rodriguez, one of the Nursery workers, has tendered her resignation. The new Nursery person will be hired by the end of June so that there will be no disruption in Nursery care. Chris has also begun working with our JVC volunteer, Kieran Rupert, who will start August 18.

Finance Report:

Maureen Fitzsimmons discussed the Finance Report which had already been emailed to the members. She noted that there has been one change in the balance sheet, i.e. the addition of the line "Contributions to the Endowment Fund." The annual large donation has been received and the \$60,000 Archdiocesan tax has been paid. While attendance has remained static, donations have increased substantially. Father Lawrence requested that we monitor thermostats more carefully. Some users are turning the thermostats up to 80 degrees, to warm a space more quickly and neglecting to turn it down. He asked that parishioners who turn on lights or heat, to remember to turn them off.

Old Business

Louise Gregg reported that Baltimore City would be willing to make a recycling pickup on Fridays and perhaps a second one per week. She shared information about single stream recycling. Father Lawrence expressed concern whether this would interfere with or negate our current seven days per week trash pickup. Louise will call to find out. She also shared information about Interfaith Power and Light which offers further recycling resources and might be a potential link to our website. There was some discussion about the use of solar power but further research is needed because the church roof cannot support the necessary solar panels.

Parish Council elections are scheduled for the weekend of May 17-18. Bios have already been posted on the website. It was decided to have on-line voting available from 9:00 am on Friday, May 15 until 9:00 am on Tuesday, May 20. The availability of on-line voting will be posted on the email tree, on Facebook, on the web site, and in the bulletin. Voting will also take place during the weekend liturgies.

Chris reported that in response to the Audit Steve McDaniel and Jerome Bird have compiled a photo inventory showing various aspects of the church buildings. This will enable us to reconstruct the facilities in the event of a fire or other disaster. Disc copies of the inventory will be stored in several secure locations.

New Business

Council received a request from Anne Gibson, on behalf of the Family Life Sub-Committee, that the children's liturgy on Christmas Eve be changed from 7:15 pm to 5:15 pm. Parents thought that the current liturgy time was too late for many of the children. The Liturgy Committee approved this proposal at its May meeting. An announcement will be placed in the bulletin requesting feedback before a decision is made.

Chris mentioned that the Columbarium group wished to come to the next Council meeting to propose a survey.

Peggy Meyer reported that the BRIDGE Gubernatorial Forum was very successful. A thousand people attended, sixty of them from St. Vincent's Parish. Peggy also reported that The Resource Exchange was awarded a \$7800 grant from Johns Hopkins Community Fund that will help with their expenses for Beds and Storage.

Chris announced that the Pride Parade will take place on Saturday, June 14. An Interfaith Worship Service will be held at 7:30 pm on Thursday, June 19, at Metropolitan Community Church, 401 West Monument Street. There are 24 churches participating, up from 8 last year.

Committee Reports

Liturgy Committee (*Valerie Rolandelli, Chair*) met on May 3, 2014.

- Anne Gibson presented a proposal to change the time of the Christmas Eve liturgy to 5:00 pm for Christmas Carols and 5:15 pm for the liturgy. This proposal was approved. It was noted that significant communication regarding this change will need to occur. This action will require Parish Council approval.
- Positive comments were received from parishioners regarding revisions made to Stations of the Cross and Good Friday. The volunteers from Our Lady of the Fields who participated in the Holy Thursday service were very moved by this liturgy.
- Jack Gohn was praised for his recruitment and programming efforts for the All Night Easter Vigil. The Liturgy Committee will take an extensive look at keeping the all-night Vigil at its retreat in August.
- Kevin Zembower has constructed a banner storage rack in the upper sacristy.
- St V's will recognize the high school seniors at the Pentecost service on June 8.
- The Summer Series will be held the first three Sundays of July and will again focus on the Eucharist using the Rolheiser book, *Our One Great Act of Fidelity*.
- **July 6th:** *The Eucharist and the Fullness of Relationship*, Drawing on Rolheiser's Chapters 1, 2, 4, 7
- **July 13th:** *The Eucharist as an Invitation to Service*, Drawing on Rolheiser's Chapter 8, 9
- **July 20th:** *The Eucharist as Our Priestly Prayer for the World*, Drawing on Rolheiser's Chapters 5, 12
- The chair of the committee next year will be Valerie Rolandelli and the co-chair will be Matt Hill. Many thanks to John Helie, who steps down as the chair, but will remain an active member of the committee.
- The next committee meeting is the annual retreat to be held on August 9, 2014 from 9:00 am to 1 pm.

Education and Enrichment Committee (*Peggy Shouse, Chair*)

- First communion for seven young parishioners took place on May 11, 2014.
- Fr. Julio Martinez, our parish retreat director (May 30-June 1, 2014) presided at the 9:30 Mass on April 27.
- Retreat dates for **2015** will be May 29-31. A director has tentatively (though not certainly) been arranged.

Social Action Committee (*Peggy Meyer and Ray Heil, Co-Chairs*)

- **Peace & Justice Committee:** The **BRIDGE gathering with the candidates running for Governor was a huge success.** 1000 attended and we had 60 from our parish. We demonstrated our faith in the Social Action Way of the Cross through the city on Good Friday. We joined with Pax Christi MD to present the stations and reflections. We are on the committee to work with City Council to ensure the \$3 million promised by Harbor East for affordable housing is realized. The attorney for Beyond the Boundaries is to help interpret the amendments to the Affordable Housing Act.
- **Emergency Services:** The food program gave groceries to families in April and spent \$514. The men's program gave clothing to 40 men in April and spent \$268.
- **The Resource Exchange:** We supplied 8 individuals with furniture and starter kits in April. We continue to get furniture from friends downsizing or that heard about us and we have two new volunteers.
- **Inter-Faith Activities:** Our discussions with other faith representatives should yield some joint participation in the fall. There is a Jewish movement for farming using Levitical principles, and we are exploring Food Justice activities.

- **Jonestown Planning Council:** Developers continue to work with us on plans for the vacant properties. The City met with neighborhood groups to determine specifics for the park.
- **Friday Dinner:** We had 231 guests on Friday even though it was only the second week of the month. We distributed back packs and suitcases that we picked up from Helping Up Mission. We also distributed clothing and new t-shirts to the ladies for Mother's Day.
- **Helping-Up Mission:** HUM is cleaning the park the first and third Saturdays of each month.
- **Christopher Place:** The men at Christopher Place cleaned the park on the 2nd Saturday.

Facilities Committee (*Dave Potts and Dan Rolandelli, Co-Chairs*)

- The committee will be meeting on Monday so there is no new report.

Communications and Outreach Committee (*Laureen Miles Brunelli, Chair*) met on April 10, 2014.

- **Dry Erase Board:** Family Life Committee proposed a dry erase board to hang in the gathering space above the pink Family Mass Bags. This dry-erase board would be used to post upcoming events....
 - The C&O Committee discussed the Family Life Committee's proposal for a dry erase board at length. The committee was happy to have a committee so focused on communication and decided to recommend to the pastoral team that the staff purchase a small, attractive bulletin board on which the committee's written material could be posted with the understanding that the Gathering Space will be reconfigured for better communication at a later date
 - Other potential communication-related issues were that other committees might use it for their information and/or want their own signage. And if we had a proliferation of similar requests, what criteria would St. V use to decide which groups could have their own signage?
 - Another concern was aesthetics of it and the fact that the Gathering Space which is designed with the intent to be worship space and could be a distraction during worship. This is why we made our recommendation to the pastoral team for its consideration in deciding on whether a FL board is appropriate in that space.
- **Parish Strategic Plan:** The committee discussed its role in evangelization, outreach and marketing. This was identified as an area that needs attention in the Strategic Plan which does not include specific action items on its timeline. We will continue to look at ways to take actions that would help increase attendance. However, no immediate plans to study the issue of outreach further were made.
- **Additional Ideas:** From this conversation about outreach and the discussion of about the FL Committee's sign, though, a few ideas related to attracting new parishioners or re-engaging old ones were generated:
- We decided to pursue purchasing advertising related to the new FFF program for preschool and kindergarten, Godly Play. We would like to find other ways to promote this new program.
- We also would like to send out letters to people whose children were baptized here and are now of an age to start FFF in Godly Play and/or for families whose children are approaching First Communion age. These letters would invite people to come to St. V for its many offerings for families
- Anne Maura English will research how St. V might disseminate information to incoming medical students/residents at University of Maryland and Johns Hopkins.
- **Publicity for The Resource Exchange:** This old business was not discussed at length because Michael Keating who has been the point person on this was not in attendance.
- **Future Committee Leadership:** Laureen said she would continue as chair for another year.

Meeting Closed with Prayer at 8:59 pm.

Reminders: The Next Parish Council Meeting is June 10 at 7:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Anne Marie Freeburger