

INDWELLING

Creative Writing Serving Pastors



St. Mary's Seminary & University
Baltimore, Maryland

VOLUME 2, NO 2: SPRING 2022

INDWELLING

CREATIVE WRITING SERVING PASTORS

Volume 2, Number 2 (Spring 2022)

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Printed at Pavsner Press, Baltimore, Maryland

Cover: Pentecost window, St Mary's Main Chapel (Chapel of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary)

Indwelling is published yearly by the students of St Mary's Seminary & University. For additional copies please contact Bill Scalia, Managing Editor, at bscalia@stmarys.edu, or by phone at (410) 864-3603. The Journal is available online at www.stmarys.edu/seminary/indwelling

Contribution to *Indwelling* is reserved for St Mary's School of Theology students. For submission requirements, please contact indwellingjournal@gmail.com. Submissions are accepted year round from any student in formation at St Mary's.

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Go and Teach All Nations

Ben Daghir

“Go and teach all nations”

The first image I saw

And

The last image I’ll see.

Jesus Christ pointing out to the world

Beyond ourselves.

Beyond our rectories.

Beyond our horizons

Beyond our expectations

Beyond our comfort zones.

Beyond the Parkway.

Beyond the Beltway.

Beyond the plains.

Beyond the seas.

The first image I saw

And

The last image I’ll see.

The poem that opens this issue of *Indwelling* – “Go and Teach All Nations,” by Ben Dagher – is a “deacon poem,” yet it points in two directions: forward (as in the divine imperative), but also to the past (“The first image I saw”). This backwards glance is not mere sentimentality, but a reminder of the authority for the divine imperative: looking back to the source of formation to engage the imperative of “teaching,” both as noun and verb.

The use of “image” present another dual movement. St John Paul II notes in his 1999 “Letter to Artists” that “The opening page of the Bible presents God as a kind of exemplar of everyone who produces a work: the human craftsman mirrors the image of God as creator.” That work is also the ‘work’ of teaching, and in that way seminarians produce “work” in the sense mandated by the imperative. The term “image” also suggests the visual, concrete image inscribed above the doors of the St Mary’s Seminary, but is also iconographic, in that the words present (or *make present*) the Divine Authority of the imperative. The image focuses both Christ’s words and Christ the Incarnate Word.

The poem begins with the divine imperative, establishes a frame that encloses the operational demands of the imperative, but before that – inbreaking of the clean aesthetic structure of these elements, stands Christ pointing out to the world, pointing to “go” as both location and process. The imperative does not specify a “where” beyond the generic “all nations.” The poet here offers “where” as both a movement from the internal (“ourselves”) to the external (“beyond the seas”); from private concern to public heart; from self-reference to *kenosis*.

I am happy to say that the thoughtfulness, feeling, and craft of Deacon Ben’s poem is not unique; these same qualities are evident in the prayers, psalms, reflections, lyric poems, and homilies that populate this issue of *Indwelling*. These qualities are also evident in our seminarians, who live out, in the words of John Paul II, the dictum that “Through his ‘artistic creativity’ man appears more than ever in the ‘image of God’.”

Indwelling: Our Mission

None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of his hands. A glimmer of that feeling has shone so often in your eyes when – like artists of every age – captivated by the hidden power of sounds and words, colors and shapes, you have admired the work of your inspiration, sensing in it some echo of the mystery of creation with which God, the sole creator of all things, has wished in some way to associate you.

With these words, John Paul II opens his “Letter to Artists” (1999). The Letter qualifies for us the necessary relationship between art and the Church: a relationship dependent upon the equilateral relationship between the beautiful, the good, and the true. The artist, as the Pope elaborates, is most in tune with the sacred music of Creation as it is heard through the world in which we live, pray, rejoice, and suffer. As all of us are “authors of our own acts,” and are called to shape the narratives of our lives in response to God’s invitation to us to know him, we are all, in a sense, artists.

Indwelling is concerned chiefly with language in the life of the pastor. Words are iconic in the sense that, as John Paul II writes, “Christ . . . [became] in the Incarnation the icon of the unseen God” (12). Language effects a similar incarnation: this is the symbolic resonance of the Word made Flesh. But, the Incarnation is far more than a symbol: it is a two-way communication, in truth and in love. *Indwelling* shares the creative work of the students of St. Mary’s Seminary & University to facilitate this conversation with the Creator.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote of artists, “They seek to probe the true nature of man, his problems and experiences, as he strives to know and perfect himself and the world, to discover his place in history and the universe, to portray his miseries and his joys, his needs and strengths, with a view to a better future” (18). *Indwelling* is attentive to the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer who seeks to deepen this communion within the four dimensions of priestly formation set out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992): human, spiritual, pastoral, intellectual. Not one of these dimensions stands above the others; all are sympathetically engaged in the work of catechesis and evangelization.

It is no coincidence that John Paul II made public his Letter to Artists on Easter Sunday. It is the mission of *Indwelling* to demonstrate how our students are participating in this work of word becoming, *always becoming*, enfleshed and dwelling among us.

THE EDITORS

I Trust You

Rafael Longhini

I trust you with power,
I trust you with kindness,
Hear my prayers
With love and faithfulness.

Shipwrecked

Matthew 16:24; Romans 6:3-8

Andrew Chase

It is with one hand
that I grab floating debris
pulling me out of the water
only for me to fall right back
hitting the surface with a loud thud

It'll be ok

Being plunged
into the depths
is an experience
that isn't too far from death
the only difference is that
you live

It'll be ok

Drifting off towards the shore
it is only by being seized
by the crashing of the waves
do I regain consciousness
as I am being caught up in the crest
my body is flipped three times over
slamming into the rocky coast

It'll be ok

Looking up
all I can see is the cloudy sky
before the next wave crashes in
sending seafoam into my eyes
only to spur me to get up

It'll be ok

Reaching to the heights is a ridge
overlooking the beach
where my feet now lie
The storm raging on
hides the stars
darkness encompassing the land

It'll be ok

Shuttering as I try to walk upwards
is it the cold?
the piercing back pain?

or is it the realization
that I'm stuck here

...

So now I am here
in this dark valley
Alone

...

And all I hear from you is silence
why do you do this to me?
you asked me to go on a journey
and then you're nowhere to be found
you said that you would be with me
and now you're farther away
than the ridge that hovers over me

...

An opening in the clouds
brought down moonlight
to shine upon the ridge
Revealing a fallen tree
Resting upon a living one
Fashioning in the balance
a cross

+

What I hear now is what I thought was an echo
But it's your voice
Asking me
What I have been asking you
since this night began:

Are you with me?

Come to Me

Rafael Longhini

Come to me,
Close your eyes and trust me,
Come to me,
And listen to my voice –

I will not abandon you,
I will not forsake you,
I will be here, with you.

Come to me,
For I am the source of life,
Come to me,
I will give you eternal life.

A Cross-Minded Person

James Kimmel

Evil seems strongest
when we consider ourselves
our limitedness in a material world.

We see our-souls crushed
as if the will of another
can overpower us.

The end for us is bleak
and dimmed as in a greasy
fogged mirror.

Our future seems to be
pushed along by a force
we cannot control
or remove from ourselves.

This life is a cross.

I want a cross that brings me to wholeness
and one that forms my soul by the good,
and one that I seek out and by which I thrive.

I want a cross where my soul is united to brothers
where I see the beauty of places and others.

I want a cross where I will the good of another.

I want a cross where its truth sets me free.

I want a cross I don't have to grasp at,
Rather one that is given to me freely-
a cross that comes down from heaven.

I want a cross- a cause driving me
to conversion, evangelization, and love.

A love that calls me forth towards eternal bliss,

I want a cross because it is the perfect end to my crooked start.

Called by my God who loved me first.

I want His cross.

Do Not be Afraid of Your Love for the People of God

Javier Fuentes

We recently had an evening of recollection at St. Mary's Seminary & University, led by Fr. Carter Griffin, the rector of the St. John Paul II Seminary in Washington, D.C. These evenings and days of recollection in the seminary are great opportunities to retreat with Jesus into the wilderness to pray and commune with our Heavenly Father. I especially enjoy these days because they are another chance for me to intentionally enter into deeper prayer and recharge my spiritual batteries, drawing from the source of life and love Himself.

On this occasion, a phrase that Fr. Griffin offered us to reflect upon stuck with me. He said, "Brothers, do not be afraid of your love for the people of God." This was a reminder that what we are doing in the seminary (studying theology and being formed into good and holy men in ministry) is important work, but there are people for whom this formation is geared toward: service to and love for God and His Church.

Reflecting on this powerful line from our evening of recollection, I couldn't help but think back on the many moments in which my love for God and His people has grown. One of the first moments that came to mind was from an experience over my pastoral year at St. Joseph Parish in Cockeysville.

I was asked by the pastor to bring the Eucharist to a couple who were homebound during the pandemic. This couple was unable to come back to church because the wife had been diagnosed with late-stage amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's disease. By the time I met this couple, the wife was already bedbound, but she still had some mobility from the neck up and could still speak. She was overcome with joy and excitement every time I came to visit, and especially when preparing to receive our Lord in the Eucharist.

Over my months of visiting, I witnessed this woman deteriorate so quickly that my visits changed from conversations to simply being present with her and her husband. I learned soon enough that I was

not just ministering to her but to her family as well. In all of this, I was moved by her husband in a powerful way. For all those months, I observed how he took such careful and tender care of his wife, from repositioning her for a comfortable view out the window and holding her hand as he read the Scriptures of the day to her. And he stayed so very strong for her. Every move he made and every word he spoke had a tenderness that can only have come from his profound love for her. She persevered until she was called home by the Lord in April 2021. To this day, I continue to keep in touch with the husband, and I continue to be amazed by his faith in God.

My visits with this couple awoke a desire deep within me for this same kind of love for God's people. I have a profound yearning to give of myself for the sake of my future bride, the Church. Fr. Griffin's words during that evening of recollection could not ring truer: "Do not be afraid of your love for the people of God." They will teach you in so many countless ways.

The Fixing Eyes

Thiago Rodrigues Ibiapina

*The fixing eyes such flashing lights
Penetrating the meaning mediated,
but not created.
Not rationally completed,
But spiritually experienced
Yet, incarnated lived in the burning hearts.
The fixing eyes such flashing red lights
Penetrating the burning heart
of the Holy Might.
Because the truly union with the Most High
Is the only way for the burning heart
With fixing eyes
to be divinized.*

Pneumatology

Gregory Zini

I sweep across the land, close to the ground, swiftly and silently. I have no form. It is just starting to get dark, and I want to be across the sea and in Harran by morning. But I do not worry. Time itself will wait for me if I want it to.

The land is parched. As I speed across it, the dust that I created stirs, and the people I created notice the dust. But they do not notice me. They cannot see me, because I do not want them to see me, and they do not know me. I pass weaponsmiths and warriors, hunters and cooks, tentmakers and those who are asleep. They cannot hear me, because I do not want them to hear me; they cannot smell me, because I do not want them to smell me.

As I cross the sea, the waves reach up toward the bright moon. The drops of water that I created do not notice me. The fish that I created do not notice me.

In Harran, a family gathers among the caves for breakfast, before the hunt. Most of the wives tend to the children, but one, who has no children, tends to her father-in-law. Her husband is nearby; he is my target. The family is not from here and this man does not belong here. I want to send him away.

I lurk but do not hide; this family knows me, but cannot see me, because I do not want them to see me. So I do not hide. But the family acknowledges me before they eat, even though they do not see me.

They break bread, and the man takes his piece of the loaf. I swirl upward to the sky, hundreds of feet above their crude table. I gather and form myself into a bolt and speed at the man's piece of the loaf. I strike it precisely and accurately and enter it. The man eats it. I enter the man. And then I send him and his wife away. The old man will

die here; the young man whom I have sent away will not see the old man again on this earth.

* * *

There is to be a duel. The veteran warrior has won many battles but has few scars. He has terrorized the village for many moons now. A boy, just becoming a man, has challenged him. He is a rash boy who has not yet learned to temper his will with wisdom. But I want this boy, and I want to dispose of the warrior. The warrior has played his part as I wrote it; it is time to remove him from the stage.

The villagers revile the boy even as they encircle the combatants. They mistake his intemperance for stupidity. They fear what the warrior might do after the duel.

The warrior is clad in bronze and leather but his head is bare; his shield is oaken and his spear is strong. The boy carries stones and a leather sling. I recline in a tree above them. They cannot see me, because I do not want them to see me. Long ago, I made this tree because I wanted to lay in it today. It is comfortable.

The warrior and the boy circle one another. The warrior has his spear raised, and the boy has loaded his sling with a stone. It is a scene that I have witnessed a thousand times before, and I am weary of it. It is time to vary the ending. It is time for me to leave the tree.

I swirl and speed down from the tree and across the ground; I weave through the villagers and rise and strike the boy in his shoulder just as he looses a stone from his sling. Just as I have struck the boy, the stone strikes the warrior. The warrior dies. I glide away.

* * *

Today, I am at a party. There are thousands of people here, in brightly-colored clothing, and they are laughing and singing and dancing. Many of them have seen me before, although in a different form, because I wanted them to see me. Some of them have even

touched me, talked with me, and yes, tasted me, in that different form, because I wanted them to touch me, talk with me, and taste me. Many of them know I am here right now, but they cannot see me because I do not want them to see me.

But even those who know I am here right now do not know that I am *really* here. Their party is the focus of my time and energy at this moment. I hang in the air above them and I watch their dances and their games. I smell the spiced meats that they are cooking. I hear their songs and their jokes. I laugh when one of them has too much wine and stumbles, but they do not hear me, because I do not want them to hear me. I wish to remain silent.

Soon, I will quicken the pace of this party. It needs to be richer and wilder. The exuberance of the party-goers needs amplification. And so I will amplify it. I will transform myself into a giant wall of air and descent upon the party so rapidly that the party-goers will feel a hard smack of wind on their faces, hard enough to stun them a bit, but not to harm them. Then they will begin shouting louder—some of them in languages they do not even know, and some of them in languages that do not even exist! They will dance more wildly and sing more melodiously. The aroma of their food will be richer, as will the taste of their drink.

People will speak of this party for thousands of years.

* * *

I am fed up with this traveler. I have been following him for some time now, but he has not seen me, or heard me, or smelled me, because I have not wanted him to do any of those things. But he is on my last nerve now. I have had it with him.

He is arrogant and opprobrious and greedy. There is nothing in his life but opportunism and hatred. He has stoned my sons and defiled my daughters. Worse still, he does what he does in my name, in one of my many names. And he is on his way to Selucia now, to harass

and bother and torment more of my sons and daughters. I must put a stop to it. He is wasting his life, and in so doing, he is causing harm to my children.

He is not ready to see me or to hear me, but I want him to see me and to hear me and to know my reality. There is a phenomenon that accompanies my revelations to those who are not ready for them: their senses become so overwhelmed that they are rendered useless. Only those who are ready to see me can see me without pain, and only those who are ready to hear me can hear me without pain.

I pass him on the right and turn around, so that I am moving backward and looking at the traveler while he walks toward me. I can hear his hateful words, and I can see the sneer on his face when he talks about my children. I can smell his fetid breath.

I reveal myself in another form to him and he is blinded. He cannot see. He can hear me, but only because I want him to hear me. He has the temerity to ask me who I am even though he has done so many evil things in my name, in one of my many names. I answer him with the name I want him to know me by and with the name in which I want him to do good.

He will have learned his lesson today.

A Father's Gift to His Children

James Kimmel

Can I give my son to you?
You are pulling away from my hand,
You are freely casting me aside –
the rich and poor are rejecting me.
Even dust is crying out against you.

Can I give my son to you?
He is a man, who also was rejected,
his poor, pitiful mother had watched him die,
no earthly father, no kin had defended him.
His own friends had abandoned him to death.

Can I give my son to you?
I have breathed life into them, those lifeless.
I have spoken through men who offend you.
I have ignited the fire within you.

Take my son and become my temples.
Take my Word into yourself;

I will thank you.

Faithful Pelican

Rafael Longhini

Faithful pelican,
Life giver,
Faithful pelican,
Love giver,
Faithful pelican,
Miracle of life,
Faithful pelican,
Miracle of the Eucharist.

Hope

Peter Myers

Hope cannot be met
It is not my pet
It cannot be caught or kept

It's a fleeting glimpse of fate
A desperate thing I hate
And yet I have to have it...while I wait

Lazarus – Don't Die Twice

Brooks Jensen

"Come out, Come out! My dead friend arise!"

Proclaimed a God with tears in His eyes.

Lazarus twice born, now twice to die.

Did the tomb reek of rotten flesh,

As linen cloth began with skin to mesh,

Or were you in miraculous preparation kept fresh?

Lazarus twice born, now twice to die.

Did the crowd break forth amazed,

In endless Hosannas of praise,

Or were their hearts stuck in their old ways?

Lazarus twice born, now twice to die.

Did anyone bothered to wonder,

If death were really set asunder,

Or if you would in time go back under?

Lazarus twice born, now twice to die.

Yet I have seen a dead man walk,

As mercy's gates a priest unlocked,

With precious oil and consecrated talk.

That man lived twice, but only once did die.

Suffering at the Dictator's Throne

Kenneth Lukong

Mourning, bereavement, and lamentations have flooded our cities;
Wailing on the lips of women and babes,
God why do you allow such injustice to befall us?
Your children are being wiped from the land of their joy
None escape the enemy's enchanting sword.

Each new day brings sorrows to our eyes; our paths are blocked.
The oppressor takes delight in afflicting us.
Every living thing is a danger to the authoritarian: man and
dove alike
No one is safe in the land; not even the weak

What is our crime O Lord? What wrong have we done?
You teach us that all life is sacred;
Your prophets tell us to avoid avenging others; to trust in you, yet
We are persecuted daily and don't see this sacredness upheld

God of justice, ancient of days, ruler of the nation, protector
of the poor,
Visit this land and protect it;
Let your justice dwell in our land.
Cleanse this blood with holy water; purify us,
And calm the hearts of the mourners

For the sake of your love for your children
Restore our hearts to right relations with you and with one another
That justice may flourish, we praise you for all eternity
And our joy be complete.

Reflection

This poem is my reflection on the hardships my people in Cameroon are undergoing at the whims and caprices of the authoritarian, Biya Paul, and his cohorts. The body (Cameroon) has been divided and ironically, one part suffers while the other part is well, unlike the usual Pauline understanding that if one suffers, all suffer. The English-speaking part of Cameroon is being victimized because they want to maintain their English identity and stay clear of the cohabitation of the French system of governance and law, whose essence is rotten at the core. Because the complaints brought forth by the English people were never attended to, the minority English speakers decided to begin a peaceful protest with peace plants and placards in 2016. The government reacted to this initiative with violence and killing, which has continued since then; the killings continue to increase at a geometric rate. Thus, in this poem, I reflect on the pain, the sufferings, and the uncertainty of life that has befallen English-speaking Cameroonians.

This lament is therefore directed to God, whom I see as the protector of the weak and the defender of the oppressed. In presenting my lament to God, I bring out the plight of my people, trying to paint the story as it is so that God can see the anger in my heart and come to the aid of the weak. I deliberately write this lament poem in uneven stanzas to show the anger in my heart and the fact that I am disgruntled towards God for permitting such things to happen to my people, thus violating the Church's teaching on the sanctity of life.

The theme of suffering is brought out vividly throughout the poem. Peaceful protests are quenched with live bullets. This then calls to question to whom West Cameroonians (Southern Cameroon) can complain, since their own leaders no longer consider them worth living. This theme is evidenced with words like "mourning," "lamentations," and "dying" that have flooded the land.

Another theme is hope. Despite the present circumstances, I still hope

that God will bring joy to my people. It is God who tells us that life is sacred and He is the just one. I am therefore hopeful that even though there is sadness, joy will come with dawn. I am hoping that the blood that fills the whole land will be cleansed by God with holy water and that He will calm the hearts of mourners so that we can forget the past and live with others without bearing grudges. As I continue to reflect on the grievances of my people, I employ a number of stylistic devices.

First, there is the use of “flood” in the first stanza. This is a biblical allusion, recalling Noah and the Ark. This metaphor describes the kind of lamentation, dying, and mourning that is in the city. Everywhere is covered, and no one can escape the taunts of the military easily. Also, the heading talks of the *dictator’s throne*. Thrones are known to be for God, but in this case, the dictator, Biya Paul, has seized God’s throne and is acting with impunity as he wants. Instead of protecting the people God has given to him, he persecutes them to the death.

Irony floods the whole scene. The people killed are described as being killed with *enchanted swords*. The enemy does so with alacrity and joy. Also, irony is used when I affirm that man and dove are not safe. Doves are the softest and most peace loving of creatures, and if the government is afraid of them, then there is no hope for the people. Women and children have become enemies, and walking outside with a peace plant is considered treason. This is hyperbolic but describes what I go through each passing day as I hear more stories and see gloomy pictures of my people and the streets I have trodden as recent as December 2021.

This process of writing my own poem has brought me to deep contact with my emotions and the reality of talking to God as I feel. It is hard to render these words, but it has become a way of a spiritual renewal in me. It is a way to consider that life will not always be a bed of roses. This calls for my absolute trust in God despite all odds, and for the fact that God remains the only source of refuge I can run to. He

will always vindicate my enemies and He is always there for me. I must stand for my people in ministry and bring their plights to God while bringing God's consolation to them in hard times. While I suffer with them, too, I must stand tall because they also look to me for consolation. They know that the holy water I bring can cleanse the blood in the city, and they know that God will listen to my cry for help. Though I lament, I still have to be stronger as I represent them and bring their plights to God while responding to their difficulties. In all, I pray for a peaceful return to normalcy so that through God's forgiveness, the English Cameroons and the French can live in peace again without any seeking vengeance as we journey towards eternity for complete joy, or part company and become autonomous states, each minding its affairs.

You Were By My Side

Rafael Longhini

Sometimes I thought you had forgotten me,
But even at times of difficulty,
You were by my side.
Sometimes I thought I was walking alone,
Bur even at the time of the fall,
You were by my side.

The Prepositional Choice

Thiago Rodrigues Ibiapina

*After a choice is made,
And love mediates,
By hearing my pinkish pulse
Not following the pulse of Your choice
Along with the redness of Your love
Regarding the expression
Of Your choice
And my heart being yours,
Mediated by this prepositional choice
By hearing my pinkish pulse
Of a choice which is not anymore,
Since now is only Yours.*

From the Journal of Cleopas
A Reflection on the Road to Emmaus

James Lancelotta

It had become too much for me, first watching Jesus die like that. Everyone seemed to be in shock. How could this be happening? I know deep in my heart that God anointed Jesus. He was the Messiah. I do not understand anything anymore. Then the women came busting in this morning saying the body is gone, Jesus has risen? What were they talking about? The authorities are going to be going crazy. There are rumors that the tomb guards are saying that they were overrun, and Jesus's followers took the body. I know this is not true. However, the officials, especially the Romans, will not believe us. How is any of this possible? I still believe in Jesus, but my priority is my wife's and mine safety. I told her this morning that it was time for us to go home. We need time to figure out what is going on. I need/ we need to get out of Dodge before anything else happens. I want to get safely home; it is too much. My wife reluctantly obeyed me; she is such a strong woman. I was amazed that she had the strength to watch the whole execution of Jesus, and she stayed to comfort Mary and the other ladies. Her faith in Jesus has not waived one bit. Nevertheless, she still follows me.

As we left early in the morning, just outside of Jerusalem, a stranger encountered us; now that I think about the Man just appeared. As we walked along, he started questioning us; I was initially highly apprehensive about talking to him. I thought he might be an official searching for the body, looking for someone to blame. I kept thinking how we got into this mess and how I was going to get my wife and myself out of it. As the Man kept speaking and insisting on a conversation the more, I felt at ease talking to him. The Man said he did not know what had transpired, although he was well-versed in the scriptures. He was reciting passage after passage, showing my wife and me new meanings of each line, especially in light of what had just happened. The Man showed us new and exciting ways to look at the works and words of our Fathers, Abraham, Moses, and

David. How the words of the prophets had been fulfilled, the trip became so peaceful and full of wonder. I felt myself laughing and smiling for the first time since Thursday night. My present situation and worries seemed to disappear. When we arrived at the entrance to town, the Man seemed to be going further. I insisted he stay with us for the night, and he must have dinner with us. I was not even concerned that my wife or I had not stepped foot in our house in over six months. Nothing seemed relevant. I sent the stranger and my wife ahead while I stopped by the market on the way to the house. I spent the last of my dollars, which mysteriously appeared in my pocket. I bought a couple of loaves of bread, a smoked fish, and a jug of wine. I was so comfortable and joyful as I headed to the house. As I entered the house, I could smell the newly lit fire and hear the sounds of my wife and stranger as they were talking and laughing. Everything was so joyful and perfect. I placed the newly purchased provisions on the table. My wife set the table, and our guest and I went outside to wash up for dinner. I was so comfortable around this Man I felt like I had known him my whole life. I never even thought about who he was. Everything just seemed perfect. As we headed back in, I could smell the bread and fish as they were warming on the fire; my wife had poured three cups of wine. As we gathered around the table, our guest took the bread and made a blessing; He broke it and offered it to us, and with that, my eyes were opened. Our guest was radiating. It was like He was on fire Himself.

At the same time, my wife and I let out the same bellow, "It is you 'LORD JESUS CHRIST!' You are alive and with us!" As the words came out of my mouth, I noticed the nail marks in his hands as he raised up the bread. Moreover, with that, He was gone! I was not worried as I could feel him all around us. My wife and I looked at each other, thinking the same thing we must tell the others. Did we not both feel the peace within us as we spoke to Jesus? Even when we did not recognize Him, peace was with us. My wife and I raced back to Jerusalem without saying a word, as we were both without words to describe the euphoria we were feeling. As we made it back to Jerusalem in what must have been record time, we heard other great

stories of appearances of the Lord and eagerly confessed ours, including not recognizing him from the start. As we turned in for the night, I fell into a deep sleep; the peace and comfort I felt was that of a newborn falling asleep in his mother's arms for the first time. I know the Lord has not and will never abandon us.

A City Burns

Brooks Jensen

God look down upon us with Mercy's eye
To this broke and bleeding blood-red sky
When a million weak and waning cries
Rise up to you as they wait to die

Oh God repent I pray of your rightful wrath
And throw not away the wheat with the chaff

Have mercy on us for our sin,
Forget not your Son's blood-bought kin
For in the face of approaching cannon's din
You are our only hope to vict'ry win

Citizens from wretched houses send out moans
While shells pierce soldiers to their bones
And explosive steel sets the earth in groans

Day to night the planet turns,
While muzzle flash lamps light where bullets churn
Once cherished homes into men's urns
And the dark abates as the city burns

Where are you my God as my city burns?

Until the End

Rafael Longhini

Until the end He loved us,
Until the end He surrendered,
He was faithful to the cross,
And for us, He died for love.

Walk a Mile

Brooks Jensen

Far more than a mile in these shoes
Oh yes Darkness it's been a-while,
I see you smile, as I enter the room
Teeth casting an extra shade of gloom

You offered me a kiss, while counseling
To cast my line into the abyss
Saying you miss me, give me your spiel
We both know I'll happily bite the reel.

Another time around, "do you love me?"
You ask while your words keep me bound
I love the sound, but I fear it's as real
As the ancient siren's earnest appeal

Cast your net, this ain't your fish to catch
Yes, my old friend that's a threat
Start to fret, cause while you build tombs,
I walked a mile in the Bridegroom's shoes.

To You I Raise

Rafael Longhini

Mother, sublime is your love,
Mother of tenderness,
Mother of kindness,
To you I raise my prayer.
Mother, sublime is your presence,
Mother of purity,
Mother of poverty,
To you I raise my prayer.

The Star of My Life

Khoa Tran

(Inspired by Luke 2:9-10 and 2021 Winter
Retreat Theme *Keep Your Eyes on Christ*)

There are many stars in the sky
Shine at night and fade at sunrise
but they are not stars of my life
My Star never wants to hide.

The Star of my life always shines
Guided the shepherds to find their newborn king
Showed the three wise men where Jesus placed,
Getting there, they worshiped Him face to face.

The mysterious Star is always there
Manifesting God's Presence and Care
Even at night or during the day
Loving Star is with me everywhere.

O, the Star of my life,
Never set, never rise.
Shine the way to heaven with the perpetual light.
Wherever I am coming and going,
Whenever I am awake and asleep
Be with me always,
Like the Good Shepherd taking care of his sheep.

O Jesus, the true Star of my life
Never set, never rise.
But many times, he is forsaken,
Because I look for the stars to guide me not to heaven.

The stars of power and property.
The stars of pride and popularity.
They just shine temporarily
Then lead me to the darkness of the world's valley.

These stars cannot set me free
In the depths of lonely territory

I cry for help in the midst of the night
I'm in trouble, I'm seeking a hopeful sign.
Here you come, Jesus, the Star of my life.
I'm overjoyed at seeing Thee
Destroy darkness and bring me to Eternal Light.

Jesus, the true Star of my life
Not far away, but right by my side
Pour your love into my heart
Shine your mercy upon my soul.

All created stars shine and fade
But Jesus, the Eternal Star never goes away,
Even though I am in darkest valleys
I am not afraid because You are with me.
Guide my heart to You day by day,
Keep my eyes on You always.

Light Up

Rafael Longhini

Light up my life,
Light up my walk,
Light up my dream,
Light up my vocation.

The Vision of the Blind Bartimaeus

Luke Dagher

"Jesus, Son of David, have pity on me."
Those words were heard from the side of the street.
A beggar, blind, and with deep trust.
This is the story of the Blind Bartimaeus.

The call to conversion began with his ears
As he heard that Jesus was near
He felt Jesus's presence from the curb
For faith comes first from what is heard.

Bartimaeus shouted "Son of David have pity on me."
Then he was rebuked from those nearest on the street.
He shouted all the louder to the Prince of Peace
"Have pity, have pity, have pity on me."

"Call him;" that is what Jesus said
"Bartimaeus, take courage and pick up your head."
He threw aside his cloak, opening his heart
With the Apostles he approached looking for a new start.

Jesus said, "Bartimaeus, what do you want me to do."
Bartimaeus answered quickly for he already knew.
Looking at Jesus but his eyes not at ease
He said, "Master, Master, I want to see."

Jesus said, "Your faith has saved you."
Bartimaeus's sight now perfectly true.
What is it now that Bartimaeus will do?
He sees Jesus and says, "I will follow you."

Open our eyes Jesus - just a little
Help us to see that which appears - invisible.
That we, like Bartimaeus, may trust in you.
And be at peace forever, gazing at the Truth

Indwelling

Your Dear Eyes

Khoa Tran

Darkness covered and bound us
We did not know why, we did not know how
We could not see any light with our flesh eyes
We wandered around, but nothing could be found.

In desperation, we sighed, even cried,
But something marvelous just touched our minds
Our hearts blazed with hopeful fire
Our souls jumped for joy because of your dear eyes.

...

Your dear eyes have transformed our gaze
And turned our lives to a new page.
From that page, you have laid
The seal of faith and the abundance of grace
The greatness of love that we can't repay.

On the journey of life,
Sometimes easy, sometimes stormy,
When we find your dear eyes,
All things are fine, all things at peace.

You watch over us with your dear eyes
From sunset to sunrise
Every moment in our lives
You are always by our side.

Your dear eyes manifest your infinite grace,
Though things change and our love fades,
We are of little faith,
Your love strengthens us day by day.

Reflection

During my 25 years in the world, there is one remarkable point that I cannot forget. It happened sixteen years ago, when I was first touched by Jesus from the picture of the Divine Mercy. That changed my old life into a new living.

At the age of nine, I met my friend Dzung, who is a devout Catholic. I told him that my father was a Catholic, but he had not been to the church for years. My mother and I were Buddhist believers. We used to practice Buddhist rituals and go to a pagoda every day. One time, after my friend's birthday party, my mother came to pick me up. She and I were given the picture of the Divine Mercy, and we brought it home. From that image, I was moved by the dear eyes of Jesus. I seemed to be invited into the kingdom of God's love. I could not even know what was happening to my life. That picture stirred up the little soul of a nine-year-old with surprise and marvel. That picture brought me into the loving arms of God through the huge embrace of the Catholic Church. I then got baptized in 2008. My mother also converted to Catholicism in 2015. I have come to believe that God has a special plan for me. His first look at me through the image of the Divine Mercy turned my old life to a new page, which has been written by God's loving pen. But sometimes I wonder, what has that picture meant to me for the past 17 years?

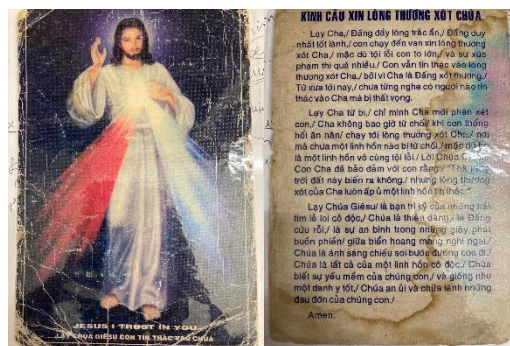
Before my eyes, Jesus desires not only to see my conversion from Buddhism to Catholicism, but also to yearn for my daily transformation. I am asked to convert my heart constantly until I am in Jesus and Jesus is in me. Conversion also requires suffering. It is, then, never easy to carry out. It is a long path of discernment. I have questioned myself a lot since I have had that picture. Will I still realize Jesus like the first time I saw Him? Is His first look at me still loving and affectionate? What does His gaze mean to my life? Am I distracted by other earthly things and ignoring His look on me? Why do I ask these questions? Why is my heart lingering? Is my first glimpse of Jesus still there?

To answer these questions, first, when Jesus is before my eyes, sometimes, He challenges my life. Why can it be so? My friends, I am not always in a comfortable state when I look at Jesus because sometimes I feel ashamed of my sins. In the book of Genesis, after the Fall, Adam and Eve hid behind a bush when they heard God's voice; I sometimes hide from Jesus because I feel unworthy to see Him directly. I realize that sometimes my gaze on Him is no longer the same as the moment when I first saw Jesus. My heart is vulnerable and broken. Something inside is hurting me, my sin. In the Gospels, at one point, Peter turned his back on Jesus. He forgot Jesus' first look to him on the bank of Tiberian River. While Peter ignored Jesus in His time of suffering, Jesus still gave him the same loving glance at the first time. From these biblical accounts to my personal life, I realize that Jesus' loving view of me has never changed, and His love for me has never ended. As proof of this, Jeremiah echoes the Lord's saying to His people, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness" (Jr 31:3). While sin creates an invisible wall that prevents me from touching his Divine Mercy, God's grace destroys that wall and brings me into His loving arms. While sin locks me up in despair and loneliness, God's mercy sets me free from that spiritual captivity.

Second, before my eyes, Jesus somehow means a lot to my life. I have found refuge in God with a prayer to the Divine Mercy from behind that picture. It is a prayer which I call a confession of a vulnerable child to his merciful father. That is not only a comforting strength, but also a tremendous healing for my wounded soul. I feel pain in my heart because of my sins, but Jesus is like a Divine Medicine that cures my spiritual injury. As the Psalmist declares, "O LORD my God, I cried out to You, and You healed me" (Ps 30:2). Moreover, Jesus' merciful eyes are meaningful to my life. When I am walking in the darkness of sin, I can fall into the pit of destruction and death anytime. I need light more than ever before. In these moments of life, God's mercy becomes the eternal light that leads me into brightness and protects me from the shadow of death. The Psalmist affirms, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" (Ps 27:1). Furthermore, my vulnerable

heart sometimes needs a physician more than ever before. In those moments of life, God becomes the Almighty, ever-living Physician who heals me and takes care of me until I recover. Finally, when my vulnerable heart sometimes is led to the desert of loneliness and despair, I even cried and sighed with my contrite heart to God. In these moments of life, I need a friend more than ever before. Jesus through the Divine Mercy becomes my great soul mate. He is always there for me and with me until the end of the age. After 17 years, the Divine Mercy picture is still with me even though it has many wrinkles and smudges now. Nonetheless, it is still an invaluable gift that guarantees the presence and providence of God in my life.

I have shared with you my story on the Divine Mercy image, which is nothing more than to express how powerful God's love is for us. The marks and wrinkles of this picture represent the storm of our lives, the attack of evil, and the challenges of temptation. However, the Lord with His divine mercy is still there with us. Today, let us open our hearts to let God's mercy as a healing stream flow into our hearts and heal us. Today, let us dare to look at Jesus and say that we are weak. We need His grace for conversion. We need His light that leads us out of the death of sin into eternal life and brings us from the valley of sorrow to the meadow of joy. Today, let us trust in the Lord, for His love endures forever. The love of the Lord never changes despite life's adversities and the change of our loves from time to time. Jesus is always there to grab our hands as we sink in the water of death. He always embraces us among the storms of life. I affirm with all my heart and faith that everything will pass, except Jesus, who is always before our eyes. Before our eyes, there is Jesus with His dearest gaze and inexhaustible love for us. He is our refuge and our strength forever and ever.



Trust

Peter Myers

Trust is like a ship upon the ocean,
Tossed about by the winds of doubt.
It teems and steams on the ocean blue and green,
As it's caught in the scheme of a dark dream.
But it will soon shine through, on the ocean blue
As I say those beautiful words, "I trust in you."

Trust is like a dove, soaring sweetly above.
It flutters and flutes like dandelion shoots.
And it ever endures as it rests on the floor
It billows and blows as it knocks at the door
Crashing down like waves upon the shore
Like a fiery flood it fills the ocean of my soul.
As I say those beautiful words, "I trust in you."

The Assumption

James Kimmel

The maiden is called forth,
And her companion of light.
Her son has come to retrieve her
from the well fought fight.

Come, Mother of my Lord,
ark of the covenant,
seat of wisdom, Mother of God!
Come, dwell in paradise!

To the light assume now,
Eternity thy mantle be,
New Life awaits thee;
Most blessed Virgin Mary.

Clouds and thick darkness surrounded thee,
At the cross where you stood;
The glory of the Lord, as revealed to all,
As sword pierced your heart tenderly.

Up, let us go up!
Bring seraphim and cherubim with thee,
To a new house there,
Of grandeur, Ophir, majesty.

Take yonder crown,
Robes embroidered and jeweled bands.
The Lord now magnifies your
Nature and beauty, daughter of the King.

Mother of Divine Love

Rafael Longhini

Mother of Divine Love,
Mother of our Lord,
Because of God you have the favor,
Mother of the Church, pray for us.
Mother of Divine Love,
Mother of the Savior,
Because of God you have the favor,
Mother of life, pray for us.

Marian

Thiago Rodrigues Ibiapina

*The water
Clear
Made me
Get near
Of a mother
Once feared
who was always here.*

I Will Not Stop

Rafael Longhini

I will not stop because the flowers are blooming,
I will not stop because it's already dawn,
I will not stop because the dream, it is not an illusion.

Homily

Dedication of the Lateran Basilica

Fr Francline Banadzem

November 9, 2021

St Mary's Seminary & University Chapel

Ezekiel 47: 1-2, 8-9, 12

Psalm 46

1 Corinthians 3: 9-11; John 2:13-22

Today we celebrate the feast of the dedication of the Basilica of Saint John Lateran, the oldest church in Europe. Emperor Constantine had been given the palace in Rome that belonged to the Laterani and after his conversion to Christianity he in turn gave it to Pope Miltiades. The Lateran Palace was then adapted to become a church and was dedicated on November 9, 324, and popes lived in it for the next 1000 years. It was first called the Basilica of the Savior, but later was also dedicated to St John the Baptist and St John the Evangelist, and so acquired the name Basilica of St John Lateran. As the Popes Cathedral Church, it symbolizes all existing churches in the world.

Our first reading on this feast day describes a vision of the prophet Ezekiel [Ezekiel 47: 1-2; 8-9; 12], when the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and its Temple. Ezekiel sees an idealized temple, with water flowing from it, east and south toward the Arabah desert and into the Dead Sea. We know that the water of the Dead Sea is seven times saltier than ocean water, and nothing can live in it. But in Ezekiel's vision, this water gives life to everything it comes in contact with. Ezekiel foresees that one day the city would be restored, and the temple would be rebuilt. And, in fact this came true many years later. The life-giving water from this temple symbolizes the Church's liturgical prayer, sacrifice, and worship, which flow from God's Temple transforming the barren and hostile societal landscape with abundant life. Our participation in this liturgy of the Mass then, like every other, is not without effects, which cannot be confined to the walls of this building.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus cleanses the Temple and when challenged by the Jews for a sign of His authority for acting as such, He talks of temple destruction with a three-day reconstruction plan. This definitely refers to His death, at which water flowed from His side on the Cross in John 19:34, as in every Mass. Ezekiel's water turned the Dead Sea into fresh water, teeming with life and *FISH*. And today's water and wine become the Eucharist in this and every Eucharistic Temple, which makes us teem also with what I call *The F.I.S.H Principle: Favours; Increase in grace; Salvation; and Healing & holiness.*

Yes, Jesus' act of cleansing was absolutely necessary so that Israel could rediscover its true meaning. We too need it. There is no human heart in which Christ does not want to and cannot be reborn. In our lives as sinners, we often distance ourselves from the Lord and dampen our Spirit. We destroy the temple of God that is in us. And yet this is never a definitive situation: only three days are enough or put things right – in other words it takes very little time for the Lord to rebuild His temple within us! Therefore, Jesus must be allowed to upset the money changing tables of our compromises and topple the currency exchange going on within each of us here. The Church is always in need of reform (*Ecclesia semper reformanda*) and we are the Church. We daily need reformation, a cleansing and purification. Pope Francis put it broadly and differently last month at the opening of the ongoing Synod on Communion, Mission and Participation (Synod on Listening). The Pontiff said, "There is no need for us to create another Catholic Church but to create a different Catholic Church." He is right. The one word that will make us realize this goal is "Zeal!" – for spiritual (internal), integral purity, holiness, and difference. Before we put the Holy Communion into our mouth today, let us look at Jesus and say of Him and His Church [John 2:17b, Psalms 69:10] *Zeal for your house consumes me.*

Homily

Feast of St Scholastica

Rev. Mr. Ben Daghir

February 10, 2022

St Mary's Seminary & University Chapel

1 Kings: 11:4-13

Psalm 106: 3-4, 35, 36, 40

Mark 7: 24-30

Today we celebrate the Memorial of St. Scholastica. She was a virgin, celibate, and chaste spouse of Christ.

The contemporary culture laughs at virginity, celibacy, and chastity - it mocks these virtues, and will often encourage young people to lose their virginity for the sake of growing up.

God, on the other hand, calls many people to remain virgins for the sake of the Kingdom. Virginity, celibacy, and chastity are grounded not in the culture, but rather in Christ.

There's something particularly life-giving and powerful about virginal love. It participates in God's love for humanity and Christ's love for the Church.

While preparing for this Memorial of the Virgin St. Scholastica, I was reminded of one of the most influential books that I have read while in seminary. The book is written by Cardinal Cantalamessa and is entitled *Virginity*.

Cantalamessa discusses how God created the universe: *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. Therefore, only one party is involved in the creation of the universe. In fact, all the diversity in creation that we see, from the stars to vast seas to plants, animals, and humans - all of this comes from God's virginal love. Although the culture may laugh at virginity, the whole universe exists because of it. Virginal love is life-giving.

We also see the outpouring of life through the perpetual virginity of the Virgin Mary. Mary gave birth to “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible” (Colossians 1:15-16). Virginal love is life-giving.

Shifting from Creation and the Incarnation, we can turn our gaze to Christ on the Cross, who wears the crown of Virginity. There we see the Virgin, the celibate, the chaste man - there we see our vocation, happiness, and life in its fullness.

So, how do we respond to our contemporary culture that mocks virginity, celibacy, and chastity?

G.K. Chesterton once stated, “Each generation is converted by the saint who contradicts the culture the most.”

The Virgin contradicts the culture to the extreme. Likewise, the celibate radically contradicts the culture. Quite similarly, the chaste person contradicts the culture in a beautiful way.

May the Virgin, St. Scholastica, intercede for us that we become evangelists in the most convincing manner...by our witness.

What Do You Do When You Are Desperate?

Fr Francline Banadzem

January 31, 2022

St Mary's Seminary & University Chapel

2 Samuel 15:13-14, 30; 16: 5-13

Psalms 5

Mark 5: 1-20

There comes a time in life when we are terribly frustrated, seriously misunderstood, and deeply disappointed. We are so sad, and we wish we didn't exist to go through such predicaments that beset us.

Perhaps we are accused unjustly, or disgraced and ridiculed for some mistake or misdemeanor we are guilty of. Our unpleasant past could be revealed, making us feel depressed and despaired. Some contemplate and commit suicide. In the words of the novelist Chinua Achebe, "Things are falling apart since the centre can no longer hold." This, I suppose, was the experience of David.

Not only is news brought to him of Israel's loyalty to Absalom, his son, while he, David, is still alive; not only is the disaster upon him and his city, so eminent; Shimei comes cursing and throwing stones at David. David goes weeping and barefoot. He feels worthless, despised, and as good as dead. Strikingly and unlike many who come through such a crucible in our world today, David accepts his fate. He refuses any form of retaliation or restraint on his adversary. He admits his mistakes, and believing in divine clemency, he says "Perhaps the Lord will look upon my affliction and make it up for me with benefits for the curses he is uttering this day." And, if he (David) is the Psalmist of our Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 3), he pours forth the content of his heart in these hopeful and faith-filled words: "Lord, rise up and save me!" By this prayer, David makes a sincere journey from despair to hope, from guilt and disgrace to grief, contrition and trust, from sin and remorse to penance and confession, from darkness and death to light and Life. And do we not expect only dead people to

inhabit tombs and graves? Yet we are told that a man comes to meet Jesus from the tombs of Gerasenes. It is evident that something is dead in his spiritual, moral, or psychological life as he has a legion of unclean spirits in him. Like David in a humble begging position in our First Reading, he prostrates before Jesus, begging Him, "Son of the Most High God, I know who you are, do not torment me!"

Dear Children of God, what do we do when we are desperate? When things are falling apart, and the center doesn't seem to hold any longer; when studies and assignments are challenging and crushing; when the family is in crisis; when death (as it were) arrives at our doorstep, when the vocation journey seems long dry and weary; when money is most needed but least available; when authority figures confront us with what does not conform with our will or comfort; when friendships and relationships are wounding and disappointing; when fear is all around us, and the guilt of our sins and faults is clear to us as the noonday sun; what do we do at such moments? Hezekiah (Isaiah 37) is told he is going to die in three days, and he pleads with God, "Lord, rise up and save me," and lived for 15 more years. Jesus whom we come to receive in Holy Communion this morning, can deal with every death or near-death experience with every desperate case. He is the One who listened to this dumb demoniac and had pity on him; He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

This reminds me of St Augustine: for him, Jesus confronted the death experience of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5 - inside the House -our *hidden sins*) and raised her to life. Again, he encountered another death experience of the Son of the widow of Nain in Luke 7:11-17 – on the road/in the open/in-between House and grave - our *known sins*) and raised him to life. Finally, he encountered yet another death experience of Lazarus (John 11 – 4 days inside the grave, smelling already – our *habitual and deadly sins*) and raised him to life. What breaks us down? What makes us spiritually and morally desperate? May St John Bosco, who helped and continues to help desperate young people intercede for us that we may name our fears, identity

the sinful habits that accuse us, day and night before our God and call upon God, saying "Lord, rise up and save me!"

Homily

Feast of St. Matthew

Rev. Mr. Ben Daghir

September 21, 2021

St Mary's Seminary & University Chapel

Ephesians 4:1-7, 11-13

Psalm 19: 2-3, 4-5

Matthew 9: 9-13

“Follow me.”

Do these words sound familiar to any of you?

I have been in seminary five years now. It has been an unexpected, even difficult five years – a Grand Jury Report and a global pandemic for starters.

If I were to boil down seminary to just two words – I would choose “follow me.”

Once Matthew heard the words “follow me” his whole life shifted from coins to Christ, from being stagnant in life to being sent on mission.

Do you remember the first time you heard the words...“follow me”?

Before today, when was the last time you thought about this pivotal moment – that time and place in which Jesus broke into your life and called out to you?

Or, have you let that powerful, personal encounter with God slip away from your memory - collecting dust over the past few months, years...even decades?

For me this Gospel passage of the Calling of Matthew is challenging because I honestly do not remember the first time I heard – “follow me.” I never experienced a “St. Paul” or “Calling of Matthew” type of moment through which my whole world was turned upside down in an instant.

I wrestled with this early on in seminary. Cardinal Newman's Grammar of Assent has helped me though in understanding my vocation story. Newman explains that concerning religious matters we rarely come to an agreement with religious truths because of one specific type of argument.

Rather, Newman said indicates that we come to agreement with religious truths from a whole string of probable arguments, insights, encounters, intuitions, and experiences that come together at a common point.

That common point for me became the seminary (a call to the priesthood) and it came through experiences, interactions, and insights. It came through teachers, family members, coaches, priests, through injuries that I've had, through the profession that I worked and much more.

What is your story? Is it like The Calling of Matthew in being a powerful single moment? Has it been more like a consistent, gentle whisper over a longer period of time? Or has it been a blend of both?

Through the intercession of St. Matthew may we be renewed by Jesus' words: "follow me."

Art and Faith: A Theology of Making

Makoto Fujimura (Yale University Press, 2021). 184 pp.

Reviewed by Javier Fuentes

In a world that is darkly embattled by seemingly endless conflicts, divisions, strife, and turmoil, the Gospel breaks through to shine the Light of Truth, the Truth of our salvation that comes forth from the Light of the World, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Light of Truth penetrates our world in various ways to bring peace, healing, restoration, and joy; one of these paths is through the arts. In a new and stunning manner, artist and writer Makoto Fujimura offers the world a glimpse into the realm of 'making' and the ways in which participating in the creative art of 'making' with God can lead to healing and peace in his latest book *Art + Faith: A Theology of Making*.

Through the work of making art, Fujimura follows this path to God, to the Light of Truth. Not only does this path take Fujimura toward the Light of Truth, but to an encounter with the Logos, the creative Word of God. Along this path, Fujimura writes, "I rest in my quiet space, waiting for the paper surface to dry. As I wait, I write. Art making to me is a discipline of awareness, prayer, and praise." It is within this discipline of awareness, prayer, and praise that Fujimura has discerned a profound and fundamental insight: God is the *only* true Artist.

With this transforming fundamental insight, Fujimura recognized that when he creates art as an artist, he is participating in the creative work of the Holy Spirit. When he creates, Fujimura feels he is honoring the very source of beauty (to include poetry and creative writing, I might add!), paying homage to God this way. Fujimura says, "Imagination gives us wings to create, but it is through Christ's tears and the invitation to the feast of God that we can be partakers of the New Creation." We are called to be members and workers in the vineyard of the New Creation through the waters of baptism, participating in the work of 'making' for the Kingdom.

From the beginning, God made us to be stewards of His Creation and 'makers' with Him. But as we all know too well, humanity is fallen, and sin abounds. It is through the work of Christ for our salvation that we have been redeemed. But Fujimura will go a step further by

saying that the “typical theological path [of] Creation – Fall – Redemption – Restoration ... [is modified by a theology toward the New Creation] to Creation – Fall – Redemption – New Creation.” We are called by Christ’s saving works “to manifest the ‘Spirit-filled life’ into the heart of culture.”

Again, God made us to be ‘makers’ with Him. He’s left the last few pages for us to fill in, to speak our story, to share our song through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. God made us in His image, into an icon, reflecting His face in our hearts. He’s given us His light, Jesus Christ, to help define us, place the boundaries of light on us to help sharpen our image. God calls us to be *radah*, to be loving stewards of Creation and to participate in this poetic responsibility “to become poets of Creation, to sing alongside the Creator over Creation.”

If this is our calling, what does this mean for priests and future priests, who not only participate in the baptismal priesthood, but are also called and ordained for ministry? I would argue that Fujimura’s use of the wonderful technique of *kintsugi* offers a glimpse into how the ministerial priesthood functions as the *kintsugi* master’s hands, the Master of course being Jesus Christ, the High Priest. This important connection comes in Fujimura’s most powerful and revealing chapter dedicated to this hallowed artistic tradition in Japan.

For those unfamiliar with *kintsugi*, also known as *kintsukuroi*, which is Japanese for “golden joinery” or “golden repair,” the distinguished artform and technique is about the repairing of broken pottery and ceramics by mending the breakages with gold, silver, or platinum mixed into lacquer. The key to *kintsugi* is recognizing that this artform, to its philosophical core, treats the breakage and repair not as something to conceal but rather as a part of the story of an object. In essence, *kintsugi* takes the brokenness of the pottery, and the stories of the lives that led to this brokenness, to create “a work of beauty through brokenness.” I am reminded of St. Thomas Aquinas’ point that grace builds upon nature. Fujimura says that the Resurrection of Christ from the dead reveals the expression that *kintsugi* tries to encapsulate. The Lord’s resurrected body still retains the wounds of His Passion, but the glory of God is made manifest and wholly communicated in those wounds still present.

With this understanding of *kintsugi* in mind, one can now reflect on how a priest or priest to be may reflect on his own work of 'making.' The priestly work of 'making' comes with every action we do with great love that points to the glory of God. To serve and make someone's day, to be hospitable and kind, to teach the faith to young children, to hear the confession of a penitent and to offer absolution, healing and mercy, to tell the stories of the Gospel and make them come alive in our preaching, to anoint the sick and the dying, to celebrate the sacraments. These are the priest's participation in the work of *the Artist*. This is how a priest responds to the world full of darkness and casts a new glow from a small lamp that leads to the source of Light and Life! Fujimura says that "every act of creativity is an intuitive response to offer back to God what has been given to us." Be bold, be brave, be full of fiery passion for the love of God and for the Church. Let this fiery passion be a small flaming tongue within the Lord's refining fire that aims to help heal, mend, and create anew a world that so desperately needs the Artist's hands.

An Understanding of Life after Death as a Hermeneutical Tool for Understanding Different Expressions of Contemporary Living

Kenneth Lukong

Living eschatologically is something we all do, either consciously or unconsciously. Most often, our life choices are intrinsically moved by our understanding or non-understanding of life after death. Society is driven by what is trending at the time. Therefore, understanding some prominent theories of life after death helps reconstruct living in the contemporary world as a realized eschatology. This is not always the case, because there continue to be dissenters and *laissez-faire* people in every society and system. The objectives of this STL thesis are to understand the dominant eschatological narratives and how they operate in the lives of contemporary man, to be able to re-imagine a way forward that is wholly Christian and wholly eschatological. For instance, an atheist lives an amoral life because for him, life ends in nihilism. A reincarnationist takes chances because he believes there is room for multiple purifications if he dies in a state of impurity. Faced with views contrary Christianity, the result is a cacophony of existences that are not teleologically inclined. It is incumbent for us to understand and teach a correct understanding of life after death, according to the Church, as a means to confront prominent theories derailing humanity from eschatological living. Therefore, to embrace the finality of death accordingly, the hermeneutical tools of understanding life after death – acceptance of revealed truths, the scriptures as divine, and the resurrection of Jesus as the basis for our own resurrection – must be upheld, practiced, and believed as truths of faith. In this way, pastors and evangelizers make every effort to evangelize, especially at funerals, preaching, and grieving sessions.

Instruments of Deification: A Survey of Deification and the Priest's Instrumental Role in Deifying God's People

Brian Norris

This thesis explores the doctrine of deification beginning with its roots in Scripture and tracing its development to the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. Specifically, this project looks at the role of the priest in the deification of God's people. The introduction to this thesis begins by defining deification and highlights passages of Scripture with themes of deification. Next, in chapter one, the thesis delves into the theme of deification within the liturgy and Sacramental life of the Church within the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, St. Maximus the Confessor, and St. Thomas Aquinas. The main conclusion of the first chapter is that the graces of deification are given to the believer through the Sacraments. In the Sacrament of Baptism, the Christian is transformed into an adopted child of God, and through the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Christian is given the grace to grow in a deeper conformity to Jesus Christ. The second chapter of this thesis explores the priest's role as an instrumental cause of the Sacraments. The chapter begins with an analysis of hierarchy within the metaphysical framework of Pseudo-Dionysius. Next the chapter details how St. Thomas Aquinas utilized Pseudo-Dionysius' framework to articulate the priest's instrumental role in the deification of God's people. Finally, in the third chapter, this thesis investigates Hans Urs Van Balthazar's theology of the priesthood. Balthasar articulates three pivotal elements of priestly ministry: the priest is sent on mission, given authority, and is called to live a life of self-sacrificial service. The third chapter concludes by examining the lives of two exemplary priests, St. John Marie Vianney and Servant of God Dimitri Gallitzin. The main thrust of this thesis is that the priest is an instrumental part of God's plan for the deification of His people. Through his example, his distribution of the Sacraments, and his ministry as a teacher and preacher the priest allows Christ to work through him to deify Christ's people.

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