



Contents

www.celebrationpublications.org

FORMATION

Jesus and the Prodigal Son

Brian Pierce 2

March Lectionary Themes

Patricia and Rafael Sánchez 5

Leaders Who Preach the Gospel

Gabe Huck 7

Three Vital Skills

Melissa Musick Nussbaum 9

We Have Already Been Saved

Denise Simeone 10

Revitalizing Synodality

Biagio Mazza 11

Enter the Drama

Erin Ryan 12

Embrace the Season

Peg Ekerdt 13

The New Social Activism

Colleen Dunne 14

Singing the Triduum

J. Michael McMahon 15

Jesus and the Prodigal Son

The parable that reveals God's radical mercy

By BRIAN J. PIERCE

In Luke 15, Jesus tells three parables — the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the prodigal son — in response to criticism regarding his spontaneous practice of eating with a rather disreputable group of friends. In light of this, it is quite symbolic that his first bed as a newborn baby was a feeding trough for animals. It seems that from the very beginning Jesus associates with a pretty unusual group of “friends.” The imagery found in Luke’s infancy narrative already announces to us that Jesus has come to be bread and sustenance for the world. He has come to feed the lowly, the poor, the sinners, even the four-legged friends of God. Luke’s imagery also tells us that this child, who has come to nourish the poor and the outcast, will end his life wrapped in a shroud (swaddling clothes), put to death for daring to let his life — his very own body — become the bread of life, the bread of hope for sinners and for the poorest of the poor.

There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.” So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country. (Luke 15:11-13)

Jesus, the beloved Son of God, flows out from the eternal Source, from the house of his Abba, setting into motion a faith-filled journey of salvation, a story of light and darkness, of life and death — the latest segment of Israel’s long journey of faith. Traveling from one land to another, often in desperate situations, Israel has tried to respond in obedience to God. The good news behind this long story, of course, is that beneath every step of Israel’s pilgrim journey one finds God’s footprint and God’s promise: “I am with you.” This is what we call “grace.”



— Julie Lonneman

The beloved Son knows that he is free to leave the protection and safety of his Abba's home and travel into the distant country, a country of suffering and sin. He longs to seek out and find those who have lost their way, like sheep that stray from the shepherd's watch.

The prodigal Christ, moved by love, leaves home and plunges into our complex world. We cannot remain closed in our small, comfortable nest and call ourselves followers of Christ. When I was in college, I met a contempla-

tive Dominican nun who had spent many years confined to a wheelchair. Other than her occasional visit to the doctor, she never left her monastery. I was shocked when I discovered that Sr. Mary Michael had dedicated her whole life to corresponding with prisoners, especially those on death row. Her wheelchair and her life of prayer were not impediments at all to her missionary spirit. Her quiet life of prayer was the pulpit from which she proclaimed Jesus’ unconditional love to those whom the world easily forgets. She was a fountain of love that flowed out into the world.

“You are the salt of the earth ... the light of the world,” says Jesus to each of us (Matt 5:13-14). Our proper place is right in the heart of this wonderful and complicated world, living out the drama of the Incarnation. Worldly realities are good and important for us precisely because the world has been created by love, in the image of God. We are not afraid to embrace the world. In fact, we are anointed to be salt and light precisely because God is passionately in love with the world. This is what it means to be *church*: to stand in the middle of our beautiful and broken world, with our baptismal candle held high, and be God’s presence and God’s light right here and now in the midst of it all.

As Pope Francis reminds us, we are sent as bearers of God’s healing love and mercy:

The thing the church needs most today is the ability to heal wounds and to warm the hearts of the faithful ... it needs nearness, proximity. I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he or she has high cholesterol. ... You have to heal [the] wounds. Then we can talk about everything else.¹

“Nearness, proximity” — these are powerful, beautiful words that lead us right into the heart of Jesus’

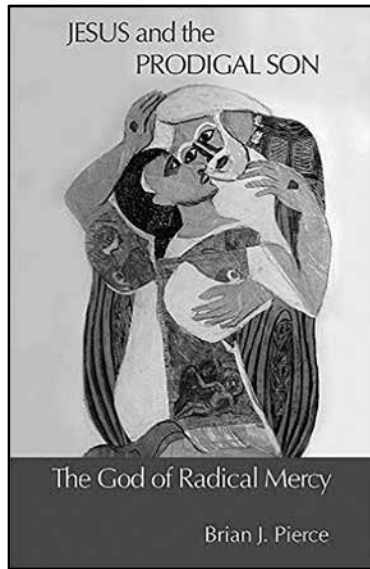


incarnation. Pope Francis challenges us to make these words part of the vocabulary of our daily lives. To really be disciples of Jesus, we must be prepared to draw near to those who live on the periphery of human existence, those who have been excluded for one reason or another from a full life. In this way we practice *proximity*, releasing Christ's healing love into the universe. Pope Francis continues, "We Christians remain steadfast in our intention to ... heal wounds, to build bridges ... to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2)."²

In the parable of the prodigal son, the younger son does not trip and fall into the distant land of sin and suffering (like most of us). Not at all. The fact is, he *chooses* to set off down this road. Before leaving on his journey he asks his abba to give him his inheritance, and his abba's response is to share his very *being* with his son. From the very beginning of the parable, then, we are given a powerful hint: This abba is different from the others; he does not play by the established rules. His actions in the parable are clearly unconventional, even a bit dangerous. He breaks with deeply ingrained cultural rules here, and it does not seem that he does so haphazardly. If we miss this detail, we may miss the parable's power to surprise us into conversion. We will see this unusual behavior again at the end of the parable, when we stumble upon the abba as he waits anxiously, even lovingly, for his wayward son's return (Luke 15:20).

Kenneth Bailey, a Protestant scripture scholar who has lived for 60 years in the Middle East, suggests, "The image of *father* [in this parable] is transformed from that of a tribal chief into a metaphor that can be used for God."³ It is a portrait of a father who acts with the tender compassion of a mother. Theologian Sandra Schneiders agrees wholeheartedly:

Jesus' parable about the father actually constitutes a radical challenge to patriarchy. The divine father who has been understood as the ultimate justification of human patriarchy is revealed as the one who refuses to own us,



Jesus and the Prodigal Son:
The God of Radical Mercy,
 by Brian Pierce
 (February 2016)
 Orbis Books,
 Maryknoll, N.Y.
www.orbisbooks.com

The Son does not break his relationship with his Abba. In fact he wants nothing more than to follow the example of his Abba, to go out of himself, to live for others, to empty himself through love.

demand our submission or punish our rebellion. Rather, God is the one who respects our freedom, mourns our alienation, waits patiently for our return and accepts our love as pure gift.⁴

The beloved Son knows — and has known from all eternity — that he is loved. He knows that everything that his Abba has is his, for he and his Abba are one (John 10:30). This *knowing* is the greatest inheritance of all. The Son has no need to search for his freedom, because his Abba's love is

freedom. The beloved Son knows that he is free to leave the protection and safety of his Abba's home and travel into the distant country, a country of suffering and sin. He longs to seek out and find those who have lost their way, like sheep that stray from the shepherd's watch.

The Son does not break his relationship with his Abba. In fact he wants nothing more than to follow the example of his Abba, to go *out of himself*, to live for others, to *empty himself* through love. He sets off with a piece of his Abba's heart so that he can help build a world free of fear and small-mindedness, where people trust life and live it rather than measuring it. He wants to share his Abba's inheritance with the friends he hopes to meet in the distant country. He wants to get to know the tax collectors and the prostitutes, the gentiles and the lepers, listen to their stories, understand their worldviews, and share their experiences. He wants to engage with the rabbis and the philosophers and learn from the simple faith of the poor and the outcast. He wants to find those who are lost, to heal those who are broken, to feed those who are starving.

The journey of Jesus is the church's journey. Says Pope Francis:

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security. ... If something should rightly disturb us and trouble our consciences, it is the fact that so many of our brothers and sisters are living without the strength, light and consolation born of friendship with Jesus Christ, without a community of faith to support them, without meaning and a goal in life. More than by fear of going astray, my hope is that we will be moved by the fear of remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving and Jesus does not

tire of saying to us: “Give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37).⁵

Jesus’ *downward movement* into the world, into the midst of the people of God, is the movement of the Incarnation, the movement of love. By taking on human flesh, the eternal and creative Word of God freely enters into the human condition, into the human heart — the heart of sinner and saint alike. In the Gospel of John, Jesus makes reference to this dynamic movement by referring to himself as “the bread of God ... which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world” (John 6:33). Pope Francis refers to the need for the church to follow Jesus in this self-giving movement of love: “The ministers of the Gospel must be people ... who know how to dialogue and to descend themselves into their people’s night...”⁶

This downward movement of God toward humanity is made real and tangible for us in the incarnation of Jesus. Jesus’ journey sets the example for the rest of us, for as he comes “down the mountain” and into the heart of humanity, bringing God’s healing love to our broken, sinful and suffering world, he looks back at us and says, “Come, follow me” (Matt 19:21). In the words of Pope Francis:

The Son of God “went out” of his divine condition and came to encounter us. ... No one is excluded from the hope of life, from the love of God. The Church is sent to reawaken this hope everywhere, especially where it is suffocated by difficult existential conditions, at times inhuman, where hope does not breathe but is suffocated. There is need of the oxygen of the Gospel, of the breath of the Spirit of the Risen Christ, to rekindle it in hearts. The Church is the house whose doors are always open not only so that everyone can find welcome and breathe love and hope, but also because ... the Holy Spirit drives us to go out ... to the fringes of humanity.⁷

Where do we, who call ourselves followers of Jesus, find ourselves on this path? Do we hear the voice of the Good Shepherd and risk journeying

with him into the distant country — without counting the cost? Does our heart burn with passion for the poor, the lost, the disenfranchised, so much that we want nothing more than to break bread with those who hunger for the mercy and peace of God?

What or who awaits us at the end of this journey of faith? Like the prodigal son, we are likely to be wounded along this path, wounded because we want nothing more than to love our neighbor the way Christ loves us. Is he not, after all, the beloved Son who was lost and has been found, who was dead and has come back to life? “Oh happy fault that earned so great, so glorious a Redeemer!”⁸

Brian J. Pierce, O.P., is a Dominican friar of the Province of St. Martin de Porres. He has spent the past 20 years preaching worldwide, especially in Latin America. His latest book is *Jesus and the Prodigal Son: The God of Radical Mercy* (Orbis Press). This feature article is a summary of the central theme of the book.

Endnotes

1. “A Big Heart Open to God,” An interview with Pope Francis, *America*, Sept. 30, 2013, p. 24.
2. Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, November 24, 2013), n. 67.
3. Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jacob and the Prodigal: How Jesus Retold Israel’s Story* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 146.
4. Sandra Schneiders, *Women and the Word* (New York: Paulist Press, 1986), p. 47.
5. Ibid., Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, n. 40.
6. Pope Francis, Ibid., “A Big Heart Open to God,” p. 24.
7. Pope Francis, Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for Promoting the New Evangelization (Vatican City: Oct. 14, 2013).
8. A segment from the “Paschal Proclamation” (*Exsultet*).

“I am no longer worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15: 21).



Illustration by Mark Bartholomew

Volver a Casa

El culto y la vida para el mes de marzo 2016

PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ
y RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ ALONSO

Durante estos últimos demasiados años los hombres están en guerra, los unos contra los otros. Los medios de comunicación nos mantienen en contacto con sus horrores, destrucción e incontables muertes sin sentido. Esta cobertura completa y abrumadora a veces nos deja insensibles. De vez en cuando nos informan de una tregua en este caos, el regreso a casa de un guerrero malherido. Entonces vemos escenas conmovedoras que llenan nuestros ojos de lágrimas de alegría y alivio porque es en casa en donde esos cuerpos rotos y esos espíritus quebrantados podrán descansar, sanar, y afrontar los terrores que han vivido. El hogar es donde uno puede encontrar de nuevo la paz. Pero no todos los que vuelven a casa hallan curación. Sus experiencias les han dejado irremediadamente perdidos, vacíos, amargados, aislados. Sin embargo, el hogar mantiene todavía esa promesa de esperanza, apoyo y sanación.

Es posible que usted, como yo, recuerde un verso del poema de Robert Frost, "La muerte del jornalero" ("The Death of the Hired Hand," 1914). Cuando el jornalero Silas volvió a la granja de Warren y María en donde trabajaba, se marchó de repente en el momento más inoportuno. Esto disgustó a Warren. María sabía bien que Silas andaba mal de salud y había vuelto a casa para morir. Warren no estaba tan seguro de ello y comentó amargamente: "El hogar es el lugar en donde, cuando tienes que volver, te tienen que amparar." María, por su parte, dijo: "Yo lo llamaría, en donde no es necesario merecerlo."

Un ambiente similar de volver a casa sin merecerlo lo hallamos en las Sagradas Escrituras de esta Cuaresma. A lo largo de su larga historia, Israel viajaba continuamente hacia casa, hacia su Dios; dejaba atrás un pasado triste y pecaminoso



para recibir en casa una bienvenida de perdón y reconciliación. Josué (el 6 de marzo), Isaías (el 13 de marzo) y Pablo (el 6 y el 13 de marzo) nos recuerdan que el pasado ha pasado verdaderamente y que no debemos recordarlo más; la culpa perdonada no debe seguir siendo una carga pesada para quienes regresan a casa. Antes bien, y como asegura Dios a través de estos mismos mensajeros, hay algo nuevo que debemos disfrutar: La obra de Dios y la obligación que tenemos de agradecer el haber sido llamados una y otra vez a volver a casa.

Dios nos ofrece esta nueva vida por Jesucristo. Es lo que celebramos solemnemente el Domingo de Pascua de Resurrección (el 27 de marzo). Cristo, resucitado y victorioso sobre el pecado y la muerte, ha hecho posible que los pecadores sean perdonados y que los fieles puedan pasar con Él de la muerte a la vida eterna. Jesucristo ha pagado un gran precio por cumplir su misión y hacernos este gran don de Dios: se degradó, "se despojó de sí mismo y tomó la condición de siervo... se humilló y obedeció aceptando una muerte vergonzosa, muerte en la cruz" (el 20 de marzo). Pero de la muerte pasó a la vida. Jesús no regresa a Dios sin compañía, sino que nos lleva consigo a la casa de Dios, como a sus amados hermanas y hermanos e hijos del único y solo Dios.

Este ambiente de volver a casa lo resume y expresa dramáticamente San Lucas en su relato del hijo pródigo (el 6 de marzo) en el que asegura que la misericordia de Dios nos invita a volver a casa. Esta increíble miseri-

cordia toma vida en un cuadro de enormes dimensiones del maestro pintor holandés Rembrandt van Rijn (1669). Pinta el fin de la parábola de San Lucas: un joven libertino ha vuelto a casa y está arrodillado ante su padre que lo abraza con cariño y firmeza. En el fondo oscuro, Rembrandt ha pintado al hermano mayor enojado y sin simpatía hacia su hermano. En vez de dejar que la alegría penetre en el corazón de su padre, el hermano mayor sólo siente resentimiento. La reacción del hermano mayor puede parecernos lógica, justa y hasta de sentido común. Puede ser que compartamos sus razones y que, como él, también nosotros nos encontremos fuera, mirando hacia adentro, a un amor incomprensible, inexplicable. La actitud del hermano mayor nos enseña a no juzgar a lo que no tenemos derecho.

De este encuentro de Henri Nouwen con el cuadro de Rembrandt en el Hermitage de San Petersburgo, en Rusia, resultó un libro de oración, *El regreso del hijo pródigo* (Doubleday, Nueva York: 1992). Al leerlo, uno puede verdaderamente penetrar en este relato, hallar su propio lugar en él y, con confianza, pedirle perdón a Dios. Como mentor solícito, Nouwen ruega al lector que ponga atención al abrazo del Padre y vea que Rembrandt pintó dos manos diferentes. La izquierda del padre es más grande, como la de un hombre; la mano derecha es pequeña, suave y femenina. Nouwen nos recuerda que Dios ama con ternura, como una Madre, y fuertemente, como un Padre. Este Dios-Padre-Madre tan amoroso espera a cada uno de nosotros con los brazos abiertos y un corazón lleno de perdón y de amor. Es nuestro deber ahora pensar, reaccionar y elegir el camino que nos lleva a casa.

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez y Rafael Sánchez Alonso han provisto de comentarios y homilias a *Celebración* desde 1979.

Coming Home

Lectionary themes for March 2016

PATRICIA DATCHUCK SÁNCHEZ
and RAFAEL SÁNCHEZ ALONSO

Year after year, we humans have been warring against one another. The wars change, the countries involved may change, but the violence of battle never really stops, wherever it may be happening. All the while, the media has kept us well in touch with the horror, destruction and countless, senseless deaths. Coverage is so complete and overwhelming that we are, at times, reduced to non-seeing numbness.

Occasionally, however, there is a welcome respite amid all the chaos as the same media reports on the homecoming of a wounded warrior. There are touching scenes that bring on tears of joy and relief — because home is where broken bodies and fractured spirits may rest and heal and try to deal with the terrors they have known. Home is where peace can once again be found. Even when people's wartime experiences have left them almost irretrievably lost, empty, bitter and isolated, home still holds out the promise of hope, help and healing.

Perhaps, like me, you are reminded of a line in the poem "The Death of the Hired Hand" by Robert Frost (published in 1914). Silas, the hired hand, had worked at Warren and Mary's farm for years, repeatedly leaving and then coming back. When he returned to the farm again, at a most inopportune time, Warren was resentful. But it was clear to Mary that Silas was in poor health and had come home to die. Warren was unsure, and bitterly remarked, "Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in." Mary replied, "I should have called it something you somehow haven't to deserve."

A similar ambience of homecoming pervades the whole of the sacred scriptures, and particularly those chosen for the season of Lent. Throughout its long history, Israel



was continuously journeying home to God, leaving behind a sad and sinful past so as to be welcomed home to forgiveness and reconciliation. Joshua (March 6), Isaiah (March 13) and Paul (March 6, 13) remind us that the past is indeed the past and should no longer be remembered; nor should guilt burden those who have been forgiven. Rather, as God assures us through those same messengers, we should enjoy the newness we have received. It is God's doing, and it devolves upon those who have been called home, yet again, to be grateful.

This newness that God holds out to us in Christ will be celebrated in a grand way on Easter Sunday (March 27). Christ, risen and victorious over sin and death, has made it possible for sinners to be forgiven and for the faithful to cross over with him from death to eternal life. But this good and gracious gift has come at a great price: the mission, the suffering and the degradation of Jesus, who "emptied himself and took the form of a slave ... he humbled himself, obediently accepting even death, death on a cross!" (Phil 2:7-8, March 20). But when he had suffered and passed over from death to life, Jesus did not return home to God unaccompanied. On the contrary, he takes us with him; he brings us home to God as his beloved brothers and sisters, children of the one and only God.

This ambience of homecoming is dramatically expressed and summed up by Luke, whose narrative of the prodigal son (March 6) assures us of the mercy of the One who calls us

home. This extravagant mercy was beautifully brought to life by Dutch Master Rembrandt van Rijn around 1669. His larger-than-life painting of the Lucan parable features a profligate young man, newly returned home, kneeling before his father, whose embrace is warm and firm. In the shaded background, Rembrandt has painted the bitter and unsympathetic older brother. Instead of allowing his father's rejoicing to enter his heart, he has room only for resentment. His logical, common-sense reaction to his brother's sinfulness might be uncomfortably familiar to us. We might even share his reasoning, and, like him, find ourselves on the outside looking in at a love we cannot understand. The attitude of the older brother warns us against making judgments we have no right to render.

When Henri Nouwen encountered Rembrandt's painting in the Hermitage museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, the result was Nouwen's prayerful book *The Return of the Prodigal Son* (Doubleday, New York: 1992). This book allows readers to enter into the narrative, find their place at that moment in time and confidently reach out to God for forgiveness. Always a thoughtful mentor, Nouwen draws attention to the father's embrace so that we will notice, as he did, that Rembrandt painted two different hands. The left hand is larger, like that of a man; the right hand is smaller, soft and feminine. What an artful way to remind us that God loves us strongly, like a father, and tenderly, like a mother. This great, loving Parent, our God, awaits each of us with a heart full of forgiveness and love, with arms eager to embrace. We, for our part, need only "come to our senses" (Luke 15:17) and choose the path that leads us home.

Patricia Datchuck Sánchez and Rafael Sánchez Alonso have been collaborating to provide Lectionary commentaries and homilies for *Celebration* since 1979.

Leaders Who Preach the Gospel

Postscript to the bishops of the United States as we approach the Triduum

By GABE HUCK

Dear Bishops: Over the last three months, my essays have been a letter to you. This fourth part is a P.S. to speak to you about your role and responsibility as presiders and homilists at liturgy, something very timely as we are approaching Lent's end and so entering into the Three Days.

The odor of sanctity and the odor of money

You have a burden here, for you are bishops at a time when few have any expectation that this means you will be learned, just or chosen by God. Yet it is also a time when Pope Francis has in so many ways (and he surely knows and means this) become an experiment and a probably deliberate example of leadership in the church. And how anxious so many are, in and out of the church, to have such a leader.

His preparation for this leadership was, as he admits, failures at leadership. He had gone in some strange directions and disappointed many earlier, but he must have a lot of both ambition and humility. Most important, he is moving on from the in-house squabbles that have taken so much energy these last three decades and has dared all of us to do the same. He doesn't look to the United States for leadership, nor does he believe, as we often seem to, that we're special. When he visited last autumn, he named four Americans of those who stand out not because they talked the talk, but more because they walked the walk. What walk? We know very well. As Dr. King said in Memphis: "I may not get there with you."

I like a pope who quotes Basil, bishop and saint and plain speaker from what is now central Turkey. I quoted him in the previous essay where he sounds like a fourth-century spokesperson for the Occupy movement: "The shoes rotting in your closet belong to the one who has no shoes. The money which

you put in the bank belongs to the poor." But Francis has more recently quoted Basil as saying (with a polite translation into English): "Money is the devil's dung." Not just *dung*, the *devil's dung*!

We are a church with treasures like that, with the Gospel's impatience with hypocrisy and a sense that while riches don't mean a person is evil and lack of riches doesn't mean a person is virtuous, Jesus (as Fr. Gerard Sloyan once wrote of those Gospel stories) must have thought the odds went in that direction. Other popes must have figured that out also, but Francis seems to have realized that nobody would take it seriously until you began to deal with it in your own life and in your use of authority.

That was also Blessed Oscar Romero's hard story. As many have said, Romero is a martyr not because he was killed for being Christian; he was shot dead because he found eloquence when he found Gospel purpose for his being bishop. The words he spoke that last Lent flow from the Gospel, flow from the way he must have been hearing Lent's scriptures so clearly. His understanding of what a bishop must do seems to have confronted him and clarified what this bishop would say week after week in homilies rooted in the Sunday scriptures and the Paschal season. (Some of Romero's homilies of his last years are translated into English and published by Orbis Books as *The Violence of Love*.)

Who taught Bishop Oscar that language and courage? And what's important to your work as homilists is how Romero brought together the scriptures, the season, the situation of the people. We might not be up to reading the serious research about the "one percent," but we had better find people we trust who do. Then pass it on.

But you can't write or talk or homilize without knowing the situations that the Gospel itself demands be in

front of us, homilists and bishops more than any. To say it well you need help, but eloquence is not just oratory, it is passion, and we are so hungry for that. Basil and Oscar were both confronted with a one-percent problem and, inevitably, with the violence used to keep it so. So why do we not hear more of such preaching this Lent from our bishops?

This is not all. More compromised by our U.S. citizenship than bishops and faithful in any other nation, we are challenged, but are so reluctant, to go beyond helping someone starving or hungry or made a refugee. That's what we do with a bit of our time or money, we help. But we don't probe for the *who* and the *why* of these wars, the *cui bono*, the simple questions we should have confronted earlier. We have to learn. Yes, feed the hungry but ask and find out: Why are they hungry, or powerless, or seeking asylum, or in prison, and who benefits from this?

I have to mention yet another bishop who had an answer so obvious but so hard for us because of the choices we make about our time. Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga spoke at Fordham University last November. He was asked in the question period: "What advice so you have? What can we do?" He immediately responded: "Read!"

This had to be one of those "shock of the obvious" moments. He went on to say that we North Americans have to get off our cell phones (among other things) and *read*. That happens to be what I most wanted to tell you. It's pretty clear that he didn't mean just the diocesan paper.

What we have failed to do

We have this great blessing: a relatively free press, an amazing number of people who, mostly at their own expense, have learned the things that take us out of the consuming and flag-waving and fascination with one's own likes and needs. They have been think-

ing and telling and investigating in long hours and they have found truth to tell. Does anyone care? These people do what they do in various ways:



■ Academics who do long research and know they must tell the truth both within the academy of their peers and to the rest of us. These are people like Joy Gordon in *Invisible War: The United States and the Iraq Sanctions*; Michelle Alexander in her book *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*; Ilan Pappé, an Israeli professor of history, in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* and several books since. It will help any of us find the right books if we read at least some of the review essays by Gary Wills and Charles Glass and such that appear every two weeks in *The New York Review of Books*.

■ Journalists who pursue the complexity and write about it. I.F. Stone was as indispensable to the opposition to the Vietnam war as the activists. From his home, he wrote and published a newsletter, *I.F. Stone Weekly*. It did what it did based on the hard work of finding and simply reading what the various government reports made public. Now we have people doing this in the media and on paper. Many are heard on *Democracy Now* five mornings a week, and in their articles and books (and online at www.democracynow.org).

■ Fiction and poetry. Literature is vital, as are the other arts. *The Corpse Washer*, a short novel by Sinan Antoon, an Iraqi who is teaching at NYU, tells of how the war was far more deadly than we know, and to the spirit and mind also. George Orwell and Ray Bradbury may still offer us insights into these times.

The work is there. You know *National Catholic Reporter*, *America*, *Commonweal*, and in the U.K., *The Tablet*. They do it on less than a shoestring. Read and go beyond. Bring in speakers. Work with institutions of higher education as a supporter of speakers who bring challenging views

to public lectures.

I know! None of us has time. But really, it isn't time, it is often that we are unwilling to discover how much this will change us. I have not heard a homily in these three-plus years back in the United States from Syria that even acknowledged we Catholics (as citizens) should be challenged weekly to confront the harm, the evil, we allow our country to do. Not one. I think sometimes that homilists are so happy some people still show up. They reinforce the messages of fear and security or they ignore any Gospel analysis that would challenge. I expect that soon homilists will stay away even from immigration issues, the one place our bishops have dared venture.

How many times these past few years did the words of a homily or an intercession make a compelling issue clear? We in this room won't say in so many words that some lives are worth more than others, but we clearly do. We will pray for people killed in Paris violence, weep, stand with candles burning. We might affirm that black lives matter, but even there, where is the probing of the homily preparation, the willingness to read Michelle Alexander and find out about privatization of prisons, torture, life-long penalties for having been convicted? Instead of weeping for the dead in Paris, ask why they died, and don't stop with the racist responses.

This assembly, this town, this state, this country — our failures to act and to forbid evil are far more numerous than our deliberate deeds. Remember the firm purpose of amendment. Remember "heartily sorry"? Maybe the words don't ring a bell, but we can find others. But it isn't the forgiveness we need, so much as a firm purpose of amendment, since none of these are those pesky individual sins but are sins of and against the world, including the one we are rendering possible: "the world without us," in

a few generations.

Speak the language of the bathhouse and the tomb

Aidan Kavanagh was a Benedictine monk, a scholar of liturgical theology who was eventually a professor at Yale, someone who knew well the importance of words well chosen and ordered. In 1977 at a presentation he gave at a diocesan gathering in Colorado, I heard him tell most of what there will ever be to tell of what ritual is and why we are shaped by it. He began:

I have always rather liked the gruff robustness of the first rubric for baptism found in a late fourth-century church order that directs that the bishop enter the vestibule of the baptistery and say to the catechumens without commentary or apology only four words: "Take off your clothes." There is no evidence that the assistants fainted or the catechumens asked what he meant. Catechesis and much prayer and fasting had led them to understand that the language of the passage this night in Christ from death to life would be the language of the bathhouse and the tomb — not that of the forum and the drawing room.

I have often used Kavanagh's opening and even the whole description of the Vigil and its baptisms because in that description we are hearing how, even in these once-a-year rites, the community, the church, is not an audience but the principal. The words, chants, dialogues, postures, movements and processions gave evidence that in these deeds, the daily ones, the Sunday ones, the seasonal and the once-a-year ones, they were rehearsing the lives they had chosen to live in this community. It was known by heart, sung and processed in its cycles, belonged to all. It was strong enough to bear that burden.

How can we join in this?

Gabe Huck lives in New York City. Contact him at gabeandtheresa@gmail.com.

Three Vital Skills

Prayer, fasting and almsgiving lead us to a fuller human life

By MELISSA MUSICK NUSSBAUM

I was the guest teacher at the Little L School in November. (The Little L School is a preschool that meets in my daughter's house. It was started, originally, for her daughter, Lucy, and her nephew, Leo. Hence the name). Each November, their teacher, Miss Laura, tries to combine the kids' fascination with queens (read: princesses) and kings (read: warriors) by talking about "saints who were also kings and queens."

Enter Ma-Maw (that's me), who likes reading about and thinking about saints and who likes asking saints to pray for us. We talk about the True King, and what sort of king Jesus is. We make shields and talk about the shields of faith God gives us to protect our hearts. (We talk about the shield of faith even as the boys are using their homemade shields to battle). We make crowns and talk about the crown of faith. (We talk about the crown of faith even as the girls are gluing jewels on their homemade ones, all the while preening and vamping.)

We talk about their patrons — an Abraham, an Alexander, an Elizabeth, a Terese and more — and I tell them stories. I tell them stories of St. Margaret of Scotland and St. Elizabeth of Hungary, two of my favorites. I teach them songs and poems. And I watch them as they play.

In the midst of their play I spy my tutu-wearing 3-year-old granddaughter, standing in the middle of the room, her cardboard crown on her head and her cardboard shield in her hand. She is talking to herself: "Kings never, ever, ever pick their noses."

She speaks with conviction and purpose. One of the important lessons the Little L's do is something Miss Laura calls "Skills." The children learn to put on shoes and fasten them. They learn to put on coats and hats and mittens. They learn to use toilet paper and flush and, yes, they learn the many uses of tissue. These are not in-



The church holds this sacred tripod before us. Not because talking, eating and finding comfort are evil, but because, alone, they are not enough, not sufficient for a fully human life.

stinctive skills, like walking and talking. These are social skills, hard-won and sometimes learned only after lots of fails and many tears. So it makes sense, doesn't it, that a king would be someone who is as handy with a Kleenex as a sword.

I talk about kings and queens who seek God, who feed the hungry and sue for peace, because those are my needs and the needs I see all about me, needs I am called to meet and fail at meeting, again and again. But my granddaughter knows her own strivings, her own failures, and so she invests "the King" with all the abilities and skills she is yet to acquire. He never, ever, ever picks his nose.

Every Lent we are called to the sacred tripod: prayer, fasting and almsgiving, the same three things for all our lives. It occurs to me that we baptized are in a lifelong "Skills" class. For prayer, fasting and almsgiving are not instinctive skills.

It is instinctive to go our own ways, turning a deaf ear to admonitions or counsel. Just watch a child chase a ball into the street or jump into deep

water. No one has to teach us, much less drill us, in heedlessness. We take to it as we take to talking.

And that's talking, not listening.

It is instinctive to eat. It is our second human act, right after breathing air. No one has to teach us, much less drill us, in how to take what we want and consume as much of it as we can. We take to it as we take to breathing.

It is instinctive to think of ourselves, to make sure that we are warm and fed and comfortable. No one has to teach us, much less drill us, in selfishness. We take to it as we take to walking.

So the church holds this sacred tripod before us. Not because talking, eating and finding comfort are evil, but because, alone, they are not enough, not sufficient for a fully human life. To say, at the end, I "did it my way," and I was well fed and comfortable in the doing, is not a big enough story. Not big enough, because it doesn't come close to Jesus' own story, which is the story of the new Adam, a man living on earth as God intended men and women to live.

I will continue, for all the Novembers I am invited to the Little L School, to talk about the Queen of Compassion, as St. Margaret of Scotland is sometimes called. I will tell her story, even as I know the children will probably go through stages where they are more interested in the Queen of Fashion.

I can be patient because I know the church is, and has been, and continues to be patient with me as I struggle to listen for God's voice and see and care about needs other than my own, or those of my family and tribe.

Melissa Musick Nussbaum is a regular columnist for *Celebration*. She lives in Colorado Springs, Colo.: mmnussbaum@comcast.net.

We Have Already Been Saved

The Psalms of March

By DENISE SIMEONE

Thanksgiving is not usually the first thing we think of when we reflect on Lent, yet the verses from Psalm 34 on the **Fourth Sunday of Lent (March 6)** are clearly that. The vow of thanksgiving and praise in verse 2, “I will bless the Lord at all times,” launches us into a refrain of invitation to others: “Taste and see the goodness of the Lord” (v. 9). The psalmist knows deliverance; the Lord has already saved. We who sing this psalm often forget that is the case. Salvation has already been given. Jesus died and rose and by his life showed us how to give the same witness to the reign of God. Paul’s letter from 2 Corinthians reminds us that we are now the ambassadors. God appeals to the world through our witness.

The first reading from Joshua recalls the time the Israelites were fed manna from God. Luke’s Gospel begins with the tax collectors and sinners drawing close to Jesus to listen in the face of complaints from some of the religious rulers. The story he told (perhaps better called the parable of the prodigal father) must have scandalized them all. But can we imagine the glimmer of hope and new life this story might have raised in those who felt marginalized by their religion?

This unimaginable possibility of hope pervades all the readings for the **Fifth Sunday of Lent (March 13)**. Isaiah reminds the Israelites of the defeat of the powerful Egyptian army, yet he cautions: “Remember not the events of the past, the things of long ago consider not; see, I am doing something new!” (43:18-19). Paul reminds the Philippians, “Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead” (3:13), remember to pursue the goal of living in and witnessing to the resurrected life of Christ. In the familiar story of the woman caught in adultery who is left by her accusers to stand alone, Jesus issues her an invitation



Remember how good your own bed feels after you return from a long trip? Imagine that feeling a hundredfold for people who have been refugees far from their own country and are finally able to return home. Laughter bubbles forth. Songs erupt.

forward: “Go and from now on do not sin any more” (John 8:11).

We hear all of Psalm 126 this Sunday, and it too characterizes the joy of new life we hear in the readings. The people have returned to their land after long exile. Remember how good your own bed feels after you return from a long trip? Imagine that feeling a hundredfold for people who have been refugees far from their own country and are finally able to return home. Laughter bubbles forth. Songs erupt. Work still needs to be done, and the land will need to be cultivated, but the people sing, “The Lord has done great things for us; we are filled with joy” (v. 3). Can we sing these words as we recognize that we, too, are sent forward already saved?

“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” (Psalm 22:2), sung in all three cycles on **Palm Sunday (March 20)**, conveys the despair that must have accompanied the crucifixion for the disciples. Luke does not put this psalm on Jesus’ lips as both Mark and Matthew do, but it is familiar. Enemies seemed to

surround the disciples just as they surrounded Jesus. And the disciples not only abandoned Jesus, but did not even appear to trust each other.

But from somewhere, the rest of the psalm bursts forth: The Lord does not stay far off; he rescues and delivers. The words of Isaiah, too, echo the idea that disgrace and shame are not the final answer. The early church community recognized in the words of this psalm the terrible suffering of the crucifixion. Yet they came to understand that Jesus took all the suffering unto himself. The acknowledgement begins to dawn: Salvation has already been won. Life has conquered death. Their response was to trust that God continues to act this way and confess, as Paul does in Philippians, that Jesus Christ emptied himself in obedience, even unto death.

Easter Sunday (March 27) begins with the reading from Acts describing the witness of Peter in the temple. He tells the crowds the disciples have been commissioned (sent on mission) to preach, testify to God’s reign, bear witness and forgive. Like Jesus, they are to teach, heal and continue this mission. They were prepared for this, and now it is their call. Their preaching, which we hear throughout the Easter season, reminds us this is the result of faith: Act!

Psalm 118 is a thanksgiving litany sung as the people walk in procession to the temple. The scene of this psalm is a far cry from the despair and shame of the crucifixion and recalls the people’s confidence in their God and their rescue from death. The shadow of rejection and death is near but no longer has a hold. The resurrection has shattered death, and new life has sprung forth. “This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad” (v. 24). We add our “Alleluia!”

Denise Simeone is a writer and consultant skilled at group facilitation, long-range planning and mission development. Email: denisesimeone@hotmail.com.

Revitalizing Synodality

Pope Francis and a Vatican II church

By **BIAGIO MAZZA**

On October 17, 2015, at a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the institution of the synod of bishops, Pope Francis spoke briefly and prophetically concerning the revitalization of a key teaching of the Second Vatican Council, a teaching aptly named “synodality.” The whole address is worth our attention and reflection. It can be found both in English text and Italian video formats at http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2015/october/documents/papa-francesco_20151017_50-anniversario-sinodo.html.

Francis begins by stating:

From the beginning of my ministry as Bishop of Rome, I sought to enhance the Synod, which is one of the most precious legacies of the Second Vatican Council. ... We must continue along this path. ... It is precisely this path of synodality which God expects of the Church of the third millennium.

Synodality literally means “walking” or “journeying together.” Pope Francis is very attuned to synodality and promotes it at every opportunity in order to make real the Vatican II vision of church. Synodality is not merely accomplished by periodic meetings of bishops called by the pope to discuss certain topics. Rather, synodality is a perennial and permanent process in the church; it existed from its beginnings and was retrieved by Vatican II after many centuries of neglect and suppression.

Francis emphasizes:

A synodal Church is a Church which listens, which realizes that listening “is more than simply hearing” (*Evangelii Gaudium*). It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn. The faithful people, the college of bishops, the Bishop of Rome:

Synodality means “walking” or “journeying together.”

all listening to each other, and all listening to the Holy Spirit, the “Spirit of truth” (John 14:17), in order to know what he “says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7).

Having struggled with this issue both as a Jesuit and as a member of the church’s hierarchy, Francis quickly adds, “What the Lord is asking of us is already in some sense present in the very word ‘synod.’ Journeying together — laity, pastors, the Bishop of Rome — is an easy concept to put into words, but not so easy to put into practice.”

Francis has continually insisted that if we are to be a church that not only teaches but also practices and lives out synodality, then a whole new way of being church has to come into being. The Vatican II vision of church as the entire people of God gifted with *sensus fidei*, a sense of the faith, must be incarnated in all aspects of church life, structure and interaction with the world. The role of the papacy and the bishops, as well as the structure of the church, has to change if synodality is ever to become the integral operating principle of church life and ministry. Francis addresses these points directly by stressing:

Synodality, as a constitutive element of the Church, offers us the most appropriate interpretive framework for understanding the hierarchical ministry itself ... the pope is not, by himself, above the Church; but within it as one of the baptized ... within the Church, no one can be “raised up” higher than others. On the contrary, in the Church, it is necessary that each person “lower” himself or herself, so as to serve our brothers and sisters along the way.

Turning the traditional pyramid

model of the church on its head, Francis insists that

in this Church, as in an inverted pyramid, the top is located beneath the base. Consequently, those who exercise authority are called “ministers,” because, in the original meaning of the word, they are the least of all. ... Let us not forget this! For the disciples of Jesus, yesterday, today, and always, the only authority is the authority of service, the only power is the power of the cross.

Francis concludes with a prophetic challenge to the church, something that each of us needs to reflect on in prayer and live out in our daily activities:

A synodal Church is like a standard lifted up among the nations (cf. Isa 11:12) in a world which — while calling for participation, solidarity and transparency in public administration — often consigns the fate of entire peoples to the grasp of small but powerful groups. As a Church which “journeys together” with men and women, sharing the travails of history, let us cherish the dream that a rediscovery of the inviolable dignity of peoples and of the function of authority as service will also be able to help civil society to be built up in justice and fraternity, and thus bring about a more beautiful and humane world for coming generations.

During this Lenten season, take time to reflect carefully and prayerfully on Pope Francis’ words. The conversion process integral to the Lenten season will be greatly enhanced by examining our actions in light of the call to be a synodal church.

Biagio Mazza is an author and adult faith formation coordinator for St. Sabina Parish in Belton, Mo. Email: biagio46@gmail.com.

Enter the Drama

We all have our part to play in moving Lent into Easter

By ERIN RYAN

Have you ever been part of a theater production? The sets have to be painted. Costumes have to be designed. Music rehearsed, lines learned. There's a sense of solidarity as you all band together, working, practicing, laboring to build a living story. On opening night you hope it all comes together and weaves a spell so that the audience, for two or three hours, will enter into the reality you create before them.

I used to run with a theater crowd in high school. (I was usually on the tech crew, painting backdrops, while most of my friends were actors.) These days, I'm a passionate opera fan. To me, there's nothing like sitting in the dark theater, listening to the orchestra perform the overture; then hearing a drama come to life through the music and the human voice. A well-done opera can make me cry for days — no kidding. (Lots of them are tragedies, after all.)

The same thing often happens to me in church: I get so overwhelmed by the scripture, or the preaching, or the music, that I am awash with tears. I recognize the truth, the reality of something: God's compassion, the triumph of light over darkness, my own sin — and it breaks my heart.

It takes a lot of practice by many people to make this happen.

Søren Kierkegaard once wrote, "Only in subjectivity is there decision" (*Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, 1846). I think what he meant by this is that we do not really *believe* until we *feel* something. You can give all the rational arguments for something that you want, but no one will really decide, no one will really be convinced, if it all remains within your head.

I remember going to see a performance of "Lucia de Lammermoor," Donizetti's 1835 opera of thwarted love on the 18th-century Scottish

Lent is like our practice to enter the story fully. Let's use the rest of Lent to prepare to be the people who make the liturgy come alive and tap into the mystery it is trying to portray.

moors, whose heroine goes insane with grief (the famous "mad scene"). Instead of following the story, I spent most of the opera thinking how horribly ugly the costume design was. Why did they choose those awful tartans? It kept me in my head — critical — instead of *feeling* the performance, in my heart.

There have been times like that during liturgy, too: The homily is badly prepared. The cantor's voice is so low that no one can follow along. The choir doesn't practice the hymns. I once went to an Easter Vigil where they accompanied the first reading from Genesis with a sort of projection on the wall of a lava floe, with this churning sound that was supposed to be — Creation, I guess? Instead of marveling at what God had done, I just kept thinking, "This is weird."

Liturgy and performance (i.e. opera) have a lot in common. There's music, singing, environment to design, gestures to memorize. There is no greater drama than the Triduum, with its processions and veneration and prostrations; the fire, the light low, the Exsultet, the story of salvation, and then the light rising upon lilies as "Alleluias" burst forth after a long Lent of fasting from this acclamation.

But despite the similarities, liturgy and performance are *not* the same thing. In liturgy, we are not just putting on a good show. We aren't just sitting there watching performers act out a made-up tale. No, in liturgy,

we are not trying to create a new reality from scratch. We are giving expression to a reality that already exists. We're living it, not just acting it out. And when we do this, *everyone* plays a part.

Even if we are not lectors, or cantors, or preachers or musicians or being baptized this Easter, we all have a part to play. Lent is like our practice to enter the story fully. Let's use the rest of Lent to prepare to be the people who make the liturgy come alive and tap into the mystery it is trying to portray.

At the Vigil, traditionally, there are seven readings from the Hebrew scriptures, one from Paul, and then the Gospel. There are psalm responses to each of the seven readings; then we sing the "Gloria" before we hear Paul's proclamation of the Resurrection. Many congregations do not read the full gamut of Vigil selections — the rubrics allow them to be shortened, particularly when there are going to be baptisms. But whichever responses we sing, let us sing them with our whole heart:

Lord, send out your Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.

You are my inheritance, O Lord.

Let us sing to the Lord; he has covered himself in glory.

I will praise you, Lord, for you have rescued me.

You will draw water joyfully from the springs of salvation.

Like a deer that longs for running streams, my soul longs for you, my God.

And, finally:

Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

Erin Ryan is associate editor of *Celebration*. She lives in Chapel Hill, N.C. Email her at eeryan252@gmail.com.

Embrace the Season

Deepening our faith in the midst of daily life

By PEG EKERDT

It is March. Some among us are consumed with tax season, and others are fixated on basketball's March Madness or on spring break vacations. Some wait for college acceptances while others begin to register children for summer camps. Still others can talk of little else but baseball's spring training. In some cities (yes, I do live in Kansas City), a good portion of the population is focused on the countdown to opening day. All of these things speak to our places in the world — our work, our families and our play.

But for people of faith, March means something more. March is the time of year when we take stock, make amends and resolve to do better as we immerse ourselves in the spiritual disciplines of Lent. Distracted, busy, consumed with things of this world, we often are challenged to put faith first. The world is graced and good, and it is where we were placed by God. It is where we belong and are called to be. But it's not easy to integrate what sometimes seems like two far-apart worlds.

How, then, do we fulfill the responsibilities of daily life and still embrace the season of spiritual renewal? The Catholic tradition encourages the practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving during these Lenten days. Each year, we think about and choose some variation on these age-old practices with the hope and intent of deepening our lives of faith.

We consider and weigh options as we wonder how to merge the desire to pray more faithfully with the reality that days are already chock-full and it seems difficult to imagine doing one more thing. The fasting options are ever expanding: Do we fast from food, alcohol or sweets? Or do we fast from social media, television, gossip, or accumulation of goods? (We might like to fast from car pools and work deadlines, but that is not realistic



*When all is said and done,
Lent is a season
that calls us to live in the
world, not out of it.*

unless one is headed to a hermitage.) Sharing time, talent and treasure is a way of life for some, and they don't need to do more during this season. But for all of us, in Lent and on every other day of the year, faith's call to generosity reminds us that giving alms is essential to the Christian life.

Not long ago we gathered a group of 12 for an evening of formation for new Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. There were cradle Catholics in the group, people formed by the Baltimore Catechism, as well as people who had never heard of that catechism. There were RCIA alumni, Christ Renews His Parish past participants, new parishioners, fourth-generation parishioners, and a parish wedding coordinator thrown in for good measure.

On that evening, the group explored the catechism's names for the Eucharist (Catechism of the Catholic Church #1328-1332) and chose their favorites: the Breaking of the Bread because it connects us to the first Christian community, the Lord's Supper because it is the meal Jesus shared with his disciples, Holy Communion because it draws attention to our union with Christ and with

one another, and Holy Mass (from the Latin *missa*) because it reminds us that we are sent into the world to live the faith we profess. As the discussion continued, the group was visibly moved when they read a description of the Sunday gatherings of second-century believers (CCC #1345) and recognized the same elements of the Eucharist that they celebrate each Sunday.

But the evening's richest discussion focused on Thomas Porter's hymn that we sang as evening prayer: *Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord, broken and shared, life for the world. Let us be wine, love freely poured. Let us be one in the Lord.* The discussion brought us to the brink of grasping the grace of transformation. We bring our busyness, the concerns of work and family, to the table of the Lord. We who are most ordinary come as we are. In all our human need and imperfection, we come to be blessed, broken and then shared with others. Then, we are sent (missioned) to the world where we belong, to be love freely poured, to give life to the world.

When all is said and done, Lent is a season that calls us to live in the world, not out of it — to love what we do, who we live with; to be filled with gratitude and to live with generosity that is rooted in God. The age-old practices might help us grow in God's love, or we might simply want to ask the question: What would help me in this Year of Mercy to be a better vessel of God's love? Think about it and see what you come up with. I might go to bed earlier, exercise more regularly, read the daily scriptures and write in a journal, pray to let go of judgment, and ask for the grace to be filled with joy.

Peg Ekerdt is a pastoral associate at Visitation Church, Kansas City, Mo., where her work includes pastoral care, adult formation, marriage preparation and spiritual direction. Email her at peg@church.visitation.org.

The New Social Activism

College seniors and others are ready to work for change

By COLLEEN DUNNE

I am too young to remember the days of protests in the South for civil rights or Americans committed to protesting the Vietnam War. I had only history class, movies, documentaries and stories to give me an idea of what these movements were like and the power they had to affect injustice. Over the years, I have heard many older people say the youth of this generation have lost the appreciation for social activism as a way to bring about change and to be a voice for the marginalized. These statements were made with sadness that the days of the well-planned, passionate protest were over.

If we take a closer look at what is happening in the world today, however, we see that this couldn't be further from the truth.

The Catholic tradition gives many great examples of social activists who worked for change, including Dorothy Day and her Catholic Worker movement. Like many social activists, she knew that change had to come from more than one direction — both through her ministering directly to those on the margins, and by empowering those she served by organizing them around a cause.

As a journalist, Dorothy Day believed strongly in the power of nonviolence and actively participated in acts of civil disobedience, not afraid to challenge an unjust law. The Catholic Worker movement still offers hospitality and shelter today for those on the streets and inspires a constant dialogue on bringing about change in the world. It draws many young people to serve others and to be a part of the conversation. Dorothy Day once said, "The greatest challenge of the day is: how to bring about a revolution of the heart, a revolution which has to start with each one of us?"

In a world overwhelmed with a need for this revolution, it can be

Social media users, both young and old, have found ways to bring attention to those most affected by injustice.

easy to believe that our voice doesn't matter or can't help to bring about change. However, there are countless examples of young people coming together to minister to others and to be formed through their service, which can lead to systematic change that inspires us and calls us to action.

As spring draws closer and college graduations are on the horizon, numerous soon-to-be graduates are choosing to do a year of volunteer service locally or internationally before they go on to graduate school or begin their intended careers. Among many others, programs such as the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, Lasallian Volunteers, Peace Corps, Mercy Volunteers and Maryknoll Missionaries place young people on the margins to become active in the need for social change. These experiences emphasize communal living and simplicity. They help to shape a vision where activism can change the world, and where getting involved is not only necessary but is one of the most radical calls of the Gospel.

Not all of us can leave our lives in order to move into a Catholic Worker house. However, thanks to social media, it is not hard to find a place where we can become social activists. Social media users, both young and old, have found ways to bring attention to those most affected by injustice. It's a way for us to lend our voices in movements that speak on behalf of the marginalized. Such movements are found on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or with a simple Google search. It would be unrealistic to think we could re-

spond to every movement that seeks to make a difference for others. Fair trade wages, immigration, hunger, homelessness, treatment of factory workers, race relations, and a host of other issues come to our attention every day.

As with the example of Dorothy Day, our responsibility is to discern how we can respond to the needs around us and to trace how our faith guides us along this path. For some, that responsibility takes on the form of going out into the streets to protest or risk arrest. It can lead others to abstain from using products that exploit people or the environment; to spread a message to inform others; or to volunteer a few hours a week in a place that serves those in need. The options are endless.

The idea of social activism can no doubt be an uncomfortable one. It requires a definitive position; we have to take a side and let our voices be heard. It can also require us to look at our lives and see how the products and services we use or the opinions we hold keep people on the margins. Social activism has the power to speak across religions and cultures, uniting people around a cause to do good for others.

American cultural anthropologist and author Margaret Mead once said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." Even in the times when we feel powerless over injustice or we feel one voice will not make a difference, as Christians, we have a responsibility to support the poor and oppressed.

Colleen Dunne is the development director for De La Salle Blackfeet School in Browning, Mont. Contact her at cdunne@gmail.com.

Singing the Triduum

This big challenge for pastoral musicians also brings great joy

By J. MICHAEL McMAHON

The three major liturgies of the Triduum — the Mass of the Lord's Supper on Holy Thursday, the Celebration of the Passion on Good Friday, and the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night — constitute a single celebration of Christ's death and resurrection, yet each one has its own character and includes unique ritual elements that celebrate different dimensions of the Paschal Mystery. If possible, liturgy planners should approach these three intimately connected liturgies as a single event, providing musical leadership and making musical selections that provide continuity from one to the other.

Here are some important issues to consider as you begin the process of selecting music for the Easter Triduum liturgies:

Acclamations. As at Sunday Mass, acclamations are among the most important musical elements to engage the active participation of the assembly during the Triduum. The Good Friday Celebration of the Lord's Passion includes an acclamation for the Showing of the Cross. At the Easter Vigil, acclamations are used for the proclamation of light, the solemn Alleluia, the blessing of baptismal water, and the baptisms.

Dialogues. The dialogues between the assembly and the priest or deacon are also a high priority for singing. Musicians can help to provide gentle and supportive coaching for priests and deacons who may be a bit reluctant or frightened. Make sure that the deacon (or priest) and choir are prepared to sing the dismissal and response with the double Alleluia at the end of the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday liturgies.

Psalms. The liturgies of the Triduum make generous use of the psalms, especially during the Easter Vigil's extended Liturgy of the Word. Make careful choices that require little if any instrumental support so that the



The liturgies of the Triduum make generous use of the psalms, especially during the Easter Vigil's extended Liturgy of the Word.

texts of the psalms can be proclaimed with as little encumbrance as possible.

Hymns and songs. There are many ritual actions during the Triduum that call for liturgical songs that enrich their meaning. Be sure to study and reflect on sung texts provided in the Roman Missal for various ritual moments. Many of these texts can help guide the selection of other appropriate hymns and songs, such as the entrance antiphon for Holy Thursday, "We should glory in the cross." The missal also includes antiphons and other sung texts to accompany the washing of feet (Thursday), the veneration of the cross (Friday), the sprinkling of the assembly (Easter Vigil), and the Communion procession. Some hymns are traditionally associated with certain ritual actions, such as *Ubi caritas* for the preparation of the gifts and *Pange lingua gloriosi* for the transfer of the Eucharist, both on Holy Thursday.

Instruments. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal directs that instruments be used only to support

the singing from the "Gloria" on Holy Thursday until the "Gloria" of the Easter Vigil. In that spirit, many communities continue to observe the former practice of using no instruments at all during this period. Musicians should also consider, however, the creative use of instruments to sound a joyful opening to the Triduum on Thursday evening and to evoke a spirit of exuberant celebration beginning with the "Gloria" at the great Vigil.

Vocal leadership. The Easter Triduum deserves the biggest and best group of choir singers and the best psalmists and cantors who regularly serve the community. Even in parishes with a diversity of choirs and music groups, there should ideally be one group of musicians, combined if possible, to serve the worshiping assembly at all three celebrations. One of the most important sung elements of the Triduum is the Easter Proclamation, or Exsultet, ordinarily sung by a deacon or priest. However, the Roman Missal makes provision for the Exsultet to be sung by a lay cantor "because of necessity," which reasonably includes the deacon or priest's lack of skill to proclaim it well.

Cultural diversity. In communities with a variety of cultural groups, the voices and languages of all should be part of these major celebrations of the church year. Selecting music for a diverse parish may present challenges, but can be deeply enriching for all of the various groups that gather to form one worshiping community during the Easter Triduum.

Preparing and leading music for the Easter Triduum are among the greatest challenges in the ministry of a pastoral musician, but the joys are far greater than the difficulties!

J. Michael McMahon is *Celebration's* music editor and former president of the National Association of Pastoral Musicians. Contact him at jmichael.mcmahon@gmail.com.