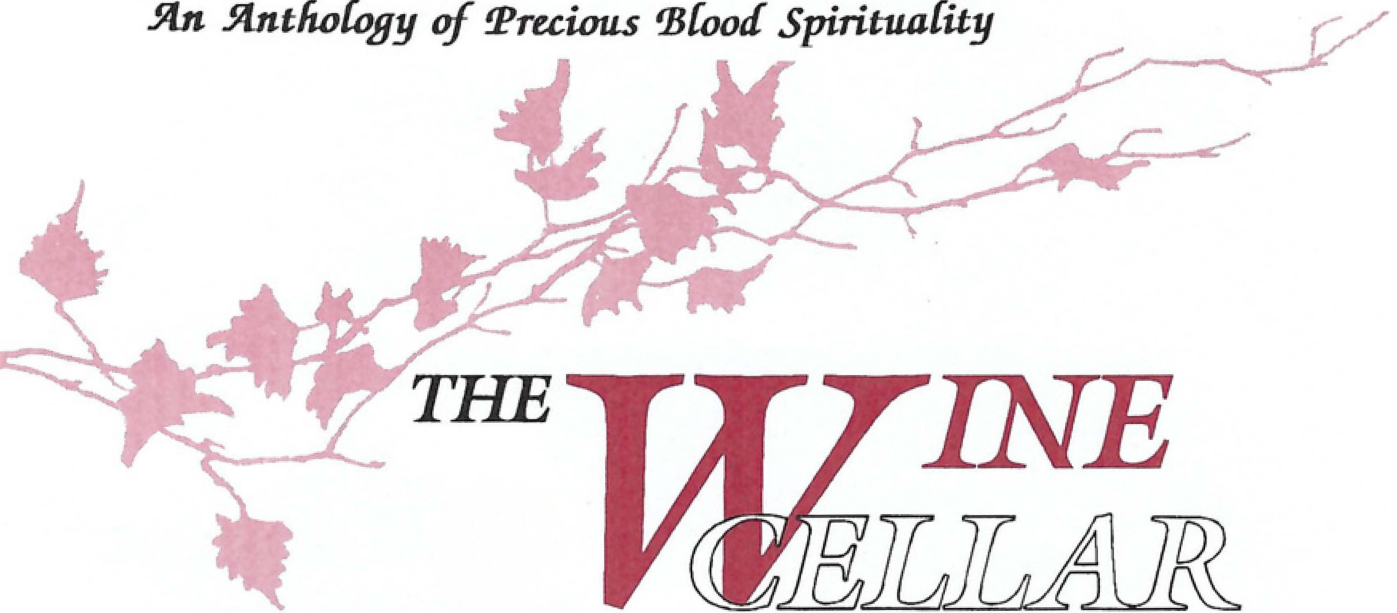


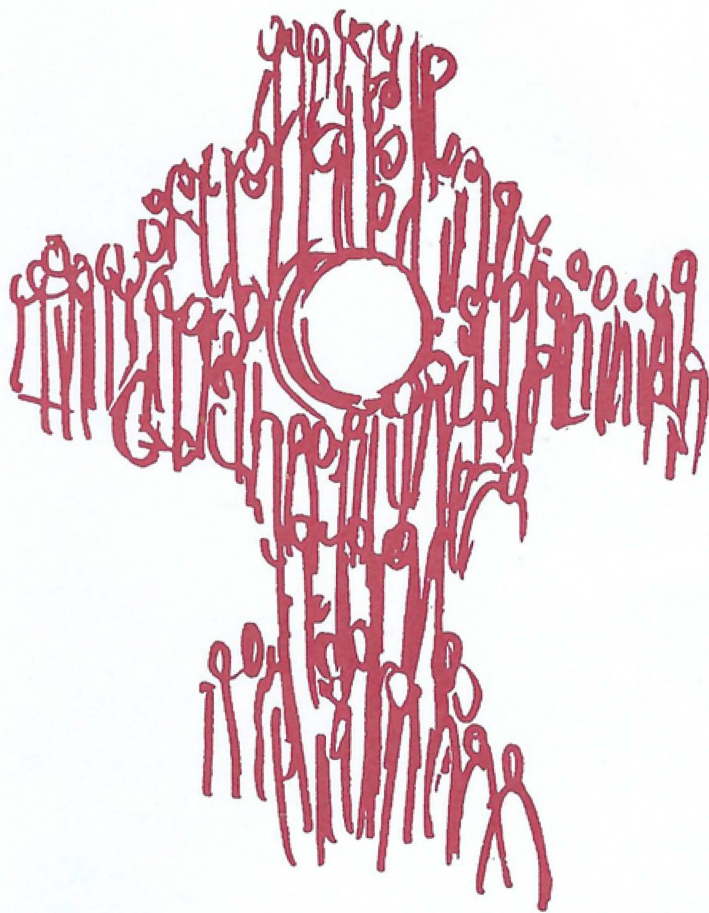
*An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality*



**THE** **WINE**  
**CELLAR**

February 1998, Number 9

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**Priestly People**

*The heart of Jesus  
is the wine cellar  
of the Blood of Christ.*

**St. Gaspar del Bufalo**

**THE  
WINE  
CELLAR**

***An Anthology of Precious Blood Spirituality***

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## On Being Priestly People

*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own, so that you may announce the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into God's wonderful light. I Peter 2, 9*

A couple of blocks from where I live is the Linda Hall Library. In no way connected with the University of Missouri Kansas City campus, it is an isolated and separate institution. The building is on a beautifully wooded hill and entirely fenced in gardens. On the rare occasions I drive that way, I have yet to notice any signs of human activity. This monument to the collection of scientific research books and materials throughout history is normally open only to membership. In 1973 the library dedicated a new wing and celebrated with an exhibit of rare books. Among the rare books was a copy from their collection of Nicolaus Copernicus' **De Revolutionibus Orbi**. The first printed edition was handed to him on his deathbed in 1543. Its simple unadorned cover is deceiving, for it is perhaps one of the most remarkable books every written. The revolution it precipitated was more than merely about the location of the earth in the cosmos. An intellectual and religious revolution was already sweeping Europe. In two more years, 1545, our Church would begin an internal revolution at the Council of Trent. Among many other moves, the Church first condemned Copernicus, and it maintained this condemnation in force until 1835. In the face of proofs by the scientific community, the Church insisted that the earth was the center of the universe and everything rotated around our orb. The Church has never been known to rush into things.



Similarly, buried among the documents of Vatican II, and now almost forgotten and some would wish everyone would forget, is the *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People*. Along with *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church (Lumen Gentium)*, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, and *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation (Dei Verbum)*, this decree precipitates a remarkable revolution. It bears rereading now 33 years later. From a fixed center of activity, the Church shifted to understand itself no longer in terms of a pyramid with the pope at the top; page 48 of my edition of the **Baltimore Catechism** has a great picture of this vision of things. There is no mention of the apostolate in this book. Rather than participants in the Church, the laity were viewed as objects of the Church's work.

The *Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People* begins by announcing this revolution in its first sentence: "In its desire to intensify the apostolic activity of the People of God . . ." Note that it no longer has the attitude of an apostolate "to" the people of God. The apostolate is "of the People of God."

The apostolate is defined as the "spread of the reign of Christ over all the earth for the glory of God the Father, to make all partakers in redemption and salvation, and through them to establish the right relationship of the entire world to Christ. Every activity of the Mystical Body with this in view goes by the name of *apostolate*; the Church exercises it through all its members, though in various ways." And again, ". . . the laity are made to share in the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ . . ." (§2) "From the fact of their union with Christ the head flows the lay right and duty to be apostles." (§3) The apostolate of the entire Church is the sanctification and evangelization of the world; it is an outward oriented activity. Nor is "Father" any longer the only one who does the blessings, but there are times and places in which only the laity can properly be the ones to bring sanctification and blessing out of their unique gifts and circumstances. Thus the prophecies of Jeremiah's new covenant are finally coming to being in our time. (Jeremiah 31)

In this vision of the Church, it is baptism which consecrates the person for the apostolate. (*Lumen Gentium* 10 and *Decree on the*



*Apostolate of the Laity* 3) The former vision of baptism as found in the **Baltimore Catechism** focused almost exclusively on concepts of original sin.

Just 35 years ago, I remember that my parish life was essentially managed by the pastor and a very small group of men who met annually over drinks and steaks to decide the needs of the parish. Today a pastoral staff of lay women and men including the pastor administrate parish life, often seeing themselves as executing the direction given by a pastoral council. The word and idea of ministry was unheard of 35 years ago. In a very short time, a revolution has taken place.

St. Gaspar and Bl. Maria lived in similar times of economic, political, and ecclesial revolution. The Napoleonic wars, the rise of democracies like the United States, the dawn of the industrial revolution, and the age of enlightenment challenged and forced people to live and relate to one another and the world in new ways. Their adaptation of religious life to meet the needs of their times was a gift from the Holy Spirit to them to serve the Church in a new way. Gaspar's charism was to know that it was his to found a society of apostolic life, a new way of living in community and preaching the gospel in the world. Part of the novelty for Gaspar was his collaboration with the laity. When he was ordained in 1808 he belonged to almost twenty different spiritual and apostolic organizations, many comprised of both lay and clerical members, dedicated to preaching missions. His revolution of ideas was not always accepted. The new relationship of lay and clerical members didn't last long before they went separate ways, but they are a major part of our history and our life.

So it shouldn't surprise us that this charism of the apostolate that comes to us in Gaspar's lineage should continue to be at work among us and attract us in a special way to seek new, collaborative relationships with the laity as companions, associates, Union of the Blood of Christ members, and in parish life. Part of the concept of a society of apostolic life, in distinction from being a fully vowed institute of religious life, precisely gives us this freedom and orientation of our lives and work. Our perfection of life takes place in the apostolate, rooted and supported by community, but clearly *in* the apostolate. It is the Holy Spirit who is urging us in this direction. It is this charism that our Church and world needs at this



unique moment in history. So this issue is about priestly people as part of our precious blood spirituality.

First, we have a guest author with whom many are already familiar; Richard Rohr permits us to reprint an article about an interesting concept of traditional and non-traditional priesthood. He takes the knife to some of our previously held ideas. Tom Welk, CPPS writes about the priestly people in the HIV-AIDS hospice ministry, bringing to these people the good news of the love of God and Church for them and the redemptive sanctification of their lives. Gerri Downs reflects upon the changes she has witnessed in a Church in which she grew up. Her own mission preaching provides her a way to invite others to be a priestly people. Jim Urbanic reflects on seventeen years of parish life in St. Joseph, during which time he experienced the changes of Vatican II being implemented; he envisions the great distance we all have yet to go to make this a reality.

In the center fold, we offer a drawing by candidate Sam D'Angelo of a recipe for prayer by St. Gaspar. The actual concoction, if you could gather these ingredients, would pack quite a wallop. Another such recipe I noted was from Brunner in the museum at Maria Stein, OH which I made for myself this Fall after a visit to the Wild Oats Market. Just let me note that they both include wormwood, a hallucinogenic. Enjoy the poetry by Pauline Grady, CPPS and Benita Volk, CPPS. Jeanette Kolberg shares a precious blood prayer for women.

In our communities' charisms, we have rare and challenging treasures, but they are also a threat to some. Like Copernicus' revolutionary book, it would be best kept safely behind a guarded fence, in a perfect hilltop garden in a library. Even if we were to try this, the Holy Spirit would burst forth and sweep us aside like a mighty wind. Our role in the renewal of Church is to proclaim the good news about the power of baptism, which makes everyone in Christ priest, prophet, and sovereign. In this issue we can reflect on these things together.





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**GERRY DOWNS** writes as a companion of the Pacific Province with the group meeting in San Leandro, CA. She has a Doctor of Ministry in applied ministry from the Graduate Theological Foundation in Donaldson, IN.

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# Discovering the Archetypal Priests

By Richard Rohr, OFM

**A**ll my life I have been trying to comprehend the core meaning of priesthood. What makes one a priest? Is it a certain education, a public ordination, a private career choice? What is the essential element in the most traditional image of priesthood in different religions and cultures? As one way through our present controversy, I am going to try to describe the “archetypal priest.” Maybe we are looking for the wrong thing. Maybe we are propping up the problem. Maybe we already have the real thing: “For you are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.” (Hebrews 2, 9)

## More Faithful Seeing

I cannot hope to make this a scholarly or footnoted text to prove my point. That is the gift of others and will surely be done in the very near future. Our present crisis of ministry is forcing us to a deeper and more faithful seeing, because priesthood is absolutely essential to culture and its survival. We must have, we always have had, we do have now, and we will continue to have priests. But formal ordination is a separate matter. We must recognize, honor and make good use of the priesthood that is clearly among us.

As I examine the cross-cultural images of priest, I find several constant patterns. Priests are always *agents of transformation*. They are

*Priests are always  
agents of transformation.*

always saying “things are not what they seem.” They are always “transubstantiating: and pointing to the “more” of things. “It looks like this, but it is really that!” I am not sure if they are transmuting the substance of things as much as transmuting our seeing of what is already there but what we refuse to see: God hidden in all things. The Catholic insistence on “real presence” was probably much more necessary and orthodox than either Catholics or Protestants ever imagined! We just framed the whole argument in an utterly inadequate way (about which we could be “right” or “wrong”) instead of simply seeing or not seeing the whole. To see the whole is always to kiss the Holy.

The other quality consistently found in the image of priesthood is that the priest is always raising the knife, stripping away the disguise, naming the illusion and throwing us into the fire. By contemporary humanistic standards, it is

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and throwing us into the fire.*



not at all a positive image, which might partly explain why the role has more easily been carried by males up to now. We seem to have wanted to reserve to women their perceived roles as nurturer, healer, consoler, the one who picks up the pieces offstage. She does not stand with bold proclamation behind the altar, but with revelatory and reconciling actions that make the knife a truly double-edged sword.

I see women (and men) do this again and again — if they are archetypal priests. We must at least ask if there is not an essential and good tension here. (I am not in principle against the ordination of women. Probably the contrary) But it is difficult in the practical order both to proclaim the paschal mystery (life-only-through-death) and at the same time counsel, discern, wait, listen, and say, “Not this but that, not now but later, not him but you.” I know as a preacher that as soon as I start nuancing, qualifying, delaying and applying, the scary revelation is always lost. Yet someone else must do it, or the message will only be paralyzed or dismissed. When priesthood no longer throws us into the fire, what is going on might be career counseling or esoteric costuming, but it is no longer priesthood. That is always the announcing of an alternative universe, a bigger world where heaven and earth are one. The price for the bigger world is always the death of the smaller one. No

*No wonder  
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to the image of blood.*

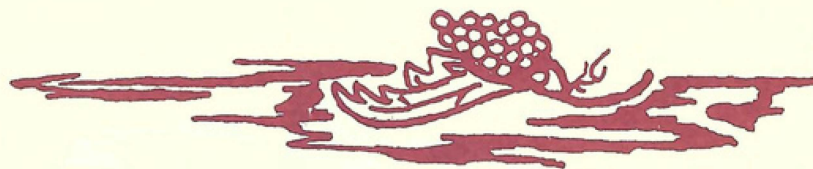
wonder archetypal priesthood is so tied to the image of blood. But blood in a “safe” and sacred context, wounds of significance that reveal the patterns of transformation, not just suffering for the sake of suffering or “sacrifice” that placates an unhappy god. This is perhaps where the ordained priesthood has made its greatest mistakes, and precisely by separating itself from depth, wisdom, the feminine.





## Archetypal and Ordained

**P**riesthood without depth, prayer, interior journey always becomes mechanical, linear, problem-solving, the spinning of prayer wheels for the sake of false security — and job security for the priest himself. Not really malicious, just stupid and self-defeating. No wonder so many people are disenchanted with institutional religion and longing for its feminine side. Institutional religion seems always to fall back on questions of management, control, group purity and who is in and who is out. The soul remains largely untouched. Society itself then remains managerial, controlling and scapegoating because no other way was ever shown! The corporate model of religion can get along quite well without any real transformation or learning how to live in the fire. As others have said, there are two common doorways into the world of religion. One doorway has “Salvation” written on it; the other has “Discussions about Salvation” written on it. You can be ordained a priest or even a bishop, living a whole life in the discussion room and, even worse, merely trying to control the discussion. You can avoid the messenger your whole life by making orthodox distinctions about the message. The world is so tired of us talking about Jesus. Now we must *be* Jesus. As Francis told his friars, “Preach the Gospel at all times, and when necessary use words.” St. Francis did not need ordained priesthood (nor did he seek it). He knew and exemplified the deeper power of archetypal priesthood. Archetypal priesthood is clearly not always the same as the ordained priesthood, although it is especially effective when the two do correspond, which is why women rightly seek them *both*. Witness the immense influence of the lives and recent death of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin and the Rev. Henri Nouwen. They were both archetypal and ordained priests.





## The Contemporary Dilemma

If this clarification is at all true, we must then move on to some practical and pastoral guidance. If this distinction has any truth to it, we can now frame the contemporary dilemma in new and more helpful ways:

1) It is possible to be ordained and not be a de facto agent of transformation or a guide through the mysteries for any real persons.

2) It is also possible to be an agent of transformation and a guide through the paschal mysteries without being ordained. This is so self-evident that one wonders why so many (in the priesthood and seeking the priesthood) seem to seek the title rather than the practice.

3) It is possible that ordination within the present managerial model of church might actually lessen one's operative ability as a real agent of transformation. Catholic priests are facing this as they are forced to resolve more and more pastoral issues through what we call "the internal forum."

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(Needing to maintain public official stances for the sake of order and correctness, while knowing it is not really true or helpful in this concrete case, takes maturity and courage.)

4) There are people seeking ordination who have shown no previous desire or ability actually to transmute anybody's death into any kind of life (young men, for example, looking for role and status, women merely pushing a power agenda, priests wanting to be bishops who have never led a single person to the mystery of Jesus.)

5) Instead of putting all of our energy into getting this or that group (or ourselves) ordained, we need to recognize, honor and support the many faces of archetypal priesthood that are already at hand



and so desperately needed at every level of life today: holy counselors, earthtenders, prayer ministers, hospital visitors, wise teachers, faith-sharers, sacred story tellers, alternative hearers, de facto mediators and reconcilers, ritual elders, religious artists, liturgical and healing musicians, proclaimers of forgiveness, centered and grounding people, joy-filled survivors, to name only a few.

6) Ordained priesthood will not have a new form and face until we explore and explode the effective power of archetypal priesthood. This is surely happening in the present time but might not continue if the ordained priesthood is too quickly propped up with married men, insecure young men, those who are just willing to be celibate, or priests imported from third world countries.

7) Much of our dissatisfaction with the present priesthood is that many priests are not archetypal priest in any sense. We have found out that mere ordination does not substitute for the "baptism in the Spirit" that gives one something real to talk about.

8) We all need to examine whether we are making use of the skills of archetypal priesthood rather than merely pushing a particular group for formal ordination. The pain and dying on this earth are too great for us to limit ourselves to managerial questions. We need the priesthood of Jesus to transform our death, our blaming, our sadness, our despair, our church and even our questions.

9) To the degree that the ordained priesthood can tap the connection to its archetypal foundations instead of merely trying to shore itself up with louder orthodoxies, it will discover its true authority and value. The inherent truth of the lived mysteries is always its own authority and does not need miter or stole, it is not very compelling truth. In their maturity, Bernardin and Nouwen needed not title or vestment for their authority.

10) Clearly many women and laymen are already wearing the mantle of what I am calling archetypal priesthood. They need to trust and offer this gift at every level of life. To waste too much time fighting for the ordained form would likely indicate that they are not themselves an instrument of transformation and deliverance (which always has a secret and subversive character to it precisely because it is "without power").



11) When the church broadens and deepens its comprehension of priesthood, which the Spirit has made inevitable, we are going to have a school of well prepared archetypal priests ready for ordination. We probably don't deserve it beforehand.

12) Crucial to this whole process is the climate in which the priest best mediates his transformative energy. If he has too much power, he will only fix and control; but if he is in the realm of powerlessness, he will learn to transmute and transform. I consider this central and essential.

Let me end by pointing out something that is not politically correct or easy for some of us to hear (am I wielding the knife?). Although I support and have signed the "Catholic Referendum," I must also point out that several honored and mainline Protestant traditions like the Presbyterians have already made every one of these changes that some Catholics think will be our salvation (selection of leaders, married and women priests, more tolerant attitudes, etc.), and they would be the first to tell you that it has not resolved the underlying malaise of faith and Spirit. They are as torn by contentious and rivalrous factions as we are, and are losing members even more rapidly. We must be honest about this. The issues of spirituality are never resolved by recourse to unseemly anger, ego-serving agendas, or political maneuverings in the way of the system. "This is not to happen among you." (Luke 22,26)

The enduring language of priesthood is the language of transformation of substance. The enduring transformative images of priesthood will always be the knife, the blood, the fire. The one with power only fixes, but the one without power must transform.

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## For Reflection

Have you personally experienced the work and presence of an archetypal priest in your life such as Richard Rohr describes?

In what way are the priestly people of Vatican II now becoming themselves agents of transformation?

What do you think about the strong image of “raising the knife?” How do images of “blood” and “fire” resonate with precious blood spirituality?

What would be your definition of priest? Which of his ten recommendations would be easiest and hardest to implement?

---

*Reprinted with permission of Richard Rohr, OFM and America Press, Inc., 106 West 56<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10019.*



# Surrender

By Pauline Grady, ASC

Devour me, God!  
Bulge this empty bowl,  
Flood it with Allness,  
Make it white ash,  
Shaped to Your enduring presence.



*Graphic by Dien Truong, CPPS*

# Prayer for Women in Church

By Jeanette Kolberg

Creator God, we bring to you  
the depths of life experienced  
in the endlessly moving cycles of our heart and soul.

We humbly seek respect and acceptance  
within the community of this, our church.

We present to you  
the strength and gentle grace  
of the feminine soul,  
and the life-giving forces of our body.

We offer to all in community  
our heart and hand in holy work,  
to enrich and nourish church.

Let us stand always  
in the courageous blood of our sisters,  
Mary Joel, Shirley, Kathleen, Agnes and Barbara Ann.  
In their loving spirit and holy memory  
lead us to be missionary  
to one another.

Living in your vision, Creator God,  
feed us with your Holy Body and Precious Blood.  
Gift us with the sense of quiet patience  
and strength of knowing,  
that we are all one in community,  
in peace and justice,  
Amen.



# RESPONDING TO SOME OF THE FACES OF AIDS

By Thomas Welk, CPPS

**O**n December 24, 1987 the U.S. Catholic Conference Administrative Board issued the document *The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response*. Over the course of the last 15 years in my hospice work I have seen many of these faces. The physical aspects of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) disease process does not distinguish between one face and another.

But it is not the physical disease process that frequently causes the greatest suffering. It is the psychosocial and spiritual issues that are the most difficult and challenging. In providing pastoral care to many of

these persons with AIDS, I have found that it is those with the same sex attraction who have the most difficult time and indicate the most need for spiritual support. Many of their concerns go beyond the immediate concern of AIDS.

I believe it is to this "face" of AIDS that we must especially respond. However, unfortunately, it is a response frequently not forthcoming.

## Why We Respond

**W**hy? The vote in June 1997 by the Southern Baptists at their conference in Dallas, Texas to boycott the Disney Company is only one recent indication of why we do not respond compassionately to members of the gay and lesbian community who have AIDS. What the Southern Baptists were particularly upset about was the *friendly* policies that Disney supposedly has toward homosexuals. This is only one small illustration of the homophobia in our society.

In the Catholic Church we have had a mixed history in our response to those who have a same sex attraction. Official Church pronouncements try to walk a fine line between statements about this being an *objective* disorder and urging a compassionate pastoral response to these individuals. Too often statements are on the condemnatory side of the line other than a compassionate Gospel response.

Again, the question of "Why?" My own sense is that this reluctance is due to a lack of coming to grips with the wider question of sexuality. In the series of articles I wrote for our *Kansas City Province Newsletter* in 1989-90 I explored some of these questions, particularly as they relate to those with same sex orientation.

In this article I will explore the question in its wider dimensions. I believe it is the failure to

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come to terms with the wider question of sexuality that has caused the Church not to respond in an adequate way to one of the faces of AIDS: those of a same sex orientation.

## Our History of Denial

**T**he history of Catholic Christianity from its early days until the present points up this struggle. The heresy of gnosticism was present at the very beginning of the Christian community. This teaching held that the created order (especially sexuality) was evil. The basic tenets of Gnosticism logically led it to deny the humanity of Jesus.

In the second and third centuries gnosticism found further expression in docetism, which held that human flesh (sexuality) is evil. The docetists maintained that Christ only *appeared* (from Greek, *dokein*) to be human. He could not really be imbued with human sexuality. The followers of Mani (Manichaeans), originating in Mesopotamia in the third and fourth centuries, observed this same teaching. Since the flesh/sex was evil the *Elect* lived a life free of all sexual contact.

As we move along in the history of the Church we find the Cathari (Albigensians) in southern France and northern Italy pursuing these same types of beliefs in the twelfth through the fourteenth centuries. They also saw matter as evil, and thereby rejected all sexual activity.

Those who followed the teachings of the French priest Cornelius Jansen (Jansenism) in the 17th century throughout the Low Countries and northern France (spreading to the Hapsburg lands and Italy in the 18th century) contended that human nature is bad. That being the case, the flesh must be disciplined. Physical pleasure could not be engaged in. Jansenism became known for its strict ascetic practices. CPPS historians might recognize some influences on our community here.





## Gender, Orientation, and Expression

**I** trace this historical path to illustrate what has brought the Church to its present position. But I believe it is more important, however, for us to engage in a brief reflection of where we need to go in a resolution of this difficult challenge. I see this challenge of establishing a sound sexual morality in a threefold way: gender, orientation and expression. Each of these aspects has its own specific challenges.

At first glance it does not appear that there is a question about the rightness/wrongness, morality/immorality, good/bad about gender (being male or female). We did not choose our gender, so we can't be judged on the basis of being a woman or a man, right? Unfortunately, women experience only too keenly the negative judgements leveled against them simply because of being a woman. The debate continues to rage loudly and hotly in the Catholic Church about the role (or lack of it) of women other than in positions without power or authority. Many women are left with the impression of not only being considered inferior, but also *bad*.

Much has been said and written about this. Much more needs to be said and written, and, more importantly, much more needs to happen so that women will no longer be seen as inferior simply because they happen to be born of the female gender. I will leave this discussion for another time.

The next level of sexuality deals with orientation: heterosexual (sexual attraction to the opposite gender) or homosexual (sexual attraction to the same gender). We readily agree that no one chooses to be born female or male. The agreement is dramatically lessened when the origin of same gender sexual orientation is considered. In many circles this attraction is still referred to as a *preference*, in effect maintaining that it is consciously chosen. It is for this reason that in some circles in the Catholic Church same gender sexual orientation is considered an *objective disorder*.

A variety of conclusions will be drawn from this, depending on the position taken on this question. Those who see it as a *choice* will see





individuals of a same sexual gender attraction as evil and sinful. This position would strongly contend that in no way could God have created people with a same sex attraction. Since it is something chosen, it can therefore also be *unchosen*, that is, one can be cured of this *disorder*.

Those who see same sex gender attraction as an orientation maintain that it was not something consciously chosen, but part of their creation. Just as they did not choose to be female or male, so they did not choose to be homo-or heterosexual. They are not to be judged as evil/good based simply on orientation.

Related to this question of same sex gender attraction is the widely debated question of etiology. Gender determination is easily explained physically. The Y chromosome carries the genetic code. Can sexual orientation be explained in the same way? Is it part of one's genetic code? As part of the Human Genome Project and other genetic research, various theories have been put forth. None have been conclusively proven.

It is the third aspect of the sexuality question that is the most difficult: sexual expression. At least in its public pronouncements and teachings the Church has urged that people not be discriminated against simply because of gender or orientation. The gay or lesbian person must be treated with the same dignity as any other person.

In terms of sexual expression, however, the Church's hierarchy has ruled that only heterosexual activity can be considered objectively moral. Homosexual activity is seen as always objectively immoral. There is not universal consensus on this teaching. According to the **Encyclopedia of Catholicism**, there are several other lines of opinion: "Some argue that homosexuality is another way of being human; therefore, homosexual activity is natural and good." Another position contends that heterosexual relationships may be the ideal, but the ideal might not be possible for all, and that homosexual activity is morally

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permissible, but lacking in fullness. A third position would challenge the position that heterosexual activity is the norm and would evaluate homosexual activity in the same way as heterosexual activity, namely by using relational criteria.

## We Are the Face of AIDS

**T**he hierarchical magisterium has on several occasions rejected all three of the above positions, but at the same time has called on pastors to provide compassionate pastoral care. (Encyclopedia of Catholicism, page 638)

So we come to the most important question of all: How do we provide effective pastoral care for those challenged by AIDS? What kind of *face* do we present? It is a question that only each one of us can answer personally.

My experience has been that a position of judgement and condemnation serves no purpose. To see AIDS as a punishment for *sinful/immoral/unnatural* homosexual activity will only do further immeasurable harm. (By the way, HIV today is more likely to be transmitted through heterosexual activity.) It is the face of compassion and understanding that will provide the most effective ministry.

Providing this climate of support for the person living with AIDS (PLWA) makes it possible to move from superficial judgments that often are erroneous to a deeper understanding of the challenging spiritual questions confronting each of us. Frequently, because so much has been stripped away because of the HIV disease process, the PLWA has become more profoundly spiritual, addressing the basic questions of existence.

In my involvement with many of these individuals I have often stood in awe of the depth of life and living still present, even as physicalness is ebbing away. As such, then, I have found myself benefitting immensely from my interaction with those seeking assistance during their illness. Indeed, it becomes a ministry *with* rather a ministry *to*. This cannot happen without a stance of understanding and compassion.





## For Reflection

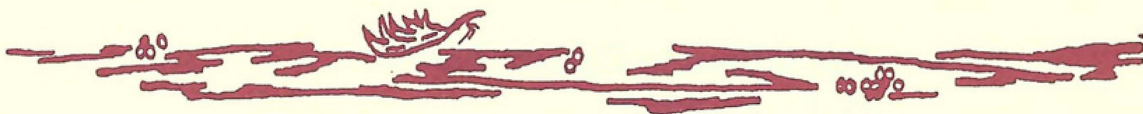
What does Tom mean by “the face of AIDS?” have you had any direct experience with a person with HIV/AIDS?

Why do you think we have failed to come to grips with diseases like HIV? What do you think of Tom’s connection between our failure to come to grips with HIV and our human sexuality?

Tom alludes to our CPPS connections to Jansenism. Do you know the history of Gaspar del Bufalo and his struggles against the Jansenism of his time? How does Jansenism manifest itself today? Why has the Church condemned the heresy of Jansenism?

For yourself, what are the challenges of understanding gender, orientation, and expression of sexuality?

Tom leaves us with these two important questions as a priestly people: “How do we provide effective pastoral care for those challenged by AIDS? What kind of *face* do we present?”



# For Spiritual Health...

*On June 19, 1825, Gaspar del Bufalo wrote a letter to the missionary priest Pietro Spina, CPPS. Only a fragment of the letter remains, but the fragment consists of an unusual recipe for spiritual health. Curiously enough each of the botanicals mentioned does have a specific homeopathic, herbal use. He surely must have been speaking figuratively when he sent this letter to enliven the heart of his friend. The greeting and opening part of the letter are missing, so we begin in the middle.*

With regard to medicine, . . . Here then is a prescription which you, in your charity, can give to others . . . Take:

the root of faith  
the leaves of hope  
the rose of charity  
the violet of humility  
the lily of purity  
the wormwood of contrition  
the myrrh of mortification  
the wood of the holy cross

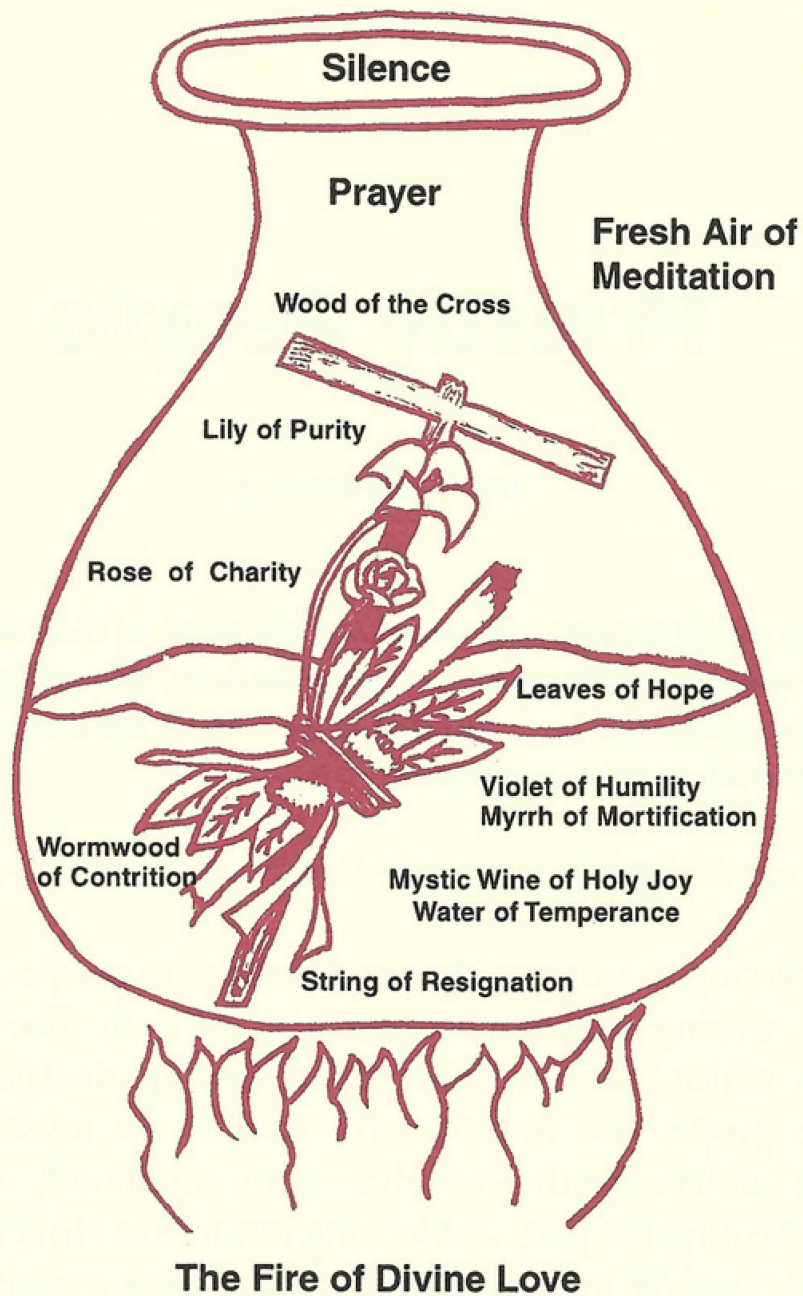
Tie them all together into a bouquet with the string of resignation. Put them on to boil over the fire of divine love in the vessel of prayer, together with the mystic wine of holy joy and the mineral water of temperance, all securely covered with the lid of silence; put it on in the fresh air of meditation and then take a cup of it in the morning and in the evening, and you will enjoy spiritual health.

Oh my beloved, may Jesus be our love. In his divine heart, I am

**Suo infimo in Christo Servo**  
G. C. del Bufalo  
Mis. Ap.

House of Frosinone, June 19, 1825





*Graphic by Sam D'Angelo*

# Priestly People

By Gerry Downs

*To intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God, the most holy synod earnestly addresses itself to the laity, whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church has already been dealt with in other documents.*

From the introduction to the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

**T**rying to put my ideas and feelings in perspective while writing this piece has been a bit difficult. The church of which I am a member today, naming the laity as those “whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church” differs greatly from that of my childhood, and I find myself savoring the past, and looking toward the challenge to live my Catholic faith in ways not imagined in days gone by.

When I was a little girl, I remember going with my mother to our parish church once a week to help clean. The Altar Society ladies came with brooms and mops, dust cloths, and Murphy’s



Oil Soap and gave the place a good going over. As a small child, I was in awe of the huge worship space and never ceased to be enthralled by the various closets, nooks, and crannies of the places “behind the scenes,” so to speak.

The main altar, against the back wall of the sanctuary, had below it a depiction of the Last Supper. I was fascinated by the intricacies of this representation, because the figures were three-dimensional and because of the detail in the faces and hands. I was just the right size to dust the crevasses of the figures, and such activity kept me out of my mother’s hair as she and the others went about the business of cleaning the church, washing and ironing the linens, removing the wax from candelabra, and other tasks which the laity of the time were permitted to perform.

## The Open Window of Vatican II

**I**n those days, long before Vatican II, women wore head coverings and men dressed in coat and tie to attend Mass. I learned that the laity were depended on to engage in the Altar Society ladies, fund-raising, running the parish summer Lawn Fete, always held on the black top between the church and hall, the parish lacking a lawn, and other like activities. These were deemed to be the “proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church” at that time.

For the most part, the laity had no idea that they were a part of the ministry of the church. The words *ministry* or *minister* were mostly understood to mean the local Protestant clergy, so it was a word infrequently used in Catholic circles. Laity were rarely encouraged to participate in areas that were understood to be the purview of the clergy, i.e., leading prayer, counseling, making any decisions affecting the parish money or property, and anything to do with liturgy. Marriage preparation, such as it was, was done by Father in the rectory parlor. Many charitable and fraternal parish groups were made up of men only and did their work and prayer under the close supervision of the parish pastor. The ministry of the church was undertaken by the



priests and sisters, in their proper roles as caretakers of souls and educators of its children.

As a child of the late 1930's, I have fond and wonderful, awe-filled remembrances of my parish church and school in my growing-up years, memories that I cherish and hold dear. I loved the *Tenebrae* services of Good Friday and the draping of the statues during Lent. I participated in the May Crownings and other processions and celebrations willingly and with enthusiasm. I was confirmed at age 11 while in the sixth grade and had no real idea of what that ceremony entailed or required. Years later, as a parent rearing my own children, the strength of the sacrament "kicked-in" so to speak. I was a member of the Young Ladies Sodality in high school and was encouraged to take Mary as my model of life.

I am grateful for the basics of my Catholic faith learned in those years. I am also grateful for my Southern Baptist father, who was an example to me of what a true Christian was meant to be. I learned tolerance and patience from Dad, though the tolerance lessons were learned more easily than the patience ones, and it was at his feet that I learned many of the answers in the **Baltimore Catechism**.

## The Invitation to Share the Apostolate

I love to remember the best of the old days, but I also know that "that was then and this is now." The worst of the old days are happily gone and I know, very really, that I am a member of a very different church today. The invitation "to intensify the apostolic activity of the people of God," comes from a Church which recognizes that an educated and informed laity, "whose proper and indispensable role in the mission of the Church," is a gift from the Holy Spirit. That Spirit calls us all, lay and ordained, those in vows of marriage, those in religious communities as well as those who are single and divorced, to be involved in the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The problem is that many of the laity still think that the Church is in the business of "saving my soul" rather than our taking responsibility for our own spiritual lives. For many of us, however, taking the responsibility for our own salvation in Jesus Christ, has been a challenge well met by our participation in the ministries open to us.



*Our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified. With a constantly increasing population, continual progress in science and technology, and closer interpersonal relationships, the areas for the lay apostolate have been immensely widened particularly in fields that have been for the most part open to the clergy alone. These factors have also occasioned new problems which demand their expert attention and study. This apostolate becomes more imperative in view of the fact that many areas of human life have become increasingly autonomous. This is as it should be, but it sometimes involves a degree of departure from the ethical and religious order and a serious danger to Christian life. Besides, in many places where priests are very few or, in some instances, deprived of due freedom for priestly work, the Church could scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity.*

From the introduction to the  
*Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*

At this point in my life, I understand my responsibilities to my church and the People of God in a very different way than I did as a child. I am aware that I have gifts and talents to share with my brothers and sisters who also believe they are called to bring Jesus with them wherever they go and who are willing to stand and be counted as ambassadors for Christ. I often have doubts as to my effectiveness as a minister, but I also know that the call to make Jesus known is my responsibility as a baptized and committed Christian. My lived experience and the stories of how and where I find God in the growth and changes of my life are the

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basis of what I can share with others, so that they may be able to find the presence of God in their own. Telling one's own story is a powerful witness, often evoking from listeners an identification with the story and arousing a desire to share their own. For many it is a moment in which they realize that God has been present in their lives and experience, in a way they had not understood before.

Many changes have occurred in my life as a result of parenthood, divorce, theological education, and realization of my place as a woman in the Catholic church. In my wildest dreaming as a child dusting the altar in my parish church, I could never have imagined what my ministry would be like today. And yet, it is that very change and growth and those dreams that in “. . . our own times require of the laity no less zeal: in fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be broadened and intensified.”

## The Precious Blood Community Invitation

**A**s a Companion of the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, I have been invited to greater participation in the life of the community to share in its missionary activity. For many who are companions, membership lends a greater emphasis on the ministries they already exercise and encourages participation in others. Companions are engaged in a myriad of ministries as testimony of their commitment to the Church and to the precious blood community.

Because of an invitation to expanded ministry by an incorporated member of the Society, I am associated with a unique, nation-wide organization providing preachers who present parish missions in Catholic parishes. Even the fact that lay people can be involved in the real ongoing work of a religious community is a new revelation to many. Many other Catholics find themselves in areas of ministry and outreach in the church, and are modeling Christian behavior.

As a lay preacher giving parish missions, I have traveled extensively in the United States. Some of the parishes in which I have preached are very conservative, and some are not. Some are liberal and some are not, but almost all of the people I meet in the pews are people of faith and dedication. They are Catholic Christians who are in search of ways to follow the call of their baptism to be “priest, prophet, and king.”



When asked about the health of the Church in the United States, my answer is that I find the folks in the pews alive and well, willing and able to take on their rightful roles as evangelizers, ministers to the sick, teachers, preachers, and in some cases, administrators of parishes in small towns and in large cities. More and more, lay Catholics are taking their places in positions in diocesan offices and parish leadership.

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king.”*

However, one of the obstacles facing laity is that many of our priest brothers have no experience in being truly collaborative. The concept of team for most men is one in which he serves as captain, directing other's tasks, and overseeing every aspect of those tasks. The concept of team for most women is one in which all are equal and able to function as individuals united in a common undertaking. This difference in concept is important to understand and is one of the reasons for the reality that many pastors have difficulty in delegating tasks to the laity. We lay people need patience and love to help them to know and understand that delegated authority is shared service, not diminished power.

One of the aspects of the missions I preach is the involvement of laity in the rituals and blessings called for in the mission sessions. This is one of the most rewarding areas of my ministry. To watch the women and men of the parish team minister to their brothers and sisters in Christ is a beautiful and wonderful witness. It makes the reality of ministry, of “hands on” presence to the members of the community, a viable and effective interaction for all.

In one of the first missions I preached, almost five years ago, the people on the mission team were some of the most enthusiastic folks I had ever met. We spent a day in reflection and preparation for the mission and they were open, willing to share, and their stories of faith were touching and true. These people were capable and competent, holding down responsible jobs, willing to tell their faith stories and



facilitate growth in the community. Ideas for putting the message of the mission to practical use and implementing follow-up programs were free-flowing from these good people, who understood what was being asked of them. Yet their pastor, a good and holy man, really had no idea how to assimilate them into the mission of the parish.



## The Role of the Laity

**U**ntil the laity are seen by more of the clergy as co-equals, contributing to the growth and ministry of the church, many will feel stifled and inhibited, misunderstood, and ignored. My experience of the priests with whom I preach the parish missions, leads me to believe that most priests are able and capable of the kind of collaboration that laity seek in the church. It has happened during the course of the missions that I preach, that the parish priest has invited priest colleagues and the mission priest to dinner and not invited the woman preacher or has ignored the team concept in other ways. In those instances, my mission priest partner has refused to attend the dinner and insisted on my full participation in whatever way necessary to present effectively the mission. I value the witness and stance of the men who do understand the role of the laity, and give it their support.

This is not to say that lay persons are not valued by the church, but only to say that their gifts and talents need to be more readily recognized and accepted as complements to those of the clergy. Most of the people I know personally who are involved in active ministry have no desire to become priests or vowed religious.

We realize that we are called to our state in life just as clearly as any one in orders or religious vows. Our desire is to be of service, according to the blessings God has given us to be used for the greater good of the Christian community. Broader invitations, kind acceptance, recognition of competence, and letting go of fear must happen for many in the church before lay persons can fully answer the call of the Church that can “. . . scarcely exist and function without the activity of the laity.”



## Let the Many Ministries Flourish

*In the celebration of Mass the faithful are a holy people, a people God has made his own, a royal priesthood: they give thanks to the Father and offer the victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him and learn to offer themselves.*

From the Instruction of the Roman Missal

**M**any of the faithful Catholic laity I meet in my travels are engaged in ministry of some kind in their local parishes, and some on a diocesan level. I have met directors of Catholic Charities, and maintenance persons, pastoral associates and cooks, lay parish administrators and parish secretaries. All these people know that what they are about is ministry, caring for the people of God in the best way they can, offering service and support to all. They are in paid positions and also are volunteers, giving their gifts and talents for the building up of the reign of God. These folks take seriously the call to service and ministry to the Church. Many have educated themselves to take on responsibilities that are new to the arena of the laity. They are willing to spend treasure, time, and themselves in becoming equipped and educated for these tasks. Directors of religious education, youth ministers, directors of liturgy and music are for the most part laity who have engaged in study and practice to give their knowledge and time to the people in their parishes. Great strides have been made in opening some ministries to the laity, in which they have distinguished themselves and brought honor to the Church. This is a joy to see, and to know that many lay people truly understand their priestly and prophetic roles “a holy people, a people God has made his own,” and those who can “. . . offer the victim not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him and learn to offer themselves.”





## Dreams for the Next Millennium

I think we have come further as a church than many ever believed possible. Progress is apparent when looking at the structure of various dioceses and parishes across the country. More and more lay people are in positions of leadership, responsibility and authority. More will fill these roles out of necessity in the future.

Is there still progress to be made? Most certainly, but that progress needs to be a product of prayer and dialogue. Change will come, but it must come with openness and honesty, respect, willingness to dialogue, and the creation of opportunities in which to be collaborative and cooperative.

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to end of the ages."*

Gospel of Matthew 28, 18-20

The challenge to the laity is to be faithful, to make disciples of others, and to teach one another by witness of life, work, love, compassion, and the forgiveness of Jesus Christ in the world. Many respond to this challenge with enthusiasm and a desire to minister according to their gifts. Part of the challenge is to invite others into the work and prayer and to create opportunities for collaboration and service. I believe that the laity in today's church are more than ready for the challenge, and have come to the understanding that the spread of the Gospel is as much their work as those in paid positions of service to the Church.

*Part of the challenge is to invite others into the work and prayer and to create opportunities for collaboration and service.*



The joy that is present on the faces of those who participate in the rituals of prayer and anointing as part of the mission presentations is unmistakable. They have been blessed with the knowledge that they can effectively minister to others in ways not formerly thought to be open to them. And the joy and surprise on the faces of those ministered to by laying on of hands, hugs, and anointings testifies to the knowledge that we, as faithful Catholic Christians, have not only the duty, but the ability, the charisms, the authority, the thirst for healing and wholeness, to minister in the church and to one another.



## For Reflection

Tell the stories of the parish you grew up in. Recall the first implementations of Vatican II. Name the things that have changed.

Which ministries do you believe remain to be opened to full lay participation? What do you believe about issues surrounding ordination? Why do we use the terms *minister* and *ministries*?

What is at the focus of lay witness? How do the laity witness? Why is collaboration at the center of lay activity?

What are the joys and challenges and sadnesses you experience in your ministry?



# Desert Canyon

By Benita Volk, CPPS

The silence hums. A single tone  
Climbs a deaf wall of sandstone,  
Trembles at its own daring at the top  
Where violent blue and harsh red clash,  
Then pitches chromatically back  
To the canyon floor.

Death diamonds  
Coil secretly  
Beside the creosote.

A hawk circles,  
And one stone falls  
Down the cliff's red wall.

To this dry place that is not thirsty,  
This gaunt place that is not hungry,  
I offer bones from my soul  
And my parched blood  
Begins to sing.





# THE MOVEMENT OF PARISH LIFE

**By James Urbanic**

I was too excited and distracted to understand what was happening to me. Joe Bathke, CPPS in his big truck, was taking me to the Kansas City airport for flights to Chicago and Jerusalem. I was leaving St. Francis parish after almost eighteen years. I was pastor at the moment, and the week following, Michael Volkmer, CPPS would be replacing me. Yet the transition, seeing school children playing in the parking lot, making a few last minute calls, stopping in the church for a visit, and opening the mail did not seem like a moment of large transition. Only later did I realize I was gone.

I first went to St. Francis parish in St. Joseph, MO in December of 1970 to interview with Paul Sattler, CPPS on the possibility of spending my last semester as a seminarian (a deacon actually) in a parish, rather than stay in school. It was the first diaconate experience of the Kansas City Province. Nor did I think it would lead to an extended experience of three appointments, under three different provincials lasting over twenty-five years. After twenty-six years of priesthood I have been in only one parish.



## Priests and Laity: Changing Apostolates

**S**ome things strike me as important in looking at parish life. The first is that the role of priest is continuing to evolve. The evolution is both natural and contrived, a healthy one yet pushed by factors seen as part of American Catholic life. Priests work now with others and have less time alone. Priests find themselves as part of a team; they are not able to take care of all the tasks of parish life, but they are members of a team who now do so. This change has large consequences for priests. They are not the only ones called by God to preach, teach, administrate, or pray. They see themselves as different from the laity, yet called by God to be with them, to live with them, pray with them, lead them, be lead by them, nurture them, be nurtured by them, care for them, be cared for by them, and yet live a celibate life.

Both the role and the apostolate are changing. Years ago the youth were in Church, and there were no youth ministers (though CYO was popular). Now many of the kids are not there, and to assist them in the faith development we hire a youth minister. I use this argument partly as a devil's advocate to move us to see how specialized we are and how much more there is to do. The kids may have been there 30 years ago, but I am not sure they were really 'there.'

They came, but I wonder about the level of their faith; it was probably the faith of their parents.

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We in middle age tend to romanticize the past and say it was always better. I am not sure it was, and youth ministry helps me say that. We say we have always had a concern for our youth, but I am not sure they were really central to the Catholic faith, except in Catholic schools. Now we are paying for that mentality by seeing so many of them as adults



less concerned about their adult faith. The 18-30 age group has rarely mattered to us, and now we know this is a mistake.

Priests and pastors now find themselves supporting their staffs. This is almost a new ministry, since even the concept of staff is relatively new. A wave of new ministries calls for more than just a few clergy as the only ones seen as called by God. The pastor just can not handle all the tasks, but one task that has developed is supporting the staff. These people do look to the clergy for direction and support. We are not yet at the point, but close, where the staff and laity direct the parish and the clergy work for them.

## Membership or Attendance

**T**wo somewhat contradictory trends are evident in parish life: At the same time laity are more involved in parishes, there are less laity at the Sunday Eucharist. I do not think parishes are any smaller than they were, but they surely are smaller on Sundays. While contributions are up, for both parish and school, the percentage of giving is down. Catholic school enrollment is now nudging slightly up, while children attending the Sunday Eucharist with their family continues to decline.

Of course Catholics still use the Sunday attendance barometer as the main criterion for parish vitality. This can be misleading, but even to suggest other criteria can be dangerous. Catholics are still learning this new dance, how to give the priest and pastor their proper respect and yet beginning to take many of their tasks to themselves. Even though parishes are in very different places, some with shared responsibility and others with a jack-of-all-trades pastor who still wishes to do everything, the overall direction is unmistakable: baptism again, with Eucharist, become the primary sacrament of parish life, not orders.

We are on this new highway, but we are clearly not there yet *there*, meaning a bit more uniformity of parish life, theology, and a sense of true ownership of the parish by all, lay and clergy.



## Moving to a Lay Centered Church

**A**nother clear direction for me is the expansion of ecclesiology among both lay and clergy. Thirty years ago there was really only one theology of church; it was Rome-based, priest-centered, and black and white. Laity were generally not involved in decision making and were not asked to be. "Pray, pay, and obey" was the law of the land.

But now that situation has changed. The large fortress has opened its windows and doors, and a few underground passages have appeared along the way. Our theology of Church now includes those who dislike

*The boundaries  
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has widened.*

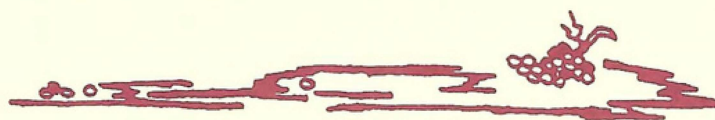
what has or is happening in the Church today, or those who only hesitantly go along with it, since "It is the Church." They go to mass, but they are angry or troubled (and all the emotions in between) about the Church of today. Along with

the traditional Catholics are those who enjoy the Church of today, are happy with its progress, and find both comfort and support from both Church and its staff.

Faith is alive and very much there. But, our Church also embraces those who think the parish should do more and be more. They push for more lay leaders, more involvement, more responses to issues of peace and justice, more putting Catholicism in the market place, and more involvement in society. The boundaries of those who are Catholic has widened.

## The Parish Is Like Life Itself

**T**here are many parts to parish life. It is complex. I am sure I did not see the complexity early in my life at St. Francis. At first I was the associate; I was just getting used to priesthood, and I always had someone else to fall back on if there were tension and problems.





The issues of a parish are the issues of life: faith, education, marriage, death, meaning in life, justice, prayer and worship, family, hope, money, sex, support, Catholicism, experiencing God, tradition, love, sin, birth, and baptism. Parish life is where these great pieces intersect. Their intersection can not always happen with concord and ease. Balancing these pieces, especially at St. Francis with over 3,000 people, was complex. There were a number of great people who kept me wondering about parish life.

Reverencing our past yet preparing for the future, being an American and being a Catholic, connection to Rome yet perhaps not fully, canon law versus pastoral necessity, and differences between the Catholic faith and other religious denominations, and what about the Jews. This is the 'big picture' of Church life, in which all our individual parishes somehow fit.

## Naming the Concerns and Issues

**O**ur parish is not much different than others; we are part of the picture I painted above. Many of our great strengths are also weaknesses: pride in parish can also be narrow and suggest a limited view, having money means some who could be generous need not be, having more than one priest suggests superiority over others who do not, a large school (425 children) may lead to haughtiness, and a large RCIA (about 20 per year) suggests raised expectations by those who come and those who stay.

I have also been struck by how little we know our people. In my first full summer as pastor at St. Francis (1988) I decided to give a six week presentation on the gospel of Mark. I ordered fifteen commentaries and set a one and a half hour time on consecutive Tuesday evenings. Sixty-five people came. Surprise. Yet a few years later a three week Advent series on the sacraments drew less than twenty-five. Yet we are a sacramental Church. Again, surprise. But underneath these examples is an unmistakable direction that Catholic adults want more education, more training in their faith, more spirituality, and more assistance with their lives.



Our Kansas City province companion program makes that clear. There is big discrepancy between the number of Catholics (growing) and the number of Catholics with real faith and action (diminishing). I am not sure of the total reasons for this, again complex. But I think some of them are cultural in nature: People will use the Church when they need it (seasonally, at Christmas, or as connected to family life, at baptisms, marriages, funerals), but they do not see it as important daily life.

Praying with others every week is less of a value than before. The Church stresses community; American life stresses the individual. The message of the Church is sometimes at odds with the direction of American thought: on abortion, on tithing, on faith in God over faith in people, and on sin and conversion of life. The message of Jesus, which should be the message of the Church but sometimes is not, is not always an easy one for people to hear. For some belonging to the Church is like belonging to a spiritual Elks Club or Moose Lodge; it is social, not religious, in nature. There is emphasis on community, on people, on doing, on events, and on tasks. For those people it is easy to be a Catholic. This group is growing.

But for people of faith, it is not easy. The message of Jesus is a challenge. Sunday Eucharist is the center of the week, and life flows from faith, not self. This group is not growing.

Some of our people can be very committed to the Catholic school, and pay the fees so their child will get a good education. But the Catholic part of the Catholic schools is the less important part. This has always amazed me: education, yes; faith, no.

### *The message of Jesus is a challenge*

Another reason I feel I was not always listening to our people is in what they feel about their Church and priests. Twenty-five years ago 80% of them would not want married priests. I am almost ready to say that figure is reversed today: 80% would accept it (which is different than saying they would welcome it). These percentages are far less for women priests. The issue is different and is seen as such by the



majority of our people. My prophetic stance is pretty poor, but I would say that married priesthood could be a reality in the next few years, but I could not say that for women priests, at least now.

## A Call for Evangelization

**T**hose turned off by the changes in the Church have left already. We will soon have to stop using that as a reason for the Exodus. It was a valid reason (for a few, not as many as used it), but its validity continues to diminish today. Some of the larger directions for the Church have now been set. Those who are disappointed by these directions have made their choices.

Another clear reason that tells me I have not listened is in reading the national material about inactive Catholics. The first piece of literature suggested that young people need time to mature. Even though they are not going to Church in their 20's just give them time, and they will be back in their 30's or when they get married. This is not happening, at least not like we thought it would. Many are not returning, many never will. We have *lost* them.

Another change I have seen is a more level approach to priests. The laity now see us as one of them, only ordained. This is not only healthy; it is accurate. The call of Christ is given to all: some married, some not, some celibate, some not. The trust the people have in us is more realistic; they know we can make mistakes, though they have trouble forgiving us when we do. We are more a part of their lives; we see them in their homes and at the store. We are at the altar and in the parking lot; we live in the rectory but are also part of their family and their friends.

*The call of Christ  
is given to all.*

Of course there are less clergy, everyone knows that. There are less of them, but they are better positioned and used. Just like the laity, there are less of them, but they are more faith-filled and truly want to be Catholic. They are less cultural, less American, more generous, and more likely to be there twenty-five years from now.



I like very much the Catholics who remain Catholics. Their motivation is more spiritual, less based on what their parents did, and more personal. What we need to do for these people is what we have always done for them. But what we need to do together is invite those who are no longer here back to the Eucharistic table. Less clergy have helped us see more clearly who we are and who we are not. These are blessings for our Church. Let's count them.

In twenty-six years I have never given a homily on the requirement of going to mass or living in mortal sin. I think it is important to come to mass, even when we do not wish to, or when we “get nothing out of it.” But our Catholics are going through the passage between “mass as obligation” toward mass attendance out of eagerness and personal responsibility, all without the previous clerical command of mortal sin hovering over the passage. I think this is a significant passage. Even though attendance is down and level of faith is down, those who stay will stay and those who are committed will remain committed.

This is a significant change in parish life, and one in which the clergy can be helpful without being too negative. We encourage each believer in Jesus to celebrate the eucharist without demanding attendance and without punishing those who are not there. This is a difficult change, and we as a Church are making it, albeit not without hardships and personal family anxiety along the way.

The total percentage of Catholics coming to Sunday mass is down. All the national surveys, including my personal one at St. Francis, indicate that, but the percentage of those who attend and come away nourished, challenged, and strengthened in their faith is up, compared with thirty years ago. But unfortunately there are no national surveys to chart this theory, but it remains one of my strongest personal beliefs.

## Our Roots in Vatican II

**T**he *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity*, issued by the Second Vatican Council in a plenary session November 18, 1965, makes this statement in its very first paragraph:

*“The lay apostolate derives from their Christian vocation, and the Church can never be without it. Sacred Scripture clearly shows how*



*spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the very beginning of the Church. Our own times require of the laity no less zeal.”*

*“Strengthened by active participation in the liturgical life of their community, they are eager to do their share in the apostolic works of that community. They lead to the Church people who are perhaps far removed from it, earnestly cooperate in presenting the word of God especially by means of catechetical instruction, and offer their special skills to make the care of souls and the administration of the temporalities of the Church more efficient.” Section 10*

I can trace some threads of parish life in this statement. Already in 1971, when I came to St. Francis, there was the beginning of a liturgical commission. There were struggles with this commission, what involvement should it have in assisting the priest prepare his Sunday homily, how much influence should it have in choosing music (no music director yet), and what should its overall direction in the life of the parish be. I know we made some errors here, but it paved the way for John Wolf, CPPS, who replaced me as associate in 1978 and was very much concerned about the liturgical life of the parish.

By this time Vatican II was thirteen years in the past, yet there was a small but steady number of parishioners at St. Francis who were concerned about its liturgical life. John expanded the commission to include art and environment, a full time music director and attention to larger celebrations. Joe Miller, CPPS and Lac Pham, CPPS continued the work of the commission, always with the input of valued laity, and now trained laity. The commission received materials, went to workshops and training sessions, and continues to work today, a good twenty-five years later.

Only by seeing a large period of time like this can we see the fruit that it has borne: the largest parish of any kind in St. Joseph, catholic or not, a liturgical life that I would rate as one of the principle two reasons that new families choose to come to St. Francis (school being the other), and a perception in the city that our liturgy and parish life





have benefitted: a strong school, an active RCIA (with companion Jodean Ford as coordinator), a full time parish administrator and a House of Bread food pantry, begun by then deacon Joseph Nassal, CPPS and lay coordinators and many lay volunteers. The food kitchen is thriving today as the second largest in the city.

## Remodeling Church and Building Community

**I**n remembering liturgical developments, I cannot forget the pioneering work done in the parish by Roy Grotenrath, CPPS, pastor 1964-70. He was pastor during much of Vatican Council II. His blueprint for the remodeled church was the basis for what was eventually finished by Paul Sattler, CPPS, pastor 1970-79. Although not really a liturgist, Paul brought the necessary architectural and financial pieces to bear. The remodeled Church was open December 24, 1971, with myself as first presider (incidentally, I was the final presider in the older church, August 1971). The remodeled church was not dedicated by Bishop Helmsing until late January of 1972.

Two incidents about that dedication still stay with me even today. One concerns the homily, the other the vestments. Paul asked Don Green, CPPS, then of Warsaw, MO to give the dedicatory homily, not the bishop. Don sent the worship commission a copy of the readings and homily outline for the festive occasion. The committee was busy planning the liturgy, as Paul had told us to do. We asked my classmate Ralph Verdi, CPPS to write a piece of music for the event. He did. But the organ accompaniment was so difficult that none of our organists could play it. At the last minute Paul told me to ask Ralph to come from Rensselaer, IN, and he himself would pay.

But the real issue concerned the homily. The commission was not happy with the choice of readings or the direction of the homily. The lay committee and myself did not know what to do. Don Green was an accomplished homilist and was eager to come and preach, besides he was Paul's friend. We suggested alternate readings, with themes that came from a lay committee of somewhat untrained but very interested parishioners. Don was overjoyed at both our direction and our delicacy in approaching him to change his ideas. It was clearly the laity in action. He did an excellent job.



The other incident concerns a flaming yellow vestment that Fr. Paul asked Regina Schinze to design just for the occasion. It was to be worn by Bishop Helmsing. It was very bright. The bishop looked at it and said, "Yellow is not a liturgical color." At which Paul said, without missing a step, that it was gold, was of the best material, and was made specifically for the occasion. Two out of three is not bad. The bishop wore it proudly.

## Accepting Our Challenges

**M**any challenges remain for us. Not enough people see gathering and inviting others as a priority. They come to church; they are active in their faith, but if others are not, they leave them alone. This next step, evangelization, this living of faith and sharing faith, is not yet ours. We do not yet own this as a priority, as we do schools and liturgy. This is the next step for the Catholic church. I am beginning to think that the Catholic Church and going to church will always be important only for a minority of people; the message is just too powerful and too upsetting to excite the majority. The world is just too fascinating; faith interferes with living in the world. Parish life has traveled a good distance in the last thirty years. Of course it will travel a good journey more.

The direction, as I see it, is more lay involvement, continued cooperation between clergy and laity, catechumenate, evangelization, youth and young adult ministry, strong liturgy, Catholic schools only if they are good educationally, retaining a sacramental emphasis, and expanded prayer forms, Eucharistic and otherwise.

Any further prophecy I am hesitant to follow. I do know that parish life is both exciting and demanding. At least it was for me. I am grateful for the experience and hope I was able to learn about myself and bring the message of the Lord to our people.



## For Reflection

Share the differences between the parish you grew up in and the parish you now attend. If it is the same physical parish, share the stories of the people who enabled the changes to occur.

Why do you believe that the Eucharist is at the heart of who we are as Catholics? In what way is Eucharist at the center of your parish life?

When you read Jim's narrative of being a parish priest, consider your own story and remember all the people who were a priestly people for you.

In light of Jim's accounting of parish life, what do you think creates a priestly people?

What do you think is going to be the future of our church? Share your prophecies.

