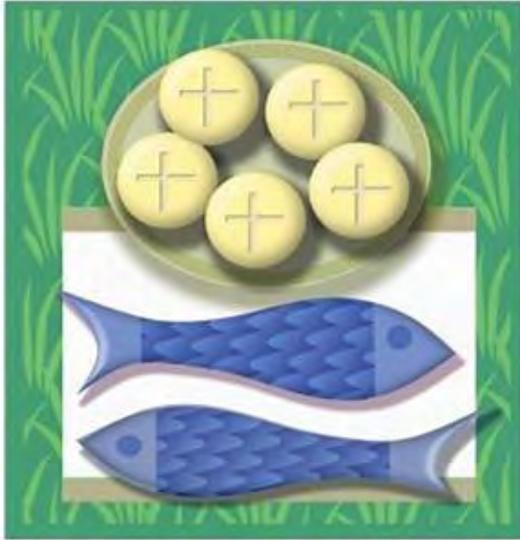


**For The Bulletin Of
August 2, 2020**



**THE 18TH SUNDAY IN
SUMMER'S ORDINARY TIME**

From Father Robert

Welcome back! Today, for the first time since March 15th, we are able to gather once again for the celebration of Holy Eucharist. While we are not all able to be together, today is a first opportunity for us to return to in-person worship. I am grateful to the members of the Reopening Committee who have been working for weeks to prepare for this morning's 9:00 a.m. Liturgy in the garden behind the church. Much work and preparation has gone into making today possible: decisions concerning how many volunteers are needed, the responsibilities of the volunteers, the work needing to be done in the parking lot, as parishioners gather, the checking in process, accompanying you to a place on the grass, making sure those with disabilities are cared for, insuring that the liturgy is well-planned and prepared, then bringing everyone to Holy Communion and from there back to the parking lot and your vehicles in order to return home.

We will evaluate today's experience and depending upon need, add additional liturgies in order to accommodate all those who have indicated their desire to return to in-person worship. Increasing the number of liturgies will definitely require more volunteers to assist with all that needs to be done and to make those additional liturgies possible. We will keep you informed as to decisions made going forward.

I also want to thank the members of the Committee that have been in the parking lot each week to facilitate our experience of Drive Through Holy Communion. Each Sunday morning, they have arrived early to set up driving lanes, pop up tents, chairs, tables, and everything they will need to make this possible, as well as distributing Holy Communion. Our thanks to: **Vince and Kathy Augusta, Steve Rojek, Joe and Theresa Nelms, Shelli Daviess, Teresa Glenn, Don Benson, Gino Ramos, Diane Hack, Hanny Reingold, Estrella Rusk, Jack Goncalves, Melodye Costanza, and Rich Confetti.**

Going forward, it is our hope to accommodate all those who wish to come for liturgy and so we will add liturgies to the extent possible, increasing the number from 50 to 100, the largest number possible given the size of the space available.

Thank you for your continued patience and support as we journey through these uncharted "waters." Thank you also once again for your amazing generosity that is making it possible to meet all of our financial obligations. It is the consistent and faithful use of both the Sunday Envelope and EFT that is making this possible.



Reflecting On The Gospel

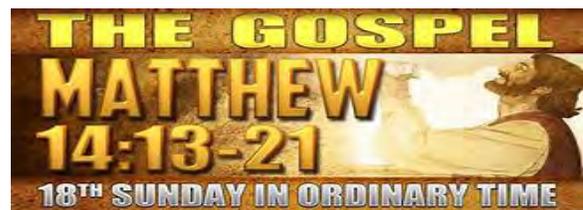
After three weeks of hearing Jesus preach and teach in parables, we now move into the next chapter of Matthew's gospel, one in which Jesus performs the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. Unlike some of the parables from last week and the week before, which are found only in Matthew, the story of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes is in each gospel, and in both Matthew and Mark the miracle happens twice! Many scholars will posit that precisely because of the multiple attestation of this miracle, the event is rooted in some historical event in the life of Jesus (which cannot be said for every gospel story).

This event was retold a number of times, with various pieces of the story being accented or downplayed, as well as connections made with the Old Testament prophet Elisha and the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples. Indeed, the gospel story as we have it (or them) makes it nearly impossible to reconstruct the historical event, as the story had been the subject of theologizing for some time prior to being written down, and then again by those who wrote it down – the evangelists themselves.

For those who have a familiarity with the Old Testament, the connection to Elisha seems clear. In that story, the prophet tells his servant to give bread to the people so they can eat. The servant objects that the bread is not enough for the number of people who need to eat. Elisha merely repeats his command and says, "For thus says the LORD: you will eat and have some left over." The connection between that story and what we have in Matthew seems crystal clear. The evangelist, or somebody who told the story before him, made the connection between Jesus' acts and those of Elisha.

And yet there is a connection to the Last Supper as well. Four verbs serve as the link between the multiplication story and Jesus' actions the night before He died. In both settings, Jesus *takes* bread, *says a blessing*, *breaks* the bread, and *gives* it. Both the eucharistic tones and allusions to Elisha are clear.

Jesus' actions are those of a prophet and so much more. The Gospel of John uses the story to launch into the Bread of Life discourse, but in Matthew, we have the narration of the miracle without any such extended discourse on the part of Jesus. We are reminded by this miracle story, a version of which appears six times in the gospels (!) that Jesus feeds the hungry and in so doing is a model for His followers to do the same.





Living The Paschal Mystery

Bread is such a simple but profound sign. It does not occur naturally, but requires human effort. Grain must be crushed to form flour. Flour is mixed with water or some other liquid to form dough, and the dough must be leavened with yeast to rise. Then the baking begins and we finally have a loaf of bread, sustenance that will fill us up and last. The human effort required to make bread is significant, and it involves time, all of which perhaps explains why so many of us simply buy bread today. Even so, there are not many things that taste better than a good loaf of homemade bread.

When we consider that Jesus multiplied the loaves so that all could eat, we recall that He acted as the prophet Elisha of old. He also foreshadowed His own Last Supper and the eucharistic gift He would leave His followers. As a result, even today we take bread, bless it, break it, and give it. In so doing we celebrate and consume Jesus Himself, Who was broken for us and given to us. As we are sustained on our earthly journey by the Eucharist, we live the paschal mystery.

Today's scriptures once again offer us questions for further reflection and meditation:

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord calls to all who hunger and thirst to come to Him and be satisfied. How do we reach out to

those who hunger and thirst, either physically or spiritually?

In the Letter to the Romans, St. Paul boldly proclaims that nothing can separate us from the love of God that comes to us in Christ Jesus. Is there an individual in your life who is in need of this message? How might you express it to this person?

Many times in the gospels we hear of Jesus going off to a "deserted place by Himself" in order to pray. Where do you find solace and quiet to pray?

Jesus' miracles show us what life is like in the kingdom of God. From today's miracle of feeding the five thousand from five loaves and two fish, what message do you receive about the kingdom?



About Liturgy: A Church That Is Poor For The Poor

Hearing in God's word about comfort for those in need is one thing. Hearing in God's word any justification for complacency and apathy toward those in need is another. We must be careful. Today's Scriptures are not about our comfort. They are about what we are called to do as disciples of Jesus Who

says to us today: There is no need for them – the hungry, the poor, the immigrant, the outcast, the one you would rather not deal with – to go away; give them some food, some help, some welcome, some kindness, some mercy yourselves.

In previous weeks' gospels leading up to today, we heard about the Word of God that, if planted into fertile hearts, grows abundantly. If we hear today's readings as an invitation to stay in a place of safety and comfort, for God will take care of us, then we've become the rocky soil into which the Word was sown but took no root. We've become the weeds secretly planted into the field by the enemy. Precisely because God takes care of our every need, we must go out and give others what they need.

Pope Francis said, "How I would like a church that is poor and for the poor!" His constant call for us to go to society's peripheries is not simply because it is a nice thing to do for people in need. If our hearts are to be changed into fertile soil, we must get out of our comfort zones and easy circle of friends and enter into relationship with those we may pray for but never interact with on a human level. Feed them yourselves. Become bread for others as Jesus has become the living bread for you. That is what we are commissioned to do every Sunday.



To are faithful parishioners who come to continue cleaning the church and bathrooms, even though we are not able to be in the church, our heartfelt gratitude: **Carole Miller, Mency Osborne, Rose Salamanca, Steve Rojek, and Finian Anyanwu.**

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

*From the Center for Action and
Contemplation*



Week Thirty
Being Peaceful Change

Change Comes from the Inside

As we come to know our soul gift more clearly, we almost always have to let go of some other "gifts" so we can do our one or two things with integrity. Such letting go frees us from always being driven by what has been called the "tyranny of the urgent."

[1] Soon urgency is a way of life, and things are not done peacefully from within. What if we choose to simply do one or two things wholeheartedly in our lives? That is all God expects and all we can probably do well. Too much good work becomes a violence to ourselves and, finally, to those around us. Let's just use our different gifts to create a unity in the work of service (Ephesians 4:12–13), and back one another up, without criticism or competition. Only in our peaceful, mutual honoring do we show forth the glory of God.

The Gospel is not about being nice; it is about being honest and just, and the world doesn't like those two things very much. Our job is to learn how to be honest, but with love and respect. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us that before we go out to witness for justice, we have to make sure that we can love and respect those with whom we disagree.

Imagine the surrender necessary for those who have been oppressed for hundreds of years to continue to work peacefully for justice. Frankly, I don't know how anyone can do it without contemplation. How do we get to that deep place where we do not want to publicly expose, humiliate, or defeat our opponents, but rather work, as King said, for win-win situations? Seeking win-win solutions, not win-lose, takes a high level of spiritual development and demands spiritual conversion.

When we are hurt, we want to hurt back. When we are put down, we want to put down the opponent. This is our ego's natural defense mechanism. We all move toward the ego, and we even solidify it as we get older if something doesn't expose it for the lie that it is—not because it is bad, but because it thinks it is the whole and only thing! We change from inside—from the power

position to the position of vulnerability and solidarity, which gradually changes everything.

True contemplation is the most subversive of activities because it undercuts the one thing that normally refuses to give way—our natural individualism and narcissism. Once we are freed from our narcissism that thinks we are the center of the world, or that our rights and dignity have to be defended before other people's rights and dignity, we can finally live and act with justice and truth. People don't really change by themselves. God changes us, if we can expose ourselves to God at a deep level.

Gateway to Action & Contemplation:

What word or phrase resonates with or challenges me? What sensations do I notice in my body? What is mine to do?

Prayer for Our Community:

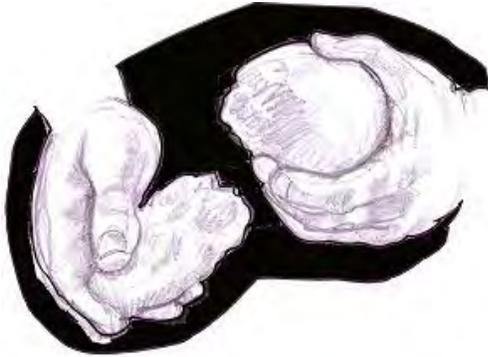
O Great Love, thank you for living and loving in us and through us. May all that we do flow from our deep connection with you and all beings. Help us become a community that vulnerably shares each other's burdens and the weight of glory. Listen to our hearts' longings for the healing of our world. [Please add your own intentions.] . . . Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God, amen.

Story from Our Community:

As I read the daily meditation this morning, I felt as if something bigger than me was telling me everything is going to be okay. My kids and I have just moved to a new town after leaving an abusive husband. It was not easy, and these first few days have been a struggle. We are healing, and I see this time in my life as more than just a change of address or a new job but as a transformation. I've been through the dark

night, the fire, and I will be stronger. I am excited to see what our new lives will include. Thank you for the daily meditations. —Name withheld

Parables in action by [Pat Marrin](#)



“All these things Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables” (Matt 13:34).

Jer 13:1-11; Matt 13: 31-35

Before we move on from the theme of Jesus’ parables, the Lectionary introduces portions of the Prophet Jeremiah, who was famous for some “action” parables. In today’s first reading, to illustrate Judah’s failure to keep the covenant, Jeremiah buries a loincloth in the ground, then retrieves it to show how its rotted state is like the once intimate relationship with Yahweh that had been corrupted by infidelity. He will later visit a potter’s studio to make the comparison with God as the one in charge of world history.

With such graphic imagery, Jeremiah had the difficult task of telling his own people of the coming destruction of Jerusalem. He was accused of undermining public morale, and he is imprisoned or left to die in a cistern. He even begged to be relieved of his prophetic vocation. He is called a “man of

constant sorrow,” and in this foreshadows Jesus anguish when predicting the destruction of the nation. Both Jeremiah and Jesus looked beyond institutional structures to the survival of God’s promises in personal fidelity and God’s presence in the community. Worship in temples and on mountains would become worship in spirit and in truth.

Jesus’ parables reflect this interiority. The humble mustard seed will germinate and take root to give shelter for the birds; the yeast the woman “hides” in the flour will rise mysteriously to sustain the community. The parables are themselves “portable,” not requiring institutional religion because they can be carried in the heart and lived out anywhere.

In the tumult of our own times, we know change is needed but hope it will not disturb our lives or upend familiar institutions. This is not always possible, especially if corruption is systemic and embedded in social structures that perpetuate injustice. Jeremiah offered little comfort to those who hoped for continuity or painless change. What he prophesied was that God was doing something new. Hope would come with a rebirth of justice and fidelity to the covenant. And like birth, there would be pain and struggle, followed by joy.

Jesus sought to prepare his disciples for transition by giving them a path to interior renewal, parables of transformation and his own example of dying and rising as the pattern of continual conversion. The early church entered the maelstrom of historical change as violence swept away many institutional and cultural mainstays, including Jerusalem and the temple, and later imperial Rome itself, collapsing under corruption from within and invading forces from without. We live within our own

political and cultural time and will not be spared upheaval and change. The Gospels counsel us to know what is essential and what is passing.

Travel light; carry the stories; love one another and break bread with one another along the way. Most of all, keep your eyes on the prize, Jesus our brother and, ultimately also the Lord of history.

COVID-19 crisis provides opportunities and grace

by [Thomas Reese, Religion News Service](#)



White shoes are displayed near the U.S. Capitol in Washington, D.C., July 21. The display honors those who have died during the coronavirus pandemic. (CNS photo/Tom Brenner, Reuters)

This year will go down as one of the worst in American history. Millions [have contracted](#) the coronavirus, and with the current rate of spread we can expect nearly 300,000 to die. Millions more are unemployed and falling into poverty. Schools are closed. Videos have exposed police brutality, which has brought people to the streets.

But crises provide opportunities and grace. They challenge us to rise to the occasion, think creatively and change the way we live and work. World War II changed American society profoundly, bringing women into the workforce and accelerating developments in aviation, electronics and communications. Among the Cold War's technological legacies is the internet and the revolution it wrought.

Despite the terrible impact of COVID-19 on us, in what ways could the coronavirus change work, families and church for the better? Where are the opportunities and graces?

In the workplace, the coronavirus has already challenged the idea that all white-collar workers need to be in an office. Productivity has been sustained, and sometimes improved, as Americans shifted to working from home. Workers spend less time and money commuting. Though school closings mean more child care responsibilities, flexible work schedules mean more time with loved ones. There may be advantages for workers with disabilities. If remote work becomes a permanent feature of American life, small towns and rural areas could also benefit as talented locals stay home and newcomers looking for more room and lower costs come from urban areas, diversifying their economies and populations.

All of this could result in a better quality of life for people who can work from home as well as a reduction in carbon emissions.

The pandemic has also opened our eyes to the importance of blue-collar workers who cannot work from home. Essential workers include not just doctors and nurses but many who are ignored, disrespected and poorly paid: workers in grocery stores, mass transit, sanitation, cleaning, maintenance and agriculture. Pope Francis teaches that an economy is measured not by its gross domestic product but by how it treats people. COVID-19 has shown us that these undervalued workers deserve better wages and working conditions.

Our understanding of the role of government is also being affected by the pandemic, as the impact of underfunding public health departments, public hospitals and emergency stockpiles has become evident. It has made clear that the market cannot solve every problem. Cries of "socialism" sound hollow to people who fear their families will get sick, go hungry and become homeless.

Government is an essential instrument in working for the common good, according to Catholic social teaching. If the pandemic shows voters how essential government is, that may make political space for government efforts for the common good. Public policy on health care and unemployment will help determine if families, particularly those who have a sick family member, will be made stronger or will be broken. What may look like economic questions are actually family questions: We know, for instance, that increases in unemployment correlate with increases in spousal and child abuse.

Everyday family life is seriously affected by the coronavirus as we experience something

akin to a months-long snow day. Being confined to home can be an opportunity to bond more deeply with those we love, but this requires conscious efforts to nourish family relationships. Listening is essential. Good communication and common activities build a group of individuals living under the same roof into living cells that nourish one another. If we learn these skills now, they will continue to nourish family life after the pandemic.

While Catholics cannot celebrate the Eucharist at home, they can celebrate their own Liturgy of the Word. Reading and discussing the [Sunday Scripture readings](#) is a great way for Catholic families to grow together in their faith. It may be time to revive old devotions such as the family rosary and grace before meals. These are good practices that should continue after the pandemic.

Being Christian does not happen just at home and in a church building. Pope Benedict XVI described the church's charity work as equal in importance to the sacraments and the Word, and Catholics mourning the loss of the sacraments can and must still live lives of compassion and love. Catholic charities and social services have had to step up to meet the fallout from the epidemic as the number needing help escalates.

We also need to learn new ways to sustain the community when we cannot congregate in parish meeting rooms and halls. In the past, parish priests and staff have protested that they had no time to develop a parish social media presence; today they have no choice.

For example, parishes can use Facebook or other social media to create small Christian communities to reflect and pray over the

Sunday Scriptures even if the Eucharist is not available. Book clubs can do the same. Spiritual direction and conferences can be conducted over Zoom.

Although people cannot go to church, the pandemic shutdown has given people more time to reflect on their lives. Fr. Pat Conroy, chaplain to the House of Representatives, reports that he has longer and deeper conversations over the phone with members of Congress because the virus has curtailed their work on the Hill and the campaign trail.

The coronavirus is wreaking havoc on the United States, but it also is giving us opportunities that we should not miss. Grace is always present, even in the worst of situations. God is present in the worst of times.

[Jesuit Fr. Thomas Reese is a columnist for Religion News Service and author of *Inside the Vatican: The Politics and Organization of the Catholic Church*.]

The scandal of mercy

by [Pat Marrin](#)

[Spirituality](#)



“Deliver us and pardon our sins for your name’s sake” (Psalm 78:9).

Jer 14:17-22; Matt 13:36-43

Today’s short Gospel in which Jesus interprets the parable of the wheat and weeds for his disciples offers us the chance to explore the probable layers evident in the formation of the New Testament. Apparent contradictions help us to distinguish an original parable from its later application to the situation of Matthew’s community in Antioch at the time his Gospel was being composed, probably around the year 80 of the first century.

The core thrust of the parable addresses the human need to divide people into “them” and “us.” Jesus continually confronted this tendency in his audiences and especially in the critics of his preaching about the unconditional mercy of God and his scandalous association with public sinners and outcasts. These “good” people wanted “bad” people to be punished and excluded from God’s favor.

The point of the parable was that good and evil are so intertwined in all of us that the impulse to judge and uproot evil in others will destroy everyone. Like the tares and the wheat, virtue and weakness are often indistinguishable in the early stages of development. To judge another is to risk rejecting their gifts instead of their faults. No, let people be. Stop judging one another. Only God can sort out such mysteries, and God has chosen to let people emerge within the community with all its tensions and issues to be worked out with patience and mutual love.

This was too much to ask of the community in Antioch, made up of both Jewish and Gentile converts to Jesus, whose Good

News was that the God of mercy calls all of us to new life and perfect love. To satisfy both sides of the question, Matthew provides an explanation of the parable promising that in the end God would save the good people and burn up the bad people. What gets compromised is the God Jesus preached, whose unconditional mercy was as scandalous to the early Christians as it was to Jesus' original audiences and especially his self-righteous critics.

The conundrum is laid at our feet. We call the Bible "revelation," a truth we ourselves could not have discovered or concluded, and this truth is that God is merciful. Jesus stakes his entire ministry on this truth and is himself the human face of divine mercy. This revelation is important because the human mind pulls God in the direction of justice. We want there to be justice, which means that some of us are good and deserve to be saved and some others are bad and deserve punishment, even exclusion from God's favor, what we imagine to be heaven. The scandal of the Gospel is that God never ceases to love sinners and want them to be gathered into the beloved community at the end of history. Only self-exclusion can separate someone from God's love, because that love has also made us free.

We all live with this mystery, including the sins and graces in conflict within each of us. We are called to live in communities that mirror our own mixed condition, waiting for God to transform us with the fire of his love.

The church needs women cardinals

Ordination does not equal competency for leadership

Jul 28, 2020

by [James Keenan](#)



In this 2017 file photo, Pope Francis speaks during his annual pre-Christmas meeting with top officials of the Roman Curia and members of the College of Cardinals in Clementine Hall at the Vatican. (CNS/Reuters/Claudio Peri)

Last week, La Croix and The Tablet both reported on an interview with the president of the French bishops' conference, Archbishop Éric de Moulins-Beaufort. During the interview, he envisioned that "the Holy See will one day be led by the Pope surrounded by a college of cardinals in which there would be women."

The Rheims archbishop's musings reminded me of many years ago when I was much younger, and older Catholics were first daring to discuss the ordination of women.

Invariably the debates about the probability of ordained women surrendered to the question of whether such ordination was possible. Here arguments against the possibility were raised by invoking

pervasive misogyny, local cultures, theology, canon law, the Bible and even the intentionality of Jesus at the last supper!

After exhausting a host of objections to the possible, invariably a senior in the room would suggest, "Why not make women cardinals?" This often prompted quizzical stares from mostly everyone, but the clever proponent would remind them that until recently there were, indeed, lay cardinals. "They didn't have to be ordained," the proponent would expertly conclude.

It was only a hundred years ago that the "new" Code of Canon Law (1917) decreed that cardinals had to be ordained. Before that they were either from the laity or the ordained, though clearly the majority were the latter.

Ordination was introduced, in part, to correct abuse in the appointment of cardinals. For instance, in 1735, Pope Clement XII made Luis Antonio de Borbón, son of King Felipe V of Spain, a cardinal, he was 8 years old. Ordination would give some surety that the person was an adult and theologically educated.

In 1983, the code required that cardinals be bishops.

We should not think, however, that these laws negated the possibility of popes making lay cardinals. While we can rarely know what a pope intends to do, until he discloses it, there have been fairly consistent reports that Pope Paul VI wanted to or actually offered to make the French philosopher Jacques Maritain one, and later that Pope John Paul II offered the appointment to Mother Teresa. Both persons reportedly declined the offer.

Moreover, in 2013 on these pages Jesuit

Fr. Frederico Lombardi, director of the Holy See's press office, commented that women cardinals were "theologically and theoretically ... possible." Like my seniors 50 years ago, he added, "Being a cardinal is one of those roles in the church for which, theoretically, you do not have to be ordained." He said this, however, to quell speculation that a woman would be among those named for the next consistory.

Why should women cardinals matter? Like the discussions 50 years ago, the Rheims archbishop's comments remind us of a variety of ways that the laity in general and women in particular can and should exercise authority and leadership in the church. He entertained the question of women deacons, but he was much more interested in the diversity of leadership roles in the church that were not being filled by the laity nor especially by women whether religious or lay. Thus he noted that he was "completely flabbergasted" that non-ordained religious brothers could vote at the Synod of Bishops' meetings, but women could not.

Reminding us that the ordained "are in principle neither more learned nor closer to God than the laity," he added, "The voice of all the baptized laity, from the moment they try to embrace Christianity, should be able to count as much as that of the clergy."

Then he turned to the question of competency: "Nothing prevents them from holding many more important functions in the workings of the institution, with everything being a matter of competence."

Ah, competency! The question of leadership in the church too often defaults to the question of ordination, a dumbfounding mistake inasmuch as ordination simply does not bestow such competency for leadership,

though it does recognize and confirm the capacity to preside at certain sacraments. Pope Francis' insistence on a servant priesthood is a helpful addendum: Orders is fundamentally a sacrament for a vocation of service.

When it comes to competency for leadership, the sacrament does not give to those what they do not have. By the sacrament of orders, a priest or a bishop does not become more able to lead an office, a parish, a department at an episcopal conference, a state or national conference, a confraternity, a Catholic non-governmental organization, a dicastery or a congregation. Clergy do not gain such competency by orders.

The appeal to having women cardinals, then, is a case in point. The pope shortly after his election created a cabinet of eight cardinals whose judgment he wanted to regularly summon. If he is looking for competent judgment, could there not be women in that group? If women could be cardinals, should not they be in his inner circle of confidants and advisors?

I always find the topic of women cardinals energizing. As it did 50 years ago and as recently Moulins-Beaufort illustrated, the topic provokes us to untether the question of competency from orders and allows us to see as Paul told us the variety of gifts within the church.

That untethering is long overdue.
[Jesuit Fr. James F. Keenan is Canisius Professor at Boston College.]

Down to earth faith by [Pat Marrin](#)

[Spirituality](#)



“Do you believe this?” Jesus asked her”
(John 11:27).

St. Martha

Jer 15:10, 16-21; John 11:19-27 or Luke 10:38-42

The figure of Martha is an evolving presence in the Gospels. She first appears in Luke when she and her sister, Mary, welcome Jesus to their house. She provides hospitality by preparing a meal, while Mary welcomes Jesus by sitting at his feet to listen to him. Jesus praises Mary for choosing the better part, prompting us to wonder if he went hungry that day.

The story is a stock setting for a familiar adage about spiritual things being superior to material things. The common wisdom is that both are necessary. Like other stories involving two choices or examples, we are both Martha and Mary, we are both Pharisee and Publican, saint and sinner.

Martha reappears in the fourth Gospel, still the practical one, but now she and Mary have a brother named Lazarus, whose resuscitation is the final sign in the Book of Signs that reveals Jesus as I AM, the sacred name of God. Martha sets the scene for the miracle by making it graphically clear that Lazarus is dead when she tells Jesus his corpse will smell when they remove the stone from the tomb.

The story reminds us of another faith encounter later in the Gospel. Martha is like Thomas, who approaches the resurrection with the same earthiness that grounds their faith. “I want to touch his wounds, put my hand in his side.” Martha proclaims that the dead will rise from their tombs at the call of Jesus. Thomas proclaims that the crucified Jesus who died on the cross is the glorified Christ who appeared to the women and the Apostles.

We celebrate Martha because, like Thomas, she is among the witnesses to Jesus. She was struggling with the loss of her brother when she affirmed her faith in Jesus. “Yes, Lord, I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Thomas asked the hard questions and demanded proof, and then he proclaimed, “My Lord and my God” before the Mystery of the risen Christ.

Most if not all of us will have our share of funerals to work our way through these questions of faith before we come to our own experience of death. Not simply the stories, but the believers who have gone before us with names like Martha and Thomas, or the names of our own beloved dead in our own cloud of witnesses. It is this community that grounds us in faith, not only within our own circle and generation, but going back to the first believers who staked everything on the reality of the

resurrection of Jesus as the promise of eternal life.

We believe that we shall see our beloved dead face to face in the world to come, the great reunion of love when every tear shall be wiped away. The scriptures invite us to imagine that every Eucharist we receive here on earth is a pledge of future glory and the invitation to an eternal banquet. If Mary is in charge, we know there will be plenty of holy talk, and if Martha is on duty, we know there will be a great meal.

If at first by [Pat Marrin](#)

[Spirituality](#)



“Every scribe is like ... a head of the household who brings from the storeroom both the new and the old” (Matt 13:47).

Jer 18:1-6; Matt 13:47-53

Jesus praises the householder who brings forth both old and new from his storeroom. It is an apt description of the evangelists who composed the Gospels from stories taken from both the collected sayings of Jesus and the stories and lessons in the Hebrew scriptures. This also acknowledges the creativity of those who created the Lectionary, which elicits fresh insights by matching different texts for the daily readings.

Today we find paired Jeremiah's visit to the potter with Jesus' parable of the fishing net. Of note is the image of the potter who starts over after rejecting a clay vessel that does not turn out. He freely creates and recreates until he has achieved what he wants. Likewise, the fisherman sorts out the contents of the net to save some fish and discard others. Both the potter and the fisherman freely discern as they do their work.

Focusing on the Gospel, how do these images describe the Kingdom of God? For starters, it is a work in progress, not a perfect plan executed smoothly by design. It is process of learning and discovery, hit and miss, that requires judgment and patience. There is a saying that "perfection is the enemy of the good." If the fisherman only wanted a perfect catch, he would never go fishing. If the potter expected a perfect pot every time, she would quickly give up in frustration.

The Good News is that God blesses our efforts with the understanding that we will not always get it right. Life experiences can be good or bad, useful or a waste of time, but if we intend to live in this world we must cast our nets into the sea, our clay onto the wheel, and expect to learn from our failures and mistakes. The parable of the net is like the parables of the sower and the wheat and weeds. The Kingdom of God is messy business but blessed nonetheless if we simply try and keep learning.

Another life lesson is that wisdom comes only to those who make mistakes, for failure is the source of discernment and gradual adjustments until we succeed. Those who cannot admit error never learn anything. They proudly accumulate their mistakes until they are brought down in folly by reality and truth. The good steward of the

treasures of the kingdom has a storeroom filled with failed experiments and false starts that taught him or her wisdom and humility.

Richard Rohr's Daily Meditation

From the Center for Action and Contemplation

Being Peaceful Change

Holistic Peace

Peaceful change starts within us and grows incrementally from where we are. Our social and physical location will influence the problems we see and the solutions we can imagine. We must "think globally and act locally" as did Nobel Peace Prize winner Professor Wangari Maathai (1940–2011).

Maathai devoted herself to environmental and democratic reform in her native Kenya.

As a young academic biologist at the University of Nairobi in the 1970s . . . Maathai grew concerned about the environmental devastation created in Nairobi by widespread deforestation. She recognized that a massive replanting program could both save the land and provide a source of income for Nairobi's poor. So in 1977 she founded a small local organization that paid Nairobi women to plant trees. The organization soon grew into a nationwide and then pan-African one known as the Greenbelt Movement. Since its inception, the movement has planted upwards of forty million trees in Africa and provided sources of income for nearly one million women.

The genius of Maathai's vision was its holistic awareness of the linkage between

environmental sustainability and economic opportunity. . . . [1]

In her Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech, Wangari Maathai said,

[The Green Belt Movement] participants discover that they must be part of the solutions. They realize their hidden potential and are empowered to overcome inertia and take action. They come to recognize that they are the primary custodians and beneficiaries of the environment that sustains them.

Entire communities also come to understand that while it is necessary to hold their governments accountable, it is equally important that in their own relationships with each other, they exemplify the leadership values they wish to see in their own leaders, namely justice, integrity and trust.

Although initially the Green Belt Movement's tree planting activities did not address issues of democracy and peace, it soon became clear that responsible governance of the environment was impossible without democratic space. Therefore, the tree became a symbol for the democratic struggle in Kenya. Citizens were mobilized to challenge widespread abuses of power, corruption and environmental mismanagement. . . .

Through the Green Belt Movement, thousands of ordinary citizens were mobilized and empowered to take action and effect change. . . . They learned to overcome fear and a sense of helplessness and moved to defend democratic rights.

In time, the tree also became a symbol for peace and conflict resolution. . . .

It is 30 years since we started this work. Activities that devastate the environment and societies continue unabated. Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the Earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own—indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder. This will happen if we see the need to revive our sense of belonging to a larger family of life, with which we have shared our evolutionary process.

In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we have to shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now. [2]

Prophets among us

by [Pat Marrin](#)

[Spirituality](#)



“Where did this man get such wisdom and mighty deeds?” (Matt 13:54).

Jer 26:1-9; Matt 13:54-58

For those able to watch the funeral services for John Lewis today, it could have been a master class about whether the United States has had its own prophets. Even the question heading this reflection from today's Gospel might find an echo in James Lawson's description of the early formation of Lewis as part of the meetings of civil rights activists in Nashville in the late 1950s to plan the nonviolent strategy to address racial injustice. This was where John Lewis found his prophetic call realized. Here was the beginning of the wisdom that underpinned his long political career as someone who came to be called the "conscience of the Congress."

But he was not alone. Lawson sought to correct the historical record of the movement by citing the names of many of the men and women from around the country who had all received the same call, often in childhood, to work for an end to segregation and the social and economic structures that had prevented black Americans from taking their rightful place at the table of national life promised by the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence.

For those less inclined to find Biblical themes in current history, the parallels are still worth considering. Today's reading from Jeremiah depicts a prophet who endured great suffering and rejection to fulfill a vocation he could not turn away from once God had touched him. Jesus began his ministry by delivering his inaugural address in his hometown of Nazareth, reading the prophet Isaiah's vision of God's beloved community.

Though his family and neighbors were amazed at his wisdom and mighty deeds,

they still rejected Jesus. The demands of his message struck too close to home, which is the fate of every prophet who speaks to his own nation and people. Go prophesy elsewhere, but do not ask us to change the deep-seated prejudices and cultural assumptions on which our pride and privilege rest. Jesus deliberately began his ministry by embracing the profile of the former prophets who never wavered from the truth they received at their call.

We should take consolation in affirming that Providence has a hand in our national history and that so many voices have been imbued with the biblical promise of a community in which truth and justice will prevail against other strong forces that do not share this dream for everyone. A living Word comes to us in the example of others but also in the insistent truths within our own hearts about the kind of people we want to be. The very doubts and fears we may feel about deep change are actually a sign that real prophets are in our midst. It is their role to push us forward when it is difficult. The risen Jesus comes to us from the future, saying, "Don't be afraid. Come, follow me."

Abortion: Discuss, don't debate

Jul 31, 2020

by [Michael Sean Winters](#)



Demonstrators are seen near the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington March 4. The court heard oral arguments that same day in June *Medical Services v. Russo*, a challenge to a Louisiana law, passed in 2014, that requires abortion providers to have "active admitting privileges" at a hospital within 30 miles of the abortion facility. (CNS/Tyler Orsburn)

It started on Twitter. After our executive editor Heidi Schlumpf published a [column](#) praising Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez for a magnificent speech she delivered after Congressman Ted Yoho called her something vulgar (which I shall not repeat), pro-life activists attacked Schlumpf on Twitter. She was called Satan. She was called a baby murderer. Schlumpf's sin? She had not denounced AOC's stance on abortion.

Other angry pro-lifers called the NCR customer service number and shouted vulgarities at the people who answer the phones, people who were not responsible for AOC's position on abortion or for Schlumpf's column.

The emails were worse: "You must be an extremist leftist liberal DUMBOCRAP?"

You should be reprimanded and then issue a formal apology to the Catholic Religious community," one "concerned Catholic" wrote to Schlumpf. "If not, you will be dealt with by the Silent Majority In a way that you will regret. Your [sic] a disgusting and pathetic journalist who's [sic] main objective is to disturb and agitate many folks out here. You are exactly what is wrong with our country today. You have absolutely no values. Go away. Crawl back under you [sic] keyboard Snowflake. Shame! Shame! Shame!"

In this day and age, we have grown accustomed to these kinds of reactions, but shouldn't we expect better from pro-lifers? If you really care about the dignity of every human life, you can't treat other people like dirt. We all have bad days. No one knows better than I the spiritual and moral danger of judgmentalism, and many times must I confess the sin of *delectatio morosa*. But it seems that every time someone crosses the pro-life Catholic brigade, you get this kind of over-the-top, profoundly hateful reaction, and I suspect it doesn't help the pro-life cause one little bit.

Now, a new [report](#) from the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame confirms that suspicion. The methodology of the study — in-depth interviews with 217 people, selected at random but who approximate the diversity of the country — allowed the researchers to get past the tired and hoary labels that this discussion is stuck with: Turns out "pro-life" and "pro-choice" are terms that have become fraught with associations that do not reflect the complexity and the ambivalence of people's views on abortion.

"The majority of Americans occupy the edges of neither ideology nor abortion attitudes," the report states. "Most fall somewhere in between."

The whole report is important, but for my purposes today, I would like to focus on the fourth part, which offers suggestions about how we, as a culture, can facilitate a more fruitful conversation about abortion, specifically two of the key points the report makes.

First, the report states, "Americans can talk about abortion under the right conditions, are more inclined to enter conversations than debates, and would benefit from expanded education in science, law, and moral reasoning."

Far be it from a columnist to denounce the positive benefits of debate: Steel sharpens steel. But because abortion is viewed by most people as a deeply personal issue first, and only as an abstract political issue subsequently, the preference for conversations over debate is more likely to avoid short-circuiting the conversation.

There are times and issues on which it is advisable to be stiff-necked. Indeed, on this issue, I wish some Catholic politicians had been more stiff-necked in the 1970s. (Connecticut Gov. Ella Grasso was a great exception: She remained opposed to abortion and will always be a hero to me.) It is no longer the 1970s, and there is no going back. It is a time to persuade, and persuasion requires more conversation and less debate.

The other point I would like to highlight is this one: "Americans can enter conversations about abortion on common ground to support positive long-term outcomes for pregnant women, their conceiving partners, and children." The

report confronts the prevailing narrative that has largely governed the discussion so far: "For decades we have heard that the abortion question hinges on one thing: whether or not what is inside the womb is a 'baby' or a 'fetus' — a 'person,' 'human being,' or 'life' with equal protection under the law."

This is true, of course: In one sense, the discussion is a categorical one. Still, the categorical debate has landed our country and our culture in this terrible place in which the extremes dictate the terms of debate.

The report notes that while the respondents discussed issues like fetal viability, "just as commonly, we heard interviewees ponder the essentials of a 'good life' for the baby or parent(s). A 'good life,' it would seem, includes health, support, financial stability, affection, rights, and pursuit of chosen livelihoods. Americans deliberate these 'good life' cornerstones as much as they do those marking the onset of 'life.' "

This is thin ice to be skating on. It is the language of eugenics, and it is scary. Listen to a recent [interview](#) Terry Gross had with Professor Diana Foster Greene about a study comparing "the emotional health and socioeconomic outcomes for women who received a wanted abortion and those who were denied one." Greene states, at one point:

So when you ask women, why do you want to have an abortion? — they give reasons. The most common is that they can't afford to have a child, or they can't afford to have another child. And we see very large differences in economic well-being over time. Another surprising fact is that most women who have abortions — 60% of women who have abortions in the United States are already mothers. And so a

common reason is that they want to take care of the children they already have.

Our country and our culture should do all in its power to make sure that the first, and most common, reason for procuring an abortion is dealt with: No mother should be made to feel she cannot afford to have a child. The second reason is the choosing of one child over another, and it is halfway down the slippery eugenic slope.

Instead of invoking Josef Mengele, however, let's note a different aspect of Greene's observation. She uses the language of solidarity, not the language of autonomy: "They want to take care of the children they already have."

The first thing to be done by those of us who believe abortion is an infamy is to find or create greater bonds of solidarity with women and their children and to discuss abortion only in terms of solidarity. The science, so often invoked these days by those on the political left, will help end the libertarian, autonomy framing of the discussion: Whatever else you may or may not know about an unborn child, its DNA is different from that of its parents and so the argument "it's a woman's body" misstates the actual scientific reality. So, too, does ignoring the degree to which an unborn child is completely dependent on the mother's body. As soon as we, as a culture, recognize that we are talking about two souls, solidarity has a shot to redirect the discussion in ways that respect women and protect unborn lives.

The abortion issue is about to heat up. A "pro-choice" Catholic is about to be nominated for the presidency, and he undoubtedly will be joined by a pro-choice woman on the Democratic Party's ticket. The challenge for Catholics is to avoid the

debate and look for ways to start some conversations. The McGrath Institute's report is a good place to start.

[Michael Sean Winters covers the nexus of religion and politics for NCR.]

***Justice Corner by Carolyn Krantz,
Pastoral Associate***

It is hard to stand strong in the midst of chaos and instability. How did Jesus do it? He connected to the flow of divine grace from the Father. That's why he could say, "Come unto me all you who labor and are heavily burdened and I will refresh you." He was connected to the deep well from which the life force flows. When he heard about the death of his cousin, John the Baptist, he was deeply wounded. He knew that he would share the same fate. He knew he had to get away to be present to the deep flow of the divine within in order to endure. "He got into a boat..."

But the people's need for the food that does not perish, for hope in the midst of suffering, persisted. They follow Him into the desert places. There he teaches the disciples about trust and sharing. Everyone eats. There are twelve baskets left over. "I have food that you do not know," he says in another place. He is connected to the water that does not diminish, the water of eternal life.

"Come unto me all you who are thirsty," he says. In this time of COVID and political unrest, we must identify what we are thirsting for. Only our connection with the water of life will enable us to find stability and courage to do what is necessary. We must make a sanctuary for the spark of divine presence.

The church has a history of martyrs, people who stood up to regimes of cruelty and evil. They were not just those of the early

centuries, they were also those in our own time: Sr. Dorothy Stang, Franz Jergenstatter, the martyrs of El Salvador, Edith Stein, and many more. Our own country has a history of making martyrs of those who are different than the prevailing regime: Martin Luther King, Jr., Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd and more. A book could not name them all.

We exist in times of sickness, unrest and great suffering. We can spend time in fear, or be destroyed by anger, or we can get in touch with the water of life flowing within us. When we find ourselves distraught we must rely on our faith and go to the Lord. “Come unto me all you who labor and are heavily burdened.” In the midst of death all around, we must get into the boat of our hearts, in the silence, and touch the flow of God's grace within. When we feel the pain and suffering of black people, or imagine what it is for an immigrant child to sleep on the cement separated from their parents, when we thirst for justice, we must trust that we and they are in the flow of the life force that can refresh us. Nature reminds us every day that God renews and continues life. With humble heart we know that we cannot fix all the struggles of our time, but we can be a part of that fountain of grace. He will tell us what to do. He will direct our steps to fix what we can and bring compassion to those around us.

So find your boat, your place of rest and refreshment. Find that space to get away from life's duties and sadness, and go within. There we will find the kind of consistency that was present in John Lewis for the last 80 years. He was salt that did not lose its savor. As you see the marchers in Alabama in 1965 on the Edmund Pettus Bridge get mowed down by the police, know that it was this picture broadcast worldwide, that enabled the march to grow from 600 to 10,000 and succeed in changing the

injustices in Alabama. Through suffering comes change. Through death comes resurrection. Look at Ruth Bader Ginsberg continuing to fight for justice through all the cancers and radiation treatments she has endured. We have our examples, people in our own time that are connected to the life force. We cherish their memory and fight on knowing that the divine spark is within us!

*Parish Perspective by
Peter Degl'Innocenti, Pastoral Associate
Changes All Around*

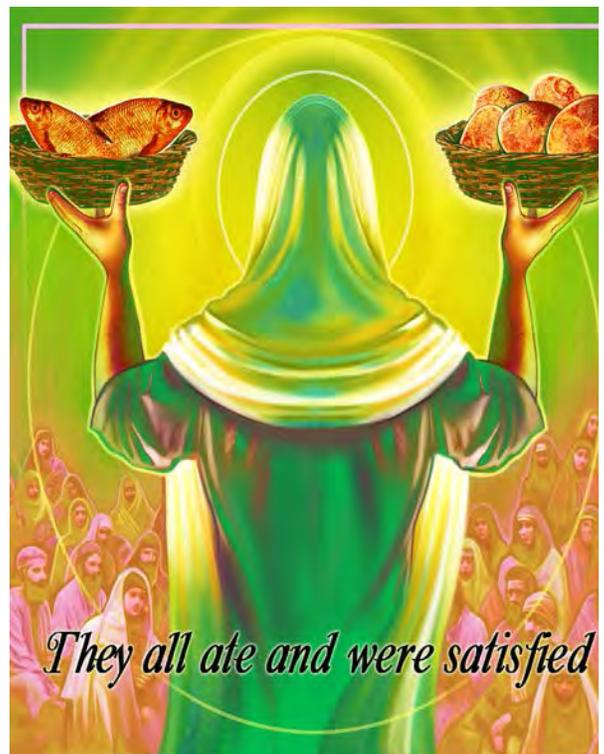
Change is the universal constant. There have been some changes going on around the parish to prove that old axiom. First and most significantly, we are having live in-person Sunday liturgy again. Granted, it's not the normative shoulder-to-shoulder hugs and kisses Mass that we remember, but it is Mass celebrated together. This Sunday marks the first gathering as a parish for an outdoor Mass. Its size is restricted to the number deemed safe, as are the actions taken by the ministers and assembly.

This is our “big test” to see if the training of the teams that need to be in place to conduct the Mass safely are functioning properly. Those valiant teams include those assigned to guide/motor traffic and parking in the parking lot, checking names of people coming to the Mass against the pre-registration list, temperature scanners to make sure the febrile don't sneak in asymptotically, ushers guiding people to the 6 foot distancing spots with their lawn chairs, and those instructing the people as to when to apply their hand sanitizer. It will take some getting used to, but it will come with time. Remember when we had to learn the “new” responses when the Roman Missal III came out? We did it then and we'll do it now.

Another unseen change regards our intrepid Knights of Columbus. The Knights held their first monthly meeting under the guidance of the newly installed officers. With the new Grand Knight Chip Sharp at the helm the Zoom supported meeting reflected a new intensity and sense of purpose for the Knights. A set of “Golden Rules” for the fair and equitable treatment and respect of fellow Knights at meetings and everywhere for that matter was the first item on the agenda. I believe this to be the first sign of a stronger more focused Knights council here at St. Ignatius of Antioch that will make significant changes to an ailing community. It seems that the Knights will be stepping-up to the plate first in social outreach as we are so well known to do.

These are just two of the changes occurring around us. Changes at Holy Cross cemetery will start to allow, in the near future, our Funeral Coordinator team to function once again, with restrictions at the cemetery. This will bring comfort, healing, and answers to the grieving families of our Catholic brothers and sisters. Something very much needed and missed for too many months.

So that’s three things actually! Look for changes, find out what’s changing, and make some changes yourself!



Two Long Running Outreach Efforts Going Virtual

For more than a decade, St. Ignatius of Antioch parish has conducted two drives during the summer months:



The Mary Project in support of
Birthright of Brentwood

and



The Backpack Drive in support of
the students of St. Peter Martyr



Due to the risk caused by the ongoing pandemic, these two traditional outreach efforts are going virtual. Rather than collecting specific items for donation to these organizations, we are collecting cash donations between now and Sunday, August 15, 2020.



If you would like to support this effort this year, please make your check payable to St. Ignatius of Antioch. Write **“SUMMER OUTREACH”** on the memo line. All funds received with this designation will be split 50/50 and forwarded to Birthright of Brentwood and St. Peter Martyr the week of August 16.

If you prefer that your donation to go to one organization or the other, please write:

“BIRTHRIGHT OUTREACH” or

“SCHOOL OUTREACH” on the memo line.

Thank you for supporting these two long running efforts. We look forward to filling the church with diapers, clothes and other baby items for Birthright and backpacks and school supplies for St. Peter Martyr in 2021.