

Obsculta

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Kendall A. Ketterlin, Lauren L. Murphy, Genevieve L. Mougey

Deo Gratias

People familiar with *Benedictines* will immediately recognize the title of this journal: *Obsculta*. This word opens the Rule of St. Benedict. The full verse translates, “Listen carefully, my [child], to the master’s instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart.” This verse is a command to attentiveness and activity. Benedict does not ask for a passive listening, but one that is transformative and life-giving.

At the School of Theology we are engaged in such listening every day. The work in this journal is evidence of that. We listen to our classmates, our friends, our professors, our books. We listen to Scripture, tradition, and experience. We listen to the world. And when we listen, we cannot help but be transformed.

My listening, and the listening of many people, led to the creation of this journal. Little did I know, as a prospective student speaking with Dean Cahoy, that the publication we briefly mentioned during our first meeting would become a reality. It has, and that, for me, is a dream come true. I would like to take this opportunity to offer my gratitude to some people, for without them and their attentiveness, this journal would not have happened.

Genevieve—Your constant attention to the mission of *Obsculta* served to remind us that this journal is more than a good idea; it is a response to a call.

Kendall—Your practical approach kept me grounded and on task. I appreciate your enthusiasm for this project and the way you just jumped in.

Bill Cahoy—Not only did you let us start a pub-

lication for the school, you have trusted us to create a work of integrity. Thank you for the freedom to realize this dream.

Kathleen A. Cahalan—Your willingness to be the faculty adviser for this project is much appreciated. You added your voice when we needed it and supported us in the decisions we made.

Rose Beauclair—You have a vision for this journal that makes me happy. Your questions and insights have been challenging and the journal is the better for it.

Faculty and Staff of the SOT—Your encouragement for this project has meant the world to me. Your questions about the progress of the journal let us know that you care about the work that we do.

Students of the SOT—Because of your good work, we don’t have 44 pages of emptiness. Thank you to all of you who submitted pieces for the journal. I am continually amazed by the engaging and insightful work that you do. This journal exists because of you.

Finally, Lea Murphy and Julie Surma—My mother assisted in preparing the photographs for publication. Julie patiently answered my questions about the computer program used for the layout of the journal. Their expertise is much appreciated.

As you read through the work in these pages, may you be inspired, encouraged, and challenged. *Obsculta*.

obscura

Perceptions

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

(Pedro Arrupe, SJ)

These are the words from Pedro Arrupe that brought me to Saint John's. I spent much time before moving here thinking about where my heart was. Was it really in ministry? Discernment to me has taken on a specifically Benedictine heart since I have come to Saint John's. I recognize that I am mixing my Catholic traditions—Jesuit and Benedictine—but both embody to me the desire to place the language of God within human grasp. Words are so important to me. They have the ability to convey love, hate, vulnerability, sorrow, and profound joy. There are times in life when they are carelessly thrown around, and other moments when there are not enough to share. Very few moments in my life can be recalled when I don't remember the words that were stated that inspired great emotion. I recall how I told my first lie. (I was two, I did write on the wall, I did try to blame it on my older sister, and my mother was able to snap me like a twig—in a very loving way, of course!) There are many instances in which we use words to inform our practices and experiences. We use them so much, and trade them back and forth with such fluidity that we are able to distance ourselves from their very costly nature.

As an undergrad English major I was able to explore in great depth my love for the written word. Flannery O'Connor, William Shakespeare, Henry David Thoreau, Jane Austen; all of these and many other literary geniuses formed my understanding of the power of words. I learned that when used in the right order, words are more powerful than any other force humanity can create.

When I first heard about the project of beginning a School of Theology publication I was excited, intrigued, and perhaps a bit skeptical. Yet I knew I needed to be a part of this endeavor. This project is

a reflection of many different people, their dreams and ambitions, as well as my own. In pursuing this publication, I was made to realize my own dreams and the steps needed to make those a reality.

With my involvement in *Obsculta*, I decided to pursue this project with a style typical to Benedictine living. The integrity that is fundamental to the core learning at the SOT•Sem would need to be transferred authentically to this project. Also, there would need to be an audacious spirit that could be felt and recognized when first glimpsing this work. Finally, this would be accomplished through deliberate pursuit of the scholarly work that is done in the School of Theology. There is one phrase from a famous poem that I have the opportunity to see every day that I go to work at the School of Theology offices. I wish to share those words with you. As you read this first publication, think of the men and women who have lived deliberately, with integrity, and have had the audacious desire to pursue their heart's desires; recognize that this happens every day in the School of Theology at Saint John's University.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, to discover that I had not lived. (Henry David Thoreau)

Genevieve Mougey



In the Woods

Genevieve L. Mougey

And the Word became Flesh

When people first get to know me, it does not take long to find out that I spend a lot of my time at a local coffee shop. Not only is a good cup of coffee one of the most beautiful miracles in life, but what I enjoy even more is that when I walk through the front door, I never know who I'm going to meet on any given night. Several years ago, in the days immediately after the attacks of September 11, I met a biker on his way from Nevada to New York. His name was Kevin and he had several friends who lived and worked in the area right around the Trade Center. For the past three days, he had been trying to get in touch with them on the phone, but was having no luck. Too much chaos, and too many people trying to get in touch with their own loved ones. Kevin wasn't worried though, just anxious to get back to see his friends and the city he had grown up in. Our conversation quickly turned to the Bible I was reading and the word of God. Kevin's idea was that the Word that John wrote about was literally the word: the gift of language, ability to speak, to read, and to write. Humanity came into this world speaking and sharing one language; through sin and pride, that language, and our ability to share with one another, became confused.

Kevin was saying that God comes out when we share our stories with other people, much like he and I were doing that night. His vision may not match a cultural exegesis of John's gospel, but I've always thought that he touched on something extraordinary. It's an intimate relationship when we open ourselves and bring that treasure to another person. By simply telling our story to another person—our thoughts, feelings, and ideas—we are helping to bring God into the world.

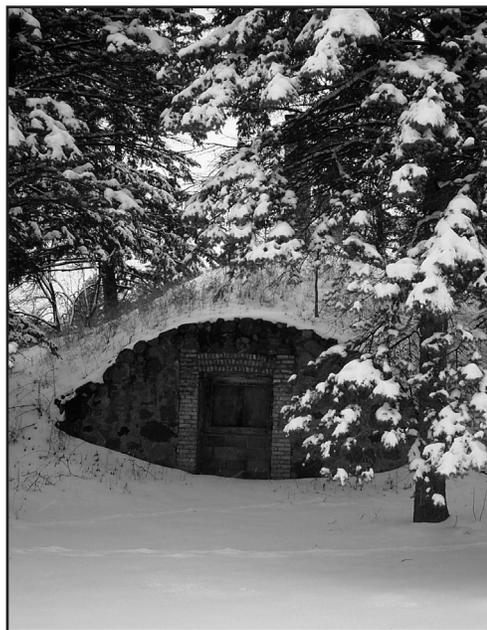
The desire to share our stories is what inspired me to knock on Lauren's door last summer with a desire to put together something, some type of publication or on-line forum for students to share the work they have been doing. Over the course of my first two semesters here at Saint John's, I would get excited when I heard people talk about the papers they were working on for class. Whether it was a dis-

cussion on celibacy in the priesthood, reflections on feminist theology, or a deeply personal story about how a person came to believe in Christ, I was always disappointed that there was nowhere for us to share the incredible work we were doing. We would write these papers, they would see a grading pen, and then die. I was astounded when Lauren told me that she had spent much of the last year working to get a student publication going.

It's our stories that are sacred, and sharing them is what *Obsculta* means for me, opening ourselves with one another and breaking open our community.

I am extremely grateful that Lauren and Genevieve let me join in this project, to Kathleen and Bill for their guidance, to the entire School of Theology for your excited support. But most of all, THANK YOU to all of you who submitted works, who took that step of opening your intimate selves and sharing your word with us.

May God bless you and open the treasures of your heart,



Easter
Morning

Kendall A. Ketterlin

Release from the Slavery of Debt: The Jubilee Year for Ancient Israel and the Modern Global Economy

Laura Kelly Fanucci

The concept of the jubilee year described in Leviticus 25 calls for a proclamation of liberty throughout the land every fifty years. The jubilee is a sacred year which heralds the restoration of ancestral lands and a release from the burden of indebtedness. The mandates of the jubilee year illustrate ancient Israel's understanding of the need for regular social reform in order to maintain balance in relationships, justice in the economy, and equality in society. The jubilee year stands as a necessary theological symbol for the world of ancient Israel, and this key component of covenant law still makes demands on God's covenant people today. An examination of how the jubilee was understood by ancient Israel will lead to an application of its principles to the contemporary crisis of the debt burden in the Developing World. This paper will explore three aspects of the meaning of the jubilee year: its necessity, its theological foundations, and its symbolic value. As a necessary ritual restoring right relationship within the covenant, a theological expression of who God is and who God's people are called to be, and a symbol of how humans are to live in the world, the jubilee year continues to pose a provocative challenge for the world today.

To understand the full meaning of the jubilee year, its context within the larger book of Leviticus must first be established. As part of the Priestly tradition (P) which was written during the postexilic period, the book of Leviticus contains a collection of laws concerning ritual purity.¹ Its rules establish the rituals and practices by which the ancient Israelites were to remain holy for their covenantal relationship with God. As part of the Holiness Code of Leviticus 17–26, the jubilee year legislation in Leviticus 25 demonstrates how the ritual laws govern not only the people's religious practices, but their social and economic interactions as well.² The jubilee laws describe important moral and religious beliefs held by the ancient Israelites, including “the equitable distribution of land, the exchange of land when necessary without deception, and the importance

of the connection between land and the family.”³ All the mandates which make up the jubilee year in Leviticus 25—necessary fallow cycles for the land, the prohibition against usury, and the redemption of debts—are ultimately concerned with maintaining right relationship with God.

The holiness of the jubilee year laws is evident through the Levitical text. First and foremost, Israel's belief in the divinely ordained nature of the laws is revealed in the description of their origin as given by the Lord to Moses on Mount Sinai (Lev 25:1). Second, the computation of the calendar by which the jubilee year is determined is itself of holy significance. Given the sacredness of the number seven in ancient Israelite culture, a cycle of “seven weeks of years,” or forty-nine years, would have indicated a heightened sense of holiness for the jubilee year (25:8). Third, the sacred nature of the jubilee year is intensified by the fact that its proclamation takes place on Israel's Day of Atonement, the most solemn day of the year on which the high priest atones for the sins of the community (25:9). The jubilee year is therefore established as an unmistakably holy moment within the Israelite calendar.

The description of the jubilee year in Leviticus 25 begins with the purpose of its proclamation—to announce liberty for all: “This fiftieth year you shall make sacred by proclaiming liberty in land for all its inhabitants” (Lev 25:10).⁴ During the jubilee year everyone is to return home, and all land is returned to its proper owner: “In this year of jubilee, then, every one of you shall return to his own property” (25:13). The year of jubilee is also a sabbatical year in which there is to be no sowing or reaping and food will be taken directly from the field for all (25:11-12). The jubilee year is to govern business dealings in all other years since it serves as both the time marker

³ David A. Leiter, “The Year of Jubilee and the 21st Century,” *Brethren Life and Thought* 47, no. 3–4 (Summer–Fall 2002): 178.

⁴ The importance of the jubilee year proclamation is evidenced by its announcement by a trumpet blast from a ram's horn whose Hebrew name (*yobel*) gives the jubilee its name: “on this, the Day of Atonement, the trumpet blast shall re-echo throughout your land” (Lev 25:9). (See note to Lev 25:10 in *New American Bible* [New York: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1992], 126.)

¹ R. Norman Whybray, *Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), 123.

² *Ibid.*, 130

and the price standard in all economic transactions (25:14-16). The majority of chapter 25 (vv. 23-55) is devoted to explanations of how the absolute law regarding redemption of property is to be carried out: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants. Therefore, in every part of the country that you occupy, you must permit the land to be redeemed" (25:23-24). Leviticus 25 thus describes multiple aspects of the ritual return to family and ancestral property every fifty years.

Having sketched in broad terms the legislation of Leviticus 25, we turn our attention to an examination of the necessity of the jubilee year within ancient Israelite culture. As a regular ritual celebration, the jubilee year provides a fundamental rhythm for the life of all creation—humans and the land. Since Leviticus 25:11-12 clearly states that the jubilee year involves the celebration of a sabbatical year, the jubilee has aptly been described as the climax of the Sabbatical cycle.⁵ The jubilee year therefore affirms the fundamental unity of creation, since both people and the land are intended to observe the sabbath:

When you enter the land that I am giving you, let the land, too, keep a sabbath for the LORD. . . . While the land has its sabbath, all its produce will be food equally for you yourself and for your male and female slaves, for your hired help and the tenants who live with you, and likewise for your livestock and for the wild animals on your land. (25:2, 6-7)

The fallow year of the land's sabbath allows the earth to rest and rejuvenate, yet the people will not starve since God will provide enough food to sustain all humans and animals. The "calendar cycles" provided by Leviticus therefore establish a structure that governs all of Israel's life "for the preservation of creation and for the liberation and well-being of all God's people."⁶ Following this cyclic understanding of time, the jubilee year serves as a recurring moment of renewal for both the land and those who work it.

The jubilee year is necessary not only for the good of creation, but for the good of the people's covenantal relationship with God as well. Robert Kawashima thus views the jubilee year primarily as

a purificatory ritual:

[T]he Jubilee Year symbolizes and completes an atonement of socioeconomic pollution. The Priestly system of thought imagined Israel, at the moment of its creation by divine fiat, as an ideal correlation of people and land, a sacred order, which not unlike the organization of creation itself as described in the Priestly cosmogony of Genesis 1, must periodically be restored.⁷

Following this understanding of Israel as a nation (the chosen people and the promised land), Kawashima argues that the Priestly author of Leviticus views "slavery and the loss of ancestral land as instances of socioeconomic pollution, since in both cases an Israelite is removed from his proper place in society, namely, from family and land."⁸ Such a disruption from the proper order results in chaos which has to be periodically and ritually set right. Therefore the mandates surrounding the jubilee year are "sacred, not just civil, obligations," which take place in order to reestablish right relationship with God.⁹ The return of the people to their families and ancestral land signifies "the return of cosmic order to Israel"—the original pure state of the nation, both people and land.¹⁰ Vision meets reality, and God's reign of peace and justice is once again restored throughout the land:

Within the Priestly system of thought, then, the Jubilee Year embodies the highest degree of purity attainable on earth, the highest good according to the priests' philosophical idealism. Every fiftieth year, everything is at it should be, where it should be.¹¹

The proclamation of the jubilee year on the Day of Atonement confirms its purificatory nature: "on the very day that the scapegoat disposes of the people's sins in the wilderness, the people and the land return to their original, sacred distribution."¹² The jubilee year thus serves as a necessary means for reestablishing right relationship with God through the purification of Israel as a nation.

Having thus established the necessity of the jubilee year, an examination of its theological foun-

⁵ Calum Carmichael, *Illuminating Leviticus: A Study of Its Laws and Institutions in the Light of Biblical Narratives* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 123.

⁶ F. Ross Kinsler, "Leviticus 25," *Interpretation* 53, no. 4 (1999): 397.

⁷ Robert S. Kawashima, "The Jubilee Year and the Return of Cosmic Purity," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 65, no. 3 (2003): 372.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Kinsler, "Leviticus 25," 397.

¹⁰ Kawashima, "The Jubilee Year," 372.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 389.

¹² *Ibid.*, 384.

dations naturally follows. According to the biblical author (P), the theological basis for the jubilee year is the Exodus event. The divinely-instituted legislation in Leviticus 25 is grounded in Israel's covenantal relationship with God which brought about their liberation from Egyptian rule: "For to me the Israelites belong as servants; they are servants of mine, because I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I, the LORD, your God" (Lev 25:55). The primary place of the Exodus in Israel's understanding of the jubilee year is seen in many of the motive clauses attached to jubilee laws which explain the necessity of their observance: "Since those whom I brought out of the land of Egypt are servants of mine, they shall not be sold as slaves to any man" (25:42). The basis for justice in the jubilee year is reverence for the Lord of the Exodus who brought Israel out of slavery: "Do not deal unfairly, then; but stand in fear of your god. I, the LORD, am your God" (25:17). The people are to live with each other in remembrance of how God has treated them with compassion and justice: "When one of your fellow countrymen is reduced to poverty and is unable to hold out beside you, extend to him the privileges of an alien or a tenant, so that he may continue to live with you" (25:35). Through the calendar rhythms of sabbath, Israel ritually remembers the experience of the Exodus: "The fundamental foundation for the Jubilee year, as for the Sabbath year and the Sabbath day, was the Exodus. God's people were to treat each other, even those who fell into slavery, in ways radically different from the other nations, because YHWH had delivered them from Egypt."¹³ This cultic and cyclic remembrance of Exodus through the various manifestations of the sabbath is thus both foundational and formational for the ancient Israelites: "It was, in a way, a sort of institutionalized exodus in which, in obedience to God, the experience of liberation from slavery was renewed and a new day of justice and peace dawned."¹⁴

In addition to the formative Exodus event, a second theological foundation for the jubilee year is Israel's belief that God is the true owner of the land: "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity; for the land is mine, and you are but aliens who have become my tenants" (Lev 25:23). Since the land belongs to God, all of God's people have an equal right to the land and its fruits. Similarly, no one can sell the land,

¹³ Kinsler, "Leviticus 25," 396.

¹⁴ C. René Padilla, "The Relevance of the Jubilee in Today's World (Leviticus 25)," *Mission Studies* 13, no. 1–2 (1996): 22.

but only the right to use the land, since all property must be returned to its original owner at the jubilee year. God's ownership of the land is understood as a basic fact: "the Lord is the guarantor of adequate right of access for all to the source of supply which is what is meant by 'the Land.'"¹⁵ The notion of redemption—having a member of one's kin put forth financial support to free one from the bondage of slavery or destitution—is understood by some commentators as the broader theological underpinning of the jubilee mandates regarding property: "It is ultimately as 'Owner of All Land' that God, by the Jubilee, 'repurchases' the land of its former owner, to guarantee that it will remain as 'family possession.'"¹⁶ The right to private property is not guaranteed as an absolute right, but the ultimate ownership of the land by God is instead proclaimed as the foundation of all economic dealings.

Having thus established the necessity of the jubilee year for ancient Israel, as well as its theological foundations, the following questions inevitably arise: Was the jubilee ever practiced as a real law or was it simply a utopian ideal? Could the universal implementation of such sweeping systematic reform ever be practically executed, and what would have been the economic and social impacts of such a dramatic upheaval? Was the jubilee ideal instead envisioned simply to give hope to Israelites who were devastated economically by the Babylonian exile? The historicity of the jubilee year continues to be debated by scholars.¹⁷ Yet what matters most for the application of the jubilee laws in contemporary society is "the intent of those who preserved the Jubilee as a biblical institution."¹⁸

The fact that a majority of the jubilee legislation is devoted to discussion of the redemption of debts has been the focus of recent biblical scholarship, as

¹⁵ Robert North, *The Biblical Jubilee . . . After Fifty Years* (Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2000), 121.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43–44.

¹⁷ The positions taken by scholars on the historicity of the jubilee year is largely determined by their view on the dating of Lev 25: "The 'utopian' view is largely linked to a later exilic dating of the Jubilee (or of the whole chapter), which probably is somewhat more common among commentators, often linked with Isa 61 or with the return from exile. . . . Those who maintain a historical reality, if not of Lev 25,10 itself, then at least of an earlier tradition which it retrieves, have generally found that the likeliest historical period for the emergence of such a tradition was the time of the settlement attributed to Joshua, when Israel's hopes were high and the fulfillment was so far off as not to seem implausible" (North, *The Biblical Jubilee*, 11–12).

¹⁸ Leiter, "The Year of Jubilee," 170.

well as a primary concern for those who raise the issue of debt reduction for the Developing World today. The Levitical author condemns interest-bearing loans in no uncertain terms: “Do not exact interest from your countryman either in money or in kind, but out of fear of God let him live with you. You are to lend him neither money at interest nor food at a profit” (Lev 25:36-37). The burden of debt is clearly understood as contrary to God’s will for humankind. The fact that laws decrying slavery are included in the discussion of loans and debts has led some scholars to conclude that “debt is regarded as slavery” in Leviticus 25.¹⁹ In particular, the problem of crippling loans which become essentially unpayable is decied as an evil which must be expunged from society. Therefore debts cannot simply be cancelled; a more comprehensive solution is needed to get at the roots of the problem, namely the presence of sin and inequity within the community:

For this reason, as puzzled commentators have noted, Leviticus 25 makes no mention of canceling debts; precisely on the Day of Atonement of the Jubilee Year, all debts have been paid off *by design*. . . . For it is the strict program of amortization together with the prohibitions of interest and of permanent sale that purge debt by paying it off.²⁰

The question of applying the program of jubilee year legislation to the present unbalance within the global economy can be addressed by examining the same key factors which established the jubilee’s meaning for ancient Israel—its necessity, theological foundations, and symbolic value—in order to determine what meaning the jubilee holds for the present age.

First, the necessity of a jubilee proclamation seems pressing, given the growing divide between developed- and developing-world countries as a result of the burden of national debt. Poorer countries, including many in sub-Saharan Africa, have amassed such staggering external debts that they struggle even to pay the interest to foreign banks and governments of industrial nations, depleting their nation’s financial resources at the expense of addressing the basic needs of their own citizens, “such as food, health care, clothing, and housing.”²¹ The debts of many nations have become largely unpayable, and some indebted countries have simply ceased payment.²²

¹⁹ North, *The Biblical Jubilee*, 18.

²⁰ Kawashima, “The Jubilee Year,” 388.

²¹ Padilla, “The Relevance of the Jubilee,” 26.

²² An analysis of the current situation regarding international debt

International organizations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have recognized the burden of staggering national debts, but much recent social activism has come from religious groups, due in large part to their application of the Levitical jubilee year to the current crisis.²³ The mandate of the jubilee year is to protect the poor from exploitation through economic slavery, “to avoid precisely the situation which agonizes us today: a world or a nation where too few have far too much, and millions starve.”²⁴ The basic stance toward the economy and ecology in Leviticus 25 stands in stark contrast to much of the current approach toward the world market and natural resources: the poor and vulnerable are not to be exploited; the land is not to be used to the point of exhaustion.

Second, the theological foundations of the jubilee year also call for the application of its principles to the current global economy. Drawing on its connection with Exodus, the proclamation of the jubilee can be seen as “a ‘celebration of release’ which must somehow involve a more just distribution of indebtedness among the poorer populations.”²⁵ The belief that all of creation ultimately belongs to God also compels a contemporary application of the Levitical jubilee legislation: “Two-thirds of the world is hungry and in need of ‘release from its debts; repossession of its land.’ ‘The Land is the Lord’s’—to be used for reasonable (even if never perfectly equal) benefit

can be found in the World Economic Outlook, a survey from the staff of the International Monetary Fund in September 2003; in particular chap. 3, “Public Debt in Emerging Markets: Is It Too High?,” <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2003/02/pdf/chapter3.pdf> (accessed 5 December 2007).

²³ The international movement called Jubilee Year 2000 brought together diverse religious groups around the world in an effort surrounding the year 2000 to campaign for debt relief for the Developing World. This movement coincided with the Catholic Church’s declaration of 2000 as a Jubilee Year, “an important religious event calling for forgiveness of sins, reconciliation between adversaries, and a commitment to serve God with joy and peace” (Leiter, “The Year of Jubilee,” 182). Pope John Paul II was a leader in the effort to awaken public consciousness to the need for a significant change in global economic policy toward the debts of developing countries. The Jubilee movement’s work to rally political leaders and powerful financial institutions continues today; notably the year 2007 was declared a “Sabbath year” by the Jubilee USA: “Inspired by the Jubilee vision of liberation and fullness of life for all, people of faith and conscience around the world are calling their political leaders to observe a Sabbath Year in 2007, seven years after Jubilee 2000.” Jubilee USA: The Sabbath Year, <http://www.jubileeusa.org/index.php?id=239> (accessed 5 December 2007).

²⁴ North, *The Biblical Jubilee*, 122.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 125–26.

of all people everywhere.”²⁶ The theology of the jubilee year also raises the ethical question of whether religious practices govern decision-making in today’s world: “The Jubilee was concerned with basic ecological and economic realities—the care of the land and those who worked the land, debts, slavery, and the distribution of the land. These practical concerns were presented as critical spiritual matters.”²⁷ The jubilee was never intended to be simply a political or an economic decision, but rather a powerful theological reality. It is described by the Leviticus author as an ethical and religious mandate intended to transform people’s ways of thinking about their fellow humans, their attitudes toward justice, and their transactions in the business world. The jubilee is a sacred matter, concerned with the restoration of right relationship with God throughout all of creation.

The symbolic value of the necessary and theologically grounded jubilee year is the third and most significant aspect of the Leviticus 25 legislation for contemporary application. Regardless of whether it was ever practiced as actual law or functioned merely as a utopian ideal, the jubilee remained an important theological symbol for ancient Israel. The Israelites’ belief in this divinely ordained legislation suggests the value of the jubilee year “to serve as a symbol to the community that everyone has a claim to own and work the land.”²⁸ The symbolic meaning of the jubilee year holds great potential for the transformation of society today as it did for ancient Israel: “The value of these rules was not their effectiveness as an enforceable law but their effectiveness for serving as a symbol for those who advocated an egalitarian society and for those who were sympathetic with people who wielded little economic power.”²⁹ Even without accepted agreement in scholarship on whether or not the jubilee was ever practical legislation, the law can be called upon to govern economic and ethical practices in today’s society.

Understanding the jubilee year as a potent symbol follows an established tradition of biblical interpretation:

The Hebrew Bible contains numerous legal rules that are problematic from a legislative standpoint, yet they have remained part of the biblical tradition. . . . Such laws do not function effectively as enforceable legislation but tend

to take on other functions that serve the society that created them in the first place. Such functions normally fall under the realm of the symbolic and the didactic.³⁰

Laws thus have multiple functions: not only to legislate expected behavior and to prescribe punishments in case of disobedience, but also to symbolize and to instruct. Laws communicate the moral values and ethical norms of a given culture, as well as teach the community’s most important beliefs. Thus even if the jubilee laws were never practical or realistic from a legal and economic standpoint, they still held great importance and meaning for ancient Israel.

It is in this symbolic nature that the jubilee year continues to hold its greatest value as a model for the modern world:

Even today the Jubilee rules serve in didactic and symbolic ways to send a moral message to the world. These rules serve to educate the general public and the world’s leaders that economic inequality is inappropriate and must be addressed whenever it occurs in cases such as the international debt crisis. They also serve as a symbol for those who feel compelled to bridge the gap between the rich and poor.³¹

To a certain degree, all laws are based on utopian visions. Humans create rules with the expectation that most, if not all, will not always be followed to the fullest. Yet the standard is still set high in the hopes of future progress and human potential. Such hopeful standards are needed to inspire the imagination and encourage real action: “We need to ask not whether it is realistic or practical or viable but whether it is imaginable. . . . The imagination must come before the implementation.”³² As the jubilee year stimulated the imagination of ancient Israel, so too can its symbolic value function to inspire and direct actions today.

The concept of the jubilee year raises difficult questions. What do freedom, solidarity, stewardship, justice, and equality mean in today’s world? How can balance be brought to the global economy? Those who accept the book of Leviticus as Sacred Scripture are called to look beyond the historical circumstances of ancient Israel to apply the meaning of the jubilee year to contemporary life. As a universal

²⁶ Ibid., 126.

²⁷ Kinsler, “Leviticus 25,” 395.

²⁸ Leiter, “The Year of Jubilee” 178.

²⁹ Ibid., 179.

³⁰ Ibid., 175.

³¹ Ibid., 181.

³² Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1986), 44–45; quoted in C. René Padilla, “The Relevance of the Jubilee,” 30.

declaration of liberty, the jubilee can be understood today in terms of a worldwide call for freedom from the slavery of crippling debt loads: “The message of the Jubilee for today . . . is a proclamation of global unity in working to relieve economic unbalance.”³³ The jubilee year continues to respond to present-day calls for justice and dignity to play a central role in global economic decision-making:

At the very heart of the Jubilee lies the firm conviction of the equality of all people before God, equality that can never be reduced to an abstract ideal, but rather is realized in the concrete possibility that all people have their basic needs met.³⁴

The hopeful vision of the jubilee legislation broadens its message beyond the particular historical situation of Israel to assert powerful relevance for present reality; it is a call to examine what is and to ask what should be. As a necessary theological symbol, both for ancient Israel and for the world today, the jubilee year invites believers to examine their own social and business dealings, as well as to challenge the economic practices of their banks and governments in order to bring about a more just and equitable world in which all of creation is honored and allowed to live freely. †

³³ North, *The Biblical Jubilee*, 120.

³⁴ Padilla, “The Relevance of the Jubilee,” 22.

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Silhouette Chapel

Kendall A. Ketterlin

Theological Limericks

In 2006, Brother Peregrine Rinderknecht, OSB, instigated the annual theological limerick contest. The contest provides students with the opportunity to engage the material they are learning in classes in a way that is entertaining and perhaps even challenging.

2006

First Place: Andrew Gaylord

Don't tell me you're losing all hope
that the bishops will widen their scope.
Just ignore the nonsense
And stick to your conscience,
And one day they'll make you . . .
a very nice offer at a Protestant university.

Second Place: Judy Kniss

Theology has texts a-plenty
Whose meanings are varied and many.
Let's pull out new tricks
Called Hermeneutics
To determine that meaning, if any.

Honorable Mention: Andy Witchger

Nestorians don't intertwine
Christ's natures: human and divine
Monophysites claim
They are one in the same
Chalcedon would correct them in time

2007

First Place: Jeremy Schwager

Nestorius said "Theotokos?
You've got it all wrong 'bout the Logos!
I think Mary is cool
But to set down a rule
We should really say Anthroptokos."

Second Place: Andrew Gaylord

A sinner you held me complete
From the day I did covet the teat
But my appetite sated
I sat and I waited
For you to say "Take up and read!"

Honorable Mention: Judy Kniss

A note group moves slowly or zooms,
The chanter never presumes.
To set the church ringing
With the sound of one's singing,
One must strictly follow the nuemes.

Upon Retirement: Recollections and Reflections

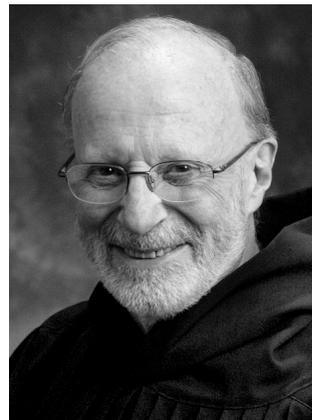
Allan Bouley, OSB

I made final profession in the old Abbey Church (Great Hall) in July of 1960, having been told by Abbot Baldwin Dworschak that I would be going to Rome in October, to the international Benedictine College of Sant' Anselmo to study for a Licentiate in Theology and then a Doctorate in Moral Theology at the Alphonsianum. In those days you did not discuss personal preferences with regard to future work in the community. It was an honor to be sent "to Rome." And in the fall I sailed there with a good deal of anticipation and trepidation, having accepted whatever the future might hold. My personal hopes to teach English and world literature were set aside.

In Rome, in fairly short order, John XXIII announced the Second Vatican Council, it convened, and produced the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy as its first document. We had Benedictine *periti* living with us at the college who shared with us daily all the ins and outs of curial shenanigans, power struggles, and backroom maneuverings as the council fathers labored to nudge the church into the twentieth century. The experience left me with a life-long "hermeneutic of suspicion" with regard to most things emanating from the Curia and the Vatican. It was also a time of heady hope and optimism as the spirit of *aggiornamento* filled the air.

With the strong leadership of Cyprian Vaggini, OSB, Sant' Anselmo launched its Liturgical Institute, the first faculty in the Eternal City to begin adopting Italian (rather than Latin) as the language of instruction, and multiple vernaculars for seminars and written exams. Later I would be asked to switch to a doctoral program in Liturgical Studies at the Institute. So much for Moral Theology! (And, yes, there is divine providence.)

With my Licentiate work nearly complete, I was brought back to Collegeville for the academic year 1964–65 in order to be "re-acclimated to the community" before starting my doctoral work in liturgy. I was all set to teach college theology courses at Saint John's University and prefect the dayhop students. It would be my first time teaching anyone. But the newly elected Abbot of St. Procopius near Chicago had been asking Abbot Baldwin for a dogma professor for their small seminary (the community also sponsored St. Procopius College—now Illinois



Benedictine). Abbot Baldwin asked me to go there and do that. I agreed to go. With three weeks' notice, I became the dogma department there: I taught Fundamental Theology, Christology, Ecclesiology, Sacramental Theology, and Mariology to seminarians and a course in religion to college sophomores with someone else's syllabus and text list. It was not difficult to be a success, since my predecessor had taught by plunking down on the lectern, day after day, a dogma text, entirely in Latin, from the Gregorian University in Rome, which he proceeded to translate for a roomful of students frantically trying to take notes since virtually none of them could read Latin. That was my first year of teaching. I also helped out in a suburban parish every single weekend. It was the proverbial baptism of fire. It also meant that I actually spent nine months of my year "at home" in Lisle, Illinois, frantically trying to stay a class or two ahead of my students. One thing it taught me: Roman teaching methods do not work very well.

I returned to Sant' Anselmo and began the liturgy doctorate. Course work complete, I decided to return to Collegeville to write my dissertation. Though it was not finished, I began my faculty appointment in the Seminary and School of Theology in 1969, teaching full time and also taking an increasing role in the elaboration of the monastery's vernacular Liturgy of the Hours. I quickly sensed a serious lacuna in the Seminary curriculum. Up to the council, future priests studied liturgy piecemeal: some in Moral Theology, some in Canon Law, some in Latin classes (so you could pronounce liturgical texts and maybe even understand some of them), and finally teaching yourself how to "say Mass" with the help of, e.g. O'Connell's, *The Celebration of Mass*. After the council virtually all of that disappeared. The lacuna and challenge: how to educate future priests about the history, theology, and pastoral practice of the liturgy in

a post-conciliar age? It seemed imperative that *some* preparation be given to those who would preside at parish worship.

So I invented a two-semester sequence of courses called Liturgical Preaching and Presidency (LP&P, quickly nicknamed “Let’s Play Priest” by seminary wags), which over the years evolved into Pastoral Liturgy I and II. Nothing in a Roman doctoral program prepared me for that.

All the students then, of course, were seminarians, fairly serious, and yet often fairly frivolous. I remember videotaping a “laboratory” (read: fake, play-acting) funeral one sunny spring day. The funeral “Eucharist” having ended, another presider was to take over at the door of Emmaus Chapel and lead us to the backyard for the “committal” at graveside. Well, he happened to be the son of a Great Lakes ship captain. He appeared out of the blue in full ship captain’s uniform, and the “funeral” became one with full military honors, complete with flag on the coffin, fake gun salute, and a real bugler blowing taps from the roof of the short wing of Emmaus. Another time: St. Patrick’s Day at a lab liturgy that included “Eucharist.” The practice-presider was a quiet Irish kid who had obviously prepared very well. But a surprising number of people returning from receiving from the cup had odd grins on their faces. Reason: The quiet Irish kid had filled the “wine” carafe with Irish whiskey rather than the water we normally used for such exercises.

The stories and the people remembered from years past could be recalled and recorded for pages. But that is not my prime purpose here. I need to write in more general terms.

In retrospect, there are many things that I am glad to have been a part of in my nearly 40 years of teaching in Saint John’s University and the School of Theology:

Having had a hand in the education of a majority of the active priests (and more recently some permanent deacons) of the Diocese of St. Cloud and of priests from other dioceses in Minnesota, the Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin, Illinois, California, Oregon, Washington, Montana, Louisiana.

Welcoming international students from the United Kingdom, Australia, Africa, Korea, other points East, and especially from China, where at least three priests educated here in the liturgy program are top players in liturgical renewal in the Catholic Church in China.

Enjoying the presence and ecumenical contributions of students belonging to the ELCA and Mis-

souri Synod of the Lutheran Church, the Episcopal Church, and United Church of Christ. The Lutherans have found the liturgy program of the SOT an ecumenically sensitive place in which to pursue their interest in a discipline still considered suspect in some of their own seminaries.

Having the opportunity to spend ten months of 1979–80 in Israel, first teaching in our Jerusalem Program, then, on sabbatical at the Ecumenical Institute at Tantur. It included visiting sites from Dan to Beersheba, many at least twice, plus Cairo, the Nile, and the pyramids and temples of Egypt.

Being invited to teach as a visitor at The Catholic University of America in 1985–86, working with undergraduates and doctoral candidates. It was the year that Charles Curran was fired from his job there because he was a naughty moral theologian. Again, I gave thanks that I had ended up in a less neuralgic field. I also concluded that CUA, like Washington, D.C. itself, was a nice place to visit, but . . .

Seeing the SOT warmly accept and affirm the ministerial call of ever increasing numbers of lay men and women and of female religious as the number of seminarians decreased dramatically.

This shift has made the classroom a much more interesting place: more variety of persons, backgrounds, and already acquired experience and skills; very high levels of motivation and involvement in the educational process. I have been on the admissions committee for some years. I am constantly impressed and moved by the sense of call, of ministry, of sacrifice, of self-giving evidenced in the life vignettes displayed in the admissions essays of applicants, whether they are fresh out of college or recently so, or engaged in a significant career change, or coming after years of volunteer service in the church. Their generosity and openness to risk as they aspire to prepare for a future in which material benefits are likely to be meager is often astonishing.

Having had a congenial group of faculty, staff, and administrative colleagues for most of these four decades has been a distinct blessing sometimes not found even in “religious” institutions elsewhere. Except for one quite rough patch some twenty years ago, I have found that we work in a collaborative manner so that we not only urge the same on our students but actually model it. We are an open, honest, amiable, and amicable bunch of people, generous with time and talent, and interested in the welfare of students and the institution. We do not engage in monothink nor do we always agree, but

the differences are out in the open, contribute to the rich mix of ideas, and generally are worked through professionally and without feuding or rancor. We like each other, and that is a blessing easily overlooked because we are quite used to it.

As the day of retirement draws near and I think back, I believe that it was God's providence that led me, via obedience to the Abbot and the needs of the community, to the teaching of liturgy. It may not have been, initially, my own fervid choice, but it has been an area of study and work that has captured my interest and enthusiasm sufficiently enough for it to have been a satisfying "career." More importantly, it has been God's way of keeping me near to my central monastic vocation, to theological and personal *lectio*, to the vibrant center of the church's pastoral life, despite the vacillations, fidelities, and failures of my own spiritual journey. I do not think that teaching *Beowulf*, Shakespeare, Keats, O'Connor, or Hemingway would have been, for me, as grace-filled. Still, I have been distanced enough from the work that it does not define who I am, and I am able to put it aside without regret or anxiety. And I am sure that the future, as the past, is in God's hands. There is no safer place.

To end, I want to share what I wrote last year in my letter to Bill Cahoy telling him of my intent to retire in the Spring of 2008:

I have especially appreciated the courage of the SOT in maintaining its high intellectual and pastoral standards and strong centrist approach to theology in the Catholic academy (grounded in history, the fathers, the monastic ethos and without being beholden to any theological 'school') especially over the past more than 25 years, as the official Catholic Church moved and continues to move further and further away, in fact if not in rhetoric, from the rich promise of Vatican II. Its retrograde moves, especially in the area of worship and liturgy, have been the cause of considerable pain for me, and are also a small part of my decision to retire at this time.

Be assured that my fond regards, moral support, and best wishes for you, the School of Theology, its faculty, staff, alums, and current students is strong and will continue to be so long into the future. †



Sunday Morning

Lauren L. Murphy

Cool Summer Mornings

John Mark Feilmeyer

Cool summer mornings remind me of fall
and I wonder -
“Will there be one at all?”

(Forest greens turned orange and red
fallen on ground-
mother earth’s frozen winter bed)

Let’s put off the eschaton a year or two.
While we wait
I can search for You.



Fish Creek Canyon

Jeremy Schwager

Christians Must Be Engaged in Social Justice Actions

Shawa Gosbert F.

Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with his neighbor; if you no longer oppress the resident alien, the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood in this place, or follow strange gods to your own harm, will I remain with you in this place, in the land which I gave your fathers long ago and forever. (Jer 7:5-7)

Before I can look more closely into the main topic of my reflection, I need to recognize some of the challenges we face in using Jeremiah's text as a guide in the modern Christian social life. These challenges apply both to us who see Jeremiah as a charter for Christian social life and for guidance of other kind or search Jeremiah for help in a more applied way. Obviously Jeremiah continues to speak not just despite his antiquity and very different cultural origin, but sometimes even because he presents an understanding of human existence so sharply distinct from the assumptions of the twenty-first century. Before reflecting on Jeremiah's text I need first to understand the religious, social-political, and cultural context of the book of Jeremiah.

Jeremiah was a prophet during the reign of Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim was a typical tyrant—cruel, selfish, and indulgent. He subjected his people to forced labor to build his magnificent palaces. To him, being a king meant living in luxurious style. In addition to playing the tyrant, Jehoiakim revived the paganism that his father had tried to eliminate. Every member of the family had a part in making cakes for *Ishtar*, Queen of Heaven. The barbarous rite of child sacrifice was practiced in the valley of Hinnon and pagan idols were set up in the Temple. To make matters worse, social abominations were perpetrated in the very shadow of the Temple. All these things rankled in Jeremiah's heart. He began his message with a sharp summons, "Amend your ways and your doings."

We Christians must be engaged in social justice actions. We cannot afford to do it in abstract, universal, non-analytic terms. "We must also bear in mind the methods and motives of oppression, the constant changes in the style of tyranny, the increasingly threatening presence of transnational corporations and the ideologies of national security and limited democracy that have for their purpose the preservation of the capitalist system and its oppressive structure."¹ The oppressor steals from the oppressed and impoverishes them.

The principal motive for oppression is the eagerness to pile up wealth and the desire is connected with the fact that the oppressor is an idolater. There is an almost complete absence of the theme of oppression in European and North America biblical theology. The absence is not surprising, since it is possible to tackle the theme only within an existential situation of oppression. Thus says Yahweh, "Do what is right and just. Rescue the victim from the hand of his oppressor" (Jer 22:3).

Reflecting from an African perspective, Christians in Africa must engage themselves in social justice actions. The African social fabrics bear a grim mark of betrayal. The experience of betrayal elicits the temperament of the people. According to the opinion of Amil Cabral, Africa suffers from the "*cancer of betrayal*." This makes the words of the German Jesuit, Alfred Delp, who was condemned to death by Hitler, relevant: "*Bread is important, freedom is more important, but the most important of all is unbroken fidelity and faith adoration.*"² The crucial challenge from the African perspective is our fidelity to the African heritage. We, who live in the African church today, for fear of missing bread, sacrifice the process of enculturation. We forget that it is for fidelity to his Father and African people, that Jesus Christ took our flesh—the Body, the church whose members are Africans—and for that, Jesus is truly African like us except sin. Have we adequately transformed the church in Africa into being truly Catholic and African?

Jeremiah was very patriotic. He did not want his people to suffer God's punishment. He thus faced a dilemma: it was difficult for him to announce punishment to them, but keeping silence would mean certainty of punishment. Patriotism is costly. One suffers either from foreigners or from one's own people. Jeremiah suffered most from his own people who did not want to hear the message of doom. Kings, priests, false prophets, and the population in general all turned a deaf ear to Jeremiah's warning and even physically harassed him.

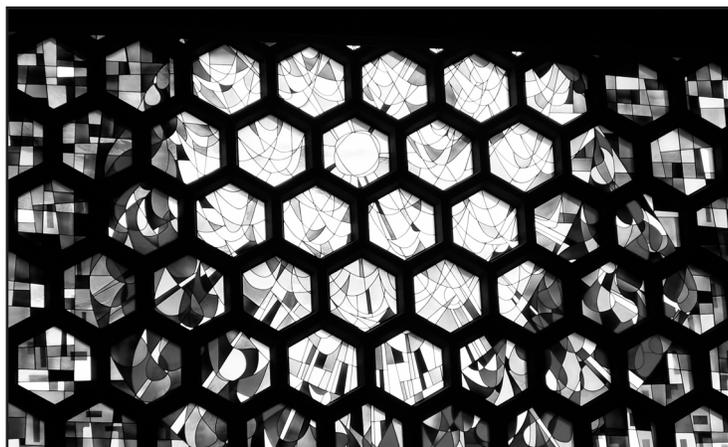
It cannot be overemphasized that today Africa needs true leaders, both in civil society and in the church, who fully identify themselves with their people. This kind of leadership has not featured prominently in the recent history of Africa. The person Jeremiah, his genuine patriotism and his unswerving dedication to his mission, should be an inspiration and a challenge for us in Africa. God bless Africa. †

¹ Assmann Hugo, *Carter y la logica del Imperialismo*, vol. 2 (San Jose: Educa, 1978).

² Alfred Delp, *Facing Death* (1944), 163; emphasis added.

Visual Representation of the Liturgical Year

Judy Kniss



All photographs of the Abbey window by Judy Kniss

One of the joys of living in the Midwest is the privilege of experiencing the cyclical flow of death and rebirth throughout the changing seasons. Winter, cold and barren, gradually turns into spring, green and alive, smelling of rain and earth. Summer, with its familiar images of full-blown roses, bumblebees, and pools of leafy shade gradually fades into autumn's crunchy decay, and the cycle repeats. In the song "The Circle Game," Joni Mitchell sings of the changing seasons:

And the seasons they go round and round
And the painted ponies go up and down
We're captive on the carousel of time
We can't return we can only look
Behind from where we came
And go round and round and round
In the circle game.¹

¹ Joni Mitchell, "The Circle Game," *Ladies of the Canyon* (Warner Bros: 1970).

Time flows on, always turning back into itself, yet continuously moving ahead into the future; we are all trapped, bound to move with the seasons through their unbroken cycle. In addition to the natural seasons, Christians experience the cycle of life and rebirth expressed through the liturgical year. Unlike the seasons of the solar year, the seasons of the liturgical year do not have commonly associated images. What does Lent look like? What about Advent? Pentecost? While you could paint a picture of an Advent wreath, would this be sufficient representation of the entire theology of the season of Advent? The theology of the liturgical year is complex, making visual imaging of the seasons difficult. The instruction, *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, describes the liturgical year as the Catholic Church's means of celebrating the whole mystery of Christ, from his incarnation to the expectation of

his second coming.² Is it possible to visually depict this theological concept? Bronislaw Bak has done exactly this with his stained glass window located in the Abbey Church of Saint John the Baptist in Collegeville, Minnesota. Bak's window in the Abbey Church visually depicts the complexity of Christian life expressed throughout the liturgical year.

This paper will first present some background to the aesthetic of modern art and architecture at work in the Abbey Church's design, as well as the theological and liturgical justifications for this aesthetic. Next, the body of this essay will focus on the window as a visual representation of the "life of a Christian in God"³ through the liturgical year, appealing to the window's visual elements of color and shape. Finally, this paper will conclude with some remarks regarding how well the window supports its intended theology of the liturgical year.

Liturgical Space and the Modern Aesthetic

In the 1950's, just prior to the Second Vatican Council, people in the Catholic Church began experimenting with liturgical celebration, as well as updating their notions of what sacred space and liturgical art should look like. In his encyclical *Mediator Dei*, Pope Pius XII encouraged the use of modern architecture in the building of new liturgical spaces,⁴ a bold move for a church traditionally beholden to medieval and renaissance European cultural heritage. However, Pius XII did place a caveat in his encyclical, warning against modern art and architecture that becomes too abstract. Above all, the forms need to engage the people in conscious worship, not alienate the assembly.⁵ The worship space must encourage the assembly to relate more fully to each other and to the liturgical actions through which they collectively offer praise and thanksgiving to God.

Modern liturgical spaces are often simple—nearly unadorned—in order to focus the assembly on the sacraments and on the relationship between

God and the faithful. Modern spaces are constructed with a variety of materials including steel, concrete, wood, tile, stone, and glass; these materials provide the beauty of a space rather than applied art and ornamentation.⁶ The Abbey Church exemplifies this practice; artwork and statuary are virtually absent in the nave and sanctuary. It is the varied building materials that give the space character.

Another characteristic of modern architecture is the use of light and open space. The Abbey Church is open, without columns or side aisles, allowing everyone to be seated close to the altar and to have a clear view of liturgical actions. Finally, the use of light, particularly colored light, is an important factor in modern architecture.⁷ In the Abbey Church, the walls are filled with clear windows that lift the building off the ground, allowing the folded concrete walls to float above the floor.⁸ The stained glass window in the Abbey Church exemplifies the modern use of light by offering an abstract visual image of Christian life engaged in worship, in addition to filtering colored light into the nave.

Visible Theology: The Abbey Window

The window in the Abbey Church completely fills the north wall of the building, stretching above the church's main entrance, which is located through the baptistery. When the monks of Saint John's began to plan for the window, they wanted an abstract design that would create a mood for the liturgical space, rather than an iconographic design depicting a specific image.⁹ The abbot at the time of construction, Baldwin Dworshak, OSB, described the monks' wishes in a letter to the architect, Marcel Breuer: "The central portion represents the Mass, a lifting of the mind and heart to God; the side portions represent the liturgical year in its different liturgical seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, and Pentecost."¹⁰ All of these elements necessitate a complicated design, a requirement that Bak's final design manages to satisfy. It is useful at this juncture to unpack the window's complex theology one section at a time.

At the center of the window, where Abbot Bald-

² Congregation for Divine Worship, General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar, Instruction (1970), §17.

³ Andrew Goltz, OSB, interview by author, 19 October 2007, Collegeville, MN.

⁴ Victoria Young, "St. John's Abbey Church, Collegeville, Minnesota (1953-1961): The Benedictines and Marcel Breuer Search for the Sacred" (PhD diss., University of Virginia, 2003), 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 57. For more information regarding early liturgical reforms and modern architecture see Pope Pius XII, *Mediator Dei* and *Documents for Sacred Architecture* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1957).

⁶ Young, "St. John's Abbey Church," 59–60.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 196.

¹⁰ Abbot Baldwin Dworschak, Collegeville, MN, to Marcel Breuer, New York City, 19 September 1958, typescript, Syracuse University Library Archives Box 105 Folder 2, cited in Young, "St. John's Abbey Church," 197.

win wanted a representation of the assembly lifting up their hearts to God in the Mass, Bak placed a round panel of glass meant to evoke the eye of God.¹¹ As Pope John Paul II describes in *Dies Domini*, “This is a contemplative gaze which . . . God casts upon all things, but in a special way upon man, the crown of creation.”¹² This pane could also be representative of the eucharistic host, another reference to the Mass, though perhaps a reference Bak did not intend. A white area representing the community of heaven immediately surrounds the eye of God; the boomerang-shaped pieces of glass in this section symbolize the heavenly inhabitants. It is unclear what the use of this shape is intended to mean, though the shapes and colors used here do seem to evoke the senses of quietness and worshipfulness, as if the inhabitants of heaven are “holding their breath in the presence of God.”¹³ The lines radiating out from the eye of God symbolize the flow of divine grace from God in all directions.

The red portion of the window is often mistakenly interpreted as the feast of Pentecost. It seems simple enough because the predominant shapes here appear to be flames, a shape commonly associated with the feast of Pentecost. However, the red section of the window represents people—all Christians who are engaged in worshiping God. The Latin phrase *sorsum corda*, which means, “lift up your hearts,” inspired this section of the window. The flame-shaped drops in this section can be described best in terms of the fire of God’s grace enkindled in the hearts of all Christians.¹⁴ The flames do call to mind the fire imagery surrounding Pentecost, the mystery that infuses our whole Christian relationship with each other and with God. Brother Andrew Goltz, OSB, one of the artisans who worked on the window’s construction, explains that the flames show “the life of the church that is on fire with the grace of God.” So, the average viewer is not completely wrong in a Pentecost interpretation, just missing the full picture.

Christians worship God through the cyclical celebrations during the liturgical year. These liturgical seasons are visually represented in different-colored columns spaced across the face of the window. According to Brother Andrew, Bak and his team de-

signed the window to reinforce the cyclical nature of the liturgical year; as Joni Mitchell sings, “the seasons, they go round and round,”¹⁵ and the end of the year becomes the beginning. With this in mind, the window is anchored on both sides with columns of gold—on the left, Advent, and on the right, Pentecost.¹⁶ Just inside these anchors, Christmas and Easter also share design elements; both columns are comprised of white and red glass formed in star-like pointed panes. These two poles of the Christian mystery, one of incarnation, the other of resurrection and ascension, mirror each other just as Advent and Pentecost mirror one another. Just inside the Easter column on the right hand side of the window, a purple column represents Lent. Finally, the green sections of the window surrounding the central white and red represent the tree of life and the foundation of the Christian tradition in the Old Testament.

All of these columns sit on a blue background that symbolizes the waters of baptism: both the ritual entrance into the Catholic Church, and the physical entry into the Abbey Church through the baptistery. Near the base of the window, on the left hand side, a wave of rippled blue glass springs from the wall of the baptistery and flows along the length of the window. This ripple can be seen in various locations on the window, trickling through each of the seasons. Finally, each hexagonal section of the background design has both a horizontal and a vertical component, resulting in a subtle cross shape in each hexagon and reminding the viewer of Christ. Let us now examine each column and the theology of its represented liturgical season.

The season of Advent is understood to be one of longing and anticipation. The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar describes Advent as having two aspects: it is a season to prepare for Christmas, and a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s second coming (§39). In order to evoke this sense of expectation, Bak used arc shapes in the pattern for the Advent column. These incomplete circle shapes point toward the incarnation. Bak deliberately chose to portray Advent and Pentecost in the same gold color in order to emphasize their relation to each other as the beginning and ending of the year. However, the use of gold instead of purple or pink for Ad-

¹¹ Goltz interview. The information in this section of the paper is from this interview unless otherwise noted.

¹² Pope John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dies Domini*, 1998.

¹³ Bronislaw Bak, quoted by Goltz.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Joni Mitchell, “The Circle Game.”

¹⁶ This unusual choice of color for Advent and Pentecost will be addressed below.

vent, or red for Pentecost, while relating the seasons more closely to each other, obfuscates each season's unique theology. These theologies are treated in the shapes used in each column, but color would have been a more immediate means of depiction. Because the chosen color is not traditionally used to represent either liturgical season, there is some confusion when people view the window expecting to see a more clearly defined image of the liturgical year.

The Christmas column is done in white and red glass, sharp panes shaped into brilliant pointy spikes. Brother Andrew describes these as the "bursting stars" of the incarnation mystery. Jesus is often described as "the light of the world" (John 8:12) and the sun that enlightens all people.¹⁷ These themes are articulated in the window through the use of star-shape patterns.

The Lenten season is one of penance, culminating in the crucifixion of Jesus; Christians mark this period with stripped-down liturgies, solemn prayer, and fasting. The purple palette of this window column uses the traditional color scheme of the Lenten season. The panes of glass in this column, shaped as drooping folds of fabric, evoke a sense of suspension, much like Jesus Christ was suspended on the cross. The swooping, drooping arcs of glass perhaps call to mind the cloth that is used to cover all art and crucifixes in a church on Good Friday.

The Easter column of the window is intended to represent the entire Easter season, from Easter morning to Pentecost fifty days later. Near the base of the window, two large ovoid shapes represent the tomb with its cover stone rolled aside. Christ rises from this tomb in "bursts of glory," indicated by the series of smaller round spots ascending from the tomb toward the top of the window. The overall pattern of the Easter column mirrors the Christmas column in its dominant use of white and red colors, as well as in the pointy, star-shaped panes of glass.

The Pentecost column mirrors the Advent column in color and position on the window. However, where the Advent window uses incomplete arc shapes, the Pentecost column is filled with water drops, not to be confused with tongues of flame. These droplets represent the Catholic Church infused with the Holy Spirit. Fifty days after Christ's resurrection, the Holy Spirit entered into the disciples and continues today to fill Christian hearts with love and fire. It is

¹⁷ Adolf Adam, *The Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1981), 123.

unclear why the artist chose for this column a water drop shape instead of flames. Flames would have been more recognizable as Pentecost; however, that motif was already in use elsewhere on the window.

As mentioned above, the green sections near the middle of the window do not simply represent the liturgical season of Ordinary Time. According to the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and Calendar*, Sundays in Ordinary Time are devoted to the celebration of all aspects of the mystery of Christ (§43). Since the window represents the entire mystery of Christ through the specific liturgical seasons, there is no need to depict Ordinary Time, a season that summarizes the others. If Ordinary Time is represented anywhere in the window, it is in the blue background, not the green columns. Rather, the green portion of the window refers to the Old Testament, the root of the New Testament and the entire Christian tradition, where the coming of Christ is foretold in prophecy. The color green is used to symbolize the tree of life, specifically Jesse's Tree and the ancestry of Jesus. The two green Old Testament columns frame the central section, stretching from ceiling to floor and straddling the baptistery.

Conclusion: Effective Visible Theology

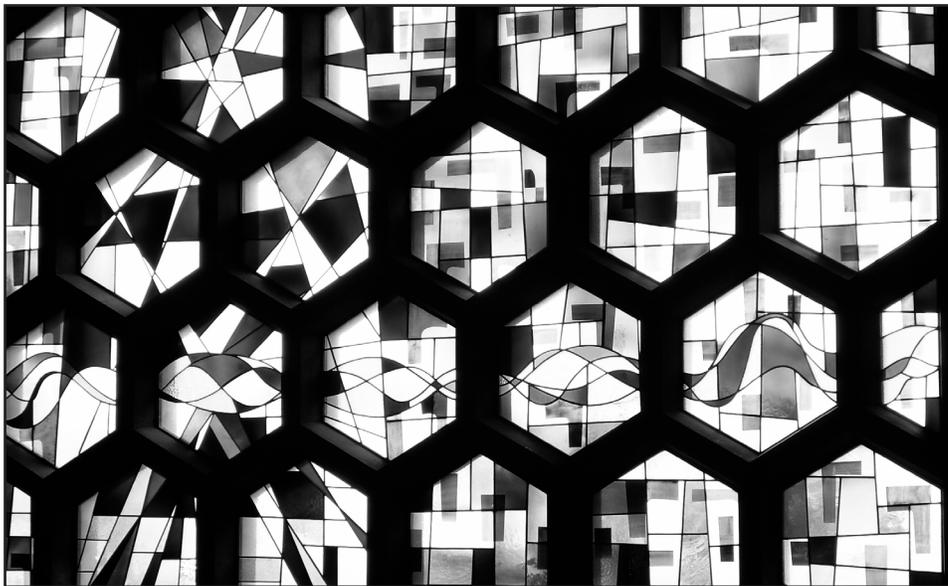
The artists who worked on the window in the Abbey Church faced a monumental task: visually representing the life of Christians, lifting their hearts to God through the celebrations of the liturgical year. The resulting design aims to show this concept through shapes, patterns, and colors. Is the design effective?¹⁸ The theology of each season is well represented through the use of color and shape, but the overall effect of the window remains mysterious. Abbot Baldwin and his confreres wanted the window to evoke an atmosphere for worship in the space; however, it is unclear whether the design was also intended to be apparently significant to the average viewer. Pius XII warned against art that is "too abstract" in *Mediator Dei*, promulgated in 1970, nine years after the Abbey window was finished. It is an interesting thought experiment to imagine what the window would have looked like if Bak and his team had kept this concern in mind. Today, many

¹⁸ The artist's intention is of primary concern in this case because the window's theology is fundamental to its being. Recall Abbot Baldwin's letter to Breuer, quoted above, where he describes precisely the theological content of the design. Viewer interpretation of the window's meaning is beyond the scope of this essay.

people see the window as a fairly literal representation of the liturgical year rather than as a depiction of the relationship between God and humankind, expressed through liturgical celebrations. In this way, the window is partially effective at conveying its intended theology; at least viewers are seeing something of what the artist intended. People who view the window with no background information are not equipped to see the broader meaning: the salvation history of a people in close relationship with God. Even some members of the monastic community do not fully comprehend the symbolism at work in the window. Every person who enters the Abbey Church is meant to be able to fully appreciate the window, but if this is the case, the intended meaning of the design should be made more available. The window beautifully represents the subtle and complex theology of the liturgical year; it is a truly marvelous visual image of Christian life. The beauty of its theology would be even more powerful if everyone could fully appreciate its subtlety. †

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Come, Lord of Glory

Paul Radkowski

Come, Lord of Glory, everlasting light;
Shatter the darkness; pierce our hardened hearts.
Hear now your people as we call your name:
Come, Lord of Glory, shine forevermore.

Come, Star of Wisdom, beautiful and bright,
Lead us and teach us, guide us on our way.
Waiting in hope and trusting you, we pray:
Come, Star of Wisdom, shine forevermore.

Come, Light of Gladness, radiant beam of joy;
Kindle in us the fire of your love.
Longing for you, unceasingly we cry:
Come, Light of Gladness, shine forevermore.

Come, Sun of Justice, heaven's gleaming ray;
Burn in our hearts; illuminate our lives.
Gathered as one, expectantly we sing:
Come, Sun of Justice, shine forevermore.

To you, the Father, glory and all praise,
To you, the Son, all honor and acclaim,
To you, the Spirit, hymns and songs we raise,
God of all ages, now and evermore.

Note: This Advent hymn text was written as part of an Individual Learning Project entitled "Praise, Petition, and Poetry: Composing Effective Liturgical Texts." The text was written for the hymn tune Toulon ("The Voice of God Goes Out Through All the World").

With Thanks and Praise

Timothy Johnston

With shouts of joy,
we come to thank you.
Praise for the Light of the world.
O radiant Light,
darkness you banished.
Blest be the Lord of all life.

Refrain

We give the Lord Glory and Praise.
Let us give thanks and sing with gladness!

O hearts rejoice,
burning with passion,
filled with the light of the Lord,
give thanks and praise
to our Creator.
Come and rejoice in the Lord.

Tremble all earth
for Christ is risen.
Let every knee bend at his name.
Blest is that name
now and forever.
Come and give praise to the Lord.

Children are we,
filled up with laughter,
sharing the light of the Lord.
Come fill our hearts,
O Holy Spirit,
that we may sing of your love.

For all the gifts
that we've been given
let us give thanks to the Lord.
We sing with joy
in adoration
for all the goodness of God.

Father be praised,
with Son and Spirit,
praise to their Living Union in Love.
Glory and praise
now and forever.
Praise for the love of the Lord.

Note: This hymn text was written as part of an Individual Learning Project entitled "Praise, Petition, and Poetry: Composing Effective Liturgical Texts." The text was written for the hymn tune "Earth and All Stars" by David N. Johnson.

My Cab Driver in Jordan

Andrew Gaylord

*But because he wanted to justify himself, he said to Jesus,
“And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29)*

Often times I found that whatever I expected or prepared for when traveling in the Holy Land, very little ever went as planned. I was left in many situations where I could do nothing more than trust in people, as difficult as this seemed at some times and in some places.

My cab driver in Jordan, Salim, did not drive so much as wander down the road, never staying in one lane but sticking to the shortest route around corners. He always was smiling, honking “hello” at cabs we passed on the highway, and even stopping once in the middle of the desert to chat briefly with a passing friend. My inclination was to say something like, “These lane lines have a purpose!” or “Could you talk to your friend later, we have somewhere to be!” But I didn’t speak Arabic. And Salim didn’t speak any English. Well, I did know two words in Arabic: hello and thank you. And Salim knew maybe a few more words in English.

Salim and I met at the house of my first cab driver in Jordan, whose name I have forgotten. He had taken me from the Israeli border to his house in Aqaba for coffee, and I initially appreciated this friendly gesture to a visitor in his country. Upon entering the large steel front gate I discovered the house actually belonged to my driver’s older brother. And as I sat in this strange but comfortable living room, I found that I was unable to appreciate either the coffee I was served or the welcoming conversation. I was thinking instead of the price I might catch on the undoubtedly lucrative black market of American tourists in the region. I was rather shaken by this new experience of “hospitality” from cab drivers. But I had heard this might happen, so I tried to look natural as I said a prayer in my head.

When I was told to have another cup of coffee, that a new driver would be picking me up soon, as my first driver had to return to the border for another fare, my chest nearly exploded. As I made for the door I was calmly informed that another driver would indeed be coming soon and that as long as I was in their house I was like their brother. I gave them my trust, though somewhat unwillingly.

Shortly, Salim showed up in his new-looking cab. He was smiling. And it looked like these men might be telling the truth.

It was a two-and-a-half-hour ride from Aqaba on the Red Sea up to Petra where I was headed. Salim and I tried to communicate in many ways. First I tried speaking very loudly and clearly, “Where do you live?!” Then I tried hand motions (“I love this land”). Then I resorted to onomatopoeia (acting out a seatbelt motion with accompanying “click” noises, upon discovering the seatbelt was broken). We settled finally on pointing and smiling.

It was about 100 degrees outside and the AC was busted. Since I wasn’t used to the heat, I began to feel pretty lightheaded. Every ten minutes, Salim offered me a swig of water from a two-liter bottle before taking any himself. He simply gave me every reason to trust him, but I couldn’t bring myself to.

When he stopped the cab at a gas station in a small, desert town, I looked over and saw that we had plenty of gas. The thought passed through my mind that this is where he sells me off to a group of terrorists. He returned one minute later with two cans of pop, walked to my window and held them up for me to choose. I picked the orange, because I didn’t trust the local cola.

For the rest of the trip, he pointed out the beautiful sites as we passed and continued to keep me hydrated. He began to grow on me. In Petra, he brought me to a cheap and comfortable hostel, and he agreed to come back for me the next day at 3:00 (the kind Italian hostess acted as our translator).

The next day, strangely, our ride back to Aqaba felt like we were old friends. We both began the trip a little bit sulky from tiredness after a long, hot day, but after an hour we were again smiling and pointing out the windows. Salim made early use of what we had found to be a very effective means of communication, emerging from our first gas station with big eyes and a big bag of chili potato chips, two choco-banana bars, two tiny boxes of gum and two cans of orange drink. Road trips are universal, I suppose. He refused to accept any money for the snacks, though I tipped him well.

He stays in my mind, and I cannot tell you how much I learned from this man with whom I exchanged only two understandable words. †

Where Two or Three Are Gathered: Clustered Parishes Are Our Future

Kristi Bivens

When I was just 16 years old my dad was ordained as a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Crookston. He was hired as a pastoral associate at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston. It was around the same time that the Cathedral began sharing a pastor, an associate pastor, and a pastoral associate (my dad) with St. Francis Church in Fisher, Minnesota. St. Francis was referred to as a “mission parish” of the Cathedral. Shortly thereafter, St. Mary’s Church in Euclid was added to the mix. There really was no cooperation between the parishes; they simply shared clergy. Over the next 16 years it all changed, and it became an extremely confusing amalgamation of parish relationships. Soon St. Francis was being served by the pastor from East Grand Forks, and Crookston was serving Euclid and St. Peter’s in Gentilly. Today, because the Cathedral has only one full time priest and one part-time priest, they only serve St. Peter’s in Gentilly. Another pastor from another parish serves St. Mary’s in Euclid, along with my dad who still works at the Cathedral and with St. Peter’s in Gentilly. The only connections these parishes have are the clergy and the Triduum of Holy Week, as they celebrate it together at the Cathedral. However, the people of these communities are connected in other ways: schools, jobs, and some are even related to each other. It has always perplexed me that there was not a more formal connection between these parishes. They are not that far apart. It has also perplexed me that the arrangements keep changing.

Now 16 years later, I am an adult member of a parish of my own, which up until six months ago was a parish with its own pastor. The Catholic Churches in the metropolitan area of St. Cloud went through a process, which took 18 months, to determine which parishes would be “clustered.” The process was well thought out and involved ordained and lay people. It also prepared people well in advance of the changes that were to come. Now Christ Church Newman Center is sharing a pastor and associate pastor with two other churches and trying to figure out what it means to be the Cluster of St. Mary’s Cathedral, St. Augustine Church, and Christ Church Newman Center.

All of these experiences have led me to my In-

tegration Project. It seems to me if clustering is to become the future of the Catholic Church, and in some cases, it is the present, there needs to be a process for cluster life and cluster ministry; there needs to be a new understanding of parish.

Why Clustering?

“Who will make the day to day decisions?” “Will people start leaving the church?” “Why can’t we keep our Mass times?” “How will the pastor get to know us?” “Will our church eventually be closed?” “Will our parish staff change?” “How will we survive financially?” “Are we a parish or are we a cluster?” “What *is* a cluster?”

Parishioners are asking many questions of the Catholic Churches in the St. Cloud, Minnesota, area as they prepare to enter a new understanding of church, often referred to as clustering. “Clustered,” “combined,” “affiliated,” and “parish-mission” are just a few of the names used to describe parishes that are served together by the same pastor. Even though “clustering” has been used for many years, there is no canonical term or widely accepted process for what is commonly becoming known as clustered parishes.

There is not a specific definition offered by the Catholic Church regarding clustering. Canon Law makes one mention of a pastor serving more than one parish in Canon 526 §1: “A pastor is to have the parochial care of only one parish; nevertheless, because of a lack of priests or other circumstances, the care of several neighboring parishes can be entrusted to the same pastor.”¹ Canon 526 can be seen in the definitions to follow.

Several dioceses across the United States offer definitions of the term cluster. The Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa, defines a cluster as “the collaboration and sharing among several parishes of pastoral leadership, staff, resources and/or programs.”² FutureChurch, a national coalition of Catholics who

¹ John Beal, James Coriden, and Thomas Green, eds. *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2000).

² Archdiocese of Dubuque, IA, Office of Pastoral Planning, “Guidelines for Clusters,” <http://www.arch.pvt.k12.ia.us/PastoralP/Cluster/clustguidlexpectplan.html> (accessed March 16, 2007).

seek the full participation of all baptized Catholics in the life of the church, offers a similar definition: “A grouping of two or three distinct parishes/missions that remain independent entities, who share a pastor and are ministered to by a pastoral administrator or a team of priests and ministry staff.”³ The Archdiocese of Detroit, whose definition is the only one of the three offered here to be based on Canon Law, claims that: “A Clustered Parish has a priest as its pastor, however the priest may live at another location and be pastor of more than one community. The communities each have a parish pastoral council, and may or may not have geographical boundaries.”⁴ The Diocese of Cleveland uses this definition: “A cluster is a group of parishes committed to a long term relationship of collaboration to plan and provide pastoral care for these communities. In forming this relationship, each parish has its own parish identity, canonical status and financial accountability.”⁵

Each of the four definitions highlights the fact that the clustered parishes share pastors, staffs, and resources, but the parishes remain separate entities. It is also important to note within the definition from the Diocese of Cleveland, it is mentioned that the relationship among the parishes is long-term. Relationships between parishes that are not long-term are headed for disaster. In order for parishes to begin working together, they cannot share resources with one parish for a year and then two different parishes for another year. The pastor and the staff will simply run themselves into the ground. There needs to be continuity between parishes in a cluster.

As the process of clustering parishes becomes more common, parishioners are asking “why?” The most prevalent reason for clustering parishes is the decrease in the number of priests available to serve a growing number of parishes and parishioners. In 1965, there were 58,432 diocesan and religious priests in the United States to serve 17,637 parishes and 4,547 missions. In 2005, 43,422 diocesan and religious priests were available to serve 19,297 parishes and 2,901 missions.⁶ The number of priestly ordinations has decreased from 994 in 1965 to 467

in 2005; however, the number of Catholics is on the rise in the United States. In 1965 there were 45.6 million Catholics in the United States compared with 67.8 million Catholics in 2005. Even though there are fewer priests and the number of parishes has not increased significantly, the strain comes from the increase in the number of parishioners in each parish.⁷ In the past, more than one priest was available to minister to parishioners in one parish. The ratio of priests to parishioners was also smaller. Today, in most parishes, there is one priest to minister to the parishioners. People often expect as much from the one priest as they did from the two or three priests they had 30 years ago. That is simply not possible. Clustering exacerbates the problem. Because priests are expected to do their ministry for two or three churches at the same time, it becomes more and more difficult for the priests to attend to the needs of their parishioners. From my current experience, I can think of one example. I am member of a cluster of three parishes with two priests to serve them. A small faith sharing group to which I belong invited both priests to dinner with us one evening. Both priests were emailed and called and neither returned the messages. They simply do not have the time.

The retirement of priests is another area which is impacting the need for clustered parishes. In 2005, there were approximately 4,408 priests serving multiple parishes. By 2010, approximately 1,250 of those men will retire.⁸ In 2002, *The Los Angeles Times* conducted a survey of priests. They discovered that the average age of these men was 61.⁹ By 2012, just four short years away, many of these men will be retired. The retirement of these men will only increase the priest shortage given the fact that the number of ordinations is not equal to even the number serving multiple parishes who will retire.

Other solutions to the priest shortage have been attempted, such as Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest (SCAP). SCAP is a rite developed by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) to be used in parishes in order for people to gather for worship and receive word and Communion even when a priest cannot be present. The intent of SCAP is to continue Sunday worship in communities without priests where Eucharist cannot be celebrated weekly.

³ FutureChurch, Lakewood, OH; <http://www.futurechurch.org/sopc/finalcrisiskitwebsites-73106.pdf> (accessed 10-15-07).

⁴ Archdiocese of Detroit, MI; <http://www.aodonline.org/aodonline-sqlimages/ParishLife/LeadershipServices/Parish-Clustering/ClusterGuidelines.pdf>.

⁵ Response to survey conducted by the author.

⁶ While the number of parishes has increased since 1965, the number has decreased since 1995 by 426 parishes.

⁷ Katarina Schuth, *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹ Cited in *ibid.*, 32.

Since the inception of SCAP in 1988, several concerns have arisen. The major concern is that the faithful do not see a difference between SCAP and Sunday Mass, because eucharistic liturgy is not being celebrated on Sundays on a weekly basis. Eucharistic liturgy is the source and summit of Catholic faith. Since Vatican II, Eucharist has been spoken about as the “most perfect expression or manifestation of the Church. The Eucharist brings the Church into being. The Eucharist, in fact constitutes the Church.”¹⁰ In 1995, the bishops of Kansas issued a pastoral statement “reaffirming the importance of Sunday celebrations of Eucharist and presenting their position on distribution of communion outside Mass on Sundays.” They wanted to heighten the distinction between Sunday Mass and a “communion service.” Because of a blurring of the lines between the celebration of Eucharist and the reception of Communion, the bishops of Kansas restrict “communion services” to emergencies only.¹¹

Another solution to the decreasing number of priests has been to bring in priests from other countries. While there are many positive aspects, the negative aspects can make things very difficult for parish life. Dean Hoge and Aniedi Okure have recently published a work on the challenges and opportunities of having international priests in the United States. The first challenge is language. It can be difficult for the priests to be understood, especially when saying Mass, which often becomes a very rhythmic process. Parishioners can find it very frustrating. In my experience, I have heard parishioners say they “may as well not go to Mass, because they can’t understand anything anyway.” Without experience and patience on the part of parishioners, the international priests will not improve their language skills. It cannot come at the cost of parishioners. There are also cultural misunderstandings and differing ecclesiologies. For example, it can be difficult for the priests to work with women as equals on staff. The understanding of men being superior to women in some cultures can present a problem in a church that has had women as ministers for many years. A sense of the pastor being superior to the other ministers in the parish can cause difficulties as well. Many priests work collaboratively with their staffs in parishes in the United

States and have done so for many years. To have a priest come to a parish and not work collaboratively with the staff can cause many difficulties for the staff as well as the parish.¹²

Finding the best solution for parishes to handle the declining number of priests is difficult. Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest and international priests are possible solutions. Clustering is a possible solution. I propose that clustering is the best solution, but it will be a major shift in how people understand and know parish. It is not the first time, however, that parishes have changed. The parish is an entity that has changed dramatically over the last 2,000 years. Through each change that has been made in parishes something has died, but through that death new fruit has been born.

Producing Much Fruit

Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. (John 12:24)

Parish life is deeply important to many Catholics. It is where people worship, grow in their faith, serve others, develop relationships, and share the most intimate parts of themselves. Parish life is often a constant in a person’s chaotic and changing life. When the constancy of parish life changes, it is a difficult adjustment for people. But, changes happen often in parishes: staff members leave and new staff members are hired, pastors change, familiar hymns are used less often, new methods of faith formation are introduced, among many others. The changes can cause the life of a parish to diminish or the parish can continue to grow. There is comfort to be found in the above passage from the Gospel of John. When parishes allow themselves to die to the familiar, they open their parish life to producing new fruit. For example, parishes that have implemented family-based faith formation have reported, anecdotally, increased participation by adults in faith formation opportunities. Families are growing together in faith; formation is no longer a program for children, but for everyone. Fruit is being borne through the death of an old understanding of faith formation.

Clustering parishes is not only a change in parts of parish life, but a change in the entire understand-

¹⁰ Kathleen Hughes, RSCJ, “Sunday Worship in the Absence of a Priest: Some Disquieting Reflections,” *New Theology Review* 8 (February 1995): 53.

¹¹ Bishops of Kansas, “Sunday Eucharist: Do This in Memory Me,” *Pastoral Music* 20 (February–March 1996): 40–41.

¹² Dean Hoge and Aniedi Okure, *International Priests in America: Challenges and Opportunities* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), 51–60.

ing of parish. Again, comfort can be found in the passage from John. It is necessary to allow the understanding of parish that now we hold to fall to the ground and die. We must realize that clustering parishes will bear fruit for each parish and the church universal that we could never imagine.

Over time, the parish has become an entity which the early Christians, or even parishioners of 40 years ago, could not have imagined. With each change in the understanding and life of a parish that has occurred over the last 2,000 years, a grain of wheat has fallen to the ground and produced much fruit.

The Catholic Church has existed for approximately 2,000 years; however the church is not the same as it was at the beginning of the 2,000 years. The same can be said about Catholic parishes. The parishes we know today are not the same as they used to be. In the early Christian church, the communities tended to be in urban areas and were small groups who gathered in people's houses. There was no sense of belonging to the larger Body of Christ, but just to the smaller community.¹³

As Christianity grew over time and spread to other areas of the world, Christian communities did as well. The understanding of belonging to the larger Body of Christ began to develop. Parishes themselves began to develop in many ways. Churches in the countryside were ministered to by a circuit rider priest or deacon and governed by a bishop. Monasteries began to develop and the religious men in the monasteries ministered to the surrounding community. Churches were built as shrines at the burial places of saints. Owners of estates would build private churches to serve the people who worked and lived on their land.¹⁴ All of these developments would lead to the more formal understanding of parish developed by the Council of Trent.

The Council of Trent, 1545–63, gave the first solid teachings around the parish. Preaching and instruction were to be done every Sunday by the parish priests. Priests were to reside in the parishes in which they were the ministers. Much of the Council of Trent focused on the hierarchy of the church and left the lay people with a passive role in the life of the parish. The sacramental life of the parish was emphasized and practices of eucharistic piety developed, such as benediction and eucharistic processions. The practices of piety gave lay people a way to

be more active in their faith and in the parish.¹⁵

The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had an impact on the parishes of the Catholic Church. People were drawn to urban centers for employment in the factories. The parishes in large cities grew exponentially. For example, in Paris in 1900, an average parish contained 40,000 members. People in parishes like the ones in Paris were unable to get to know each other and therefore a sense of community was difficult to build.¹⁶

At the same time in the United States, people were emigrating from Europe and forming parishes. The new parishes were often called “national churches.” Ethnic groups were the basis for the parishes, not geographical areas. Most towns across the United States had more than one Catholic parish, based on specific ethnic traditions. The Polish immigrants would attend a Polish parish and the German immigrants would attend the German parish.¹⁷

The history of the development of the Catholic parish shows that what we know as parish today has not always been. Parishes have adapted to the many challenges from ecclesial structures and social and cultural influences. The parishes following the Council of Trent were a response to the Protestant Reformation. The parishes of the United States are no longer national churches because the immigrants assimilated into the culture of the United States. The parishes of today are a response to the church being a part of the modern world instead of hiding from it. Clustering parishes is also a response to the changed faces of the church and the world. It may feel as though everything familiar is gone, but the people of God who belong to these parishes will survive. Parishes have needed to adapt and change with the world around them and will continue to as the world develops.

What is a parish?

In more recent years, as an understanding of parish has developed, so has the theology surrounding the parish. The Second Vatican Council, the 1983 Code of Canon Law, and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops have all developed writings about parish that can also be applied to the life of clustered parishes.

In the Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People issued by the Second Vatican Council, the follow-

¹³ James A. Coriden, *The Parish in Catholic Tradition* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1997), 18–21.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 22–24.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 31–32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 35.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 37.

ing characteristics of a parish are offered: A parish gathers all types of human diversity and inserts them into the universality of the church. Within a parish, lay and ordained members are to develop habits of working cooperatively and make contributions to diocesan undertakings. A parish should attract people to the church through its apostolic works.¹⁸

The 1983 Code of Canon Law offers much information about a parish, but its definition can be found in Canon 515, §1: A parish is a certain community of the Christian faithful stably constituted in a particular church, whose pastoral care is entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor under the authority of the diocesan bishop.¹⁹

The parish is for most Catholics the single most important part of the church. This is where for them the mission of Christ continues. This is where they publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof of their communion with one another.²⁰

The United States Catholic Bishops Committee on the Parish issued a statement in 1981 entitled, *The Parish: A People, a Structure, a Mission*. In the statement, the committee outlines its vision of a parish: “Whatever the form, a parish seeks to become ever more fully a people of God, sharing the mission of Christ and developing the structure necessary for supporting its community life and carrying out its mission.”²¹ Three areas need to be considered when looking at the parish: the people, the mission, and the structure.

According to the statement on the parish, the committee states that the parish is first a people. They are a people called together by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to “make increasingly true and obvious their response to God through Christ.” The people are “challenged to continue Christ’s work of transforming the world into a more graced fellowship.” Personal relationships are fostered among the members of a parish in order for them to become brothers and sisters in the Lord. Through the action of building relationship should grow a desire to care for those in the parish as well as in the world.²²

¹⁸ *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People), §10.

¹⁹ Beal, Coriden, and Green, eds., *New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law*.

²⁰ USCCB Committee on the Parish, *The Parish: A People, A Structure, A Mission*, *Origins* 10 (March 1981): 641.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 643.

²² *Ibid.*

All people of a parish have a role in the life of the parish. All the members of the parish have been baptized into the Body of Christ and have been called to further the mission of the church, to participate in the life of the parish. Some of the roles have been clearly defined and are held by priests, deacons, laity, or religious. The role of the priest is to help parishioners “deepen their union with Christ through the word and Eucharist and to become one with the full family of the Church through the bishop.” Many other roles are assigned to the liturgist, the faith formation director, the social concerns director, the eucharistic minister, the permanent deacon, the liturgical decorator, the music leader, and others. In order for the parish to mature fully, lay ministry must be developed with the laity in roles of leadership. It is also the role of the parish to promote vocations to all the forms of ministry in the church. Without the promotion of vocations, the church and consequently the parish will be left without needed leadership.²³

The parish is not an entity in itself. As stated above, one role of the priest is to help parishioners become one with the full church. A parish is part of a local church under a specific bishop, also known as a diocese. The parish must share in the mission of the local church. The parish is also a part of the worldwide universal church, under the pope. The tradition and teaching of the universal church guides the local church. The parish is also a member of the wider local, national, and international communities. It is not shut off from the secular world within which it exists.²⁴

The most important part of a parish community is its sacramental life. Through the sacramental life God acts and the people respond. The eucharistic liturgy is where the parish has its greatest expression of communion. It is in the liturgy where all the efforts of the parish are united with the priesthood of Jesus. In the sacrament of reconciliation, the healing forgiveness of the Lord is proclaimed to those who strive to live in Christ. “In all its celebrations of the sacraments the parish makes every effort to attend to the mystery of God’s action, to open itself to the power of the sacramental symbols and to show care for the people engaging in these rites.”²⁵

Through the many ways written about above, the parish is constantly trying to become a commu-

²³ *Ibid.*, 643–44.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 644.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

nity of faith. The achievement of the parish becoming a community of faith can be measured by “the specific ways people acknowledge the identity they have in common and demonstrate the responsibility they have for one another.” The proof of community is a reflection of “the even deeper communion with God that is theirs because of Christ’s gift of the one Spirit.”²⁶

While the parish has been described thus far as the people and their relationship, the parish does not exist for itself. It exists to further the mission of Christ. The people of the parish are called to minister to each other and those in the world around them; they are called to evangelize. Evangelization calls believers to deepen their faith while bringing the Gospel message to those who do not know it or have been away from the church for an extended period of time. The best way for parishes to further the mission of Christ is to be a credible witness of faithfulness to Christ.²⁷

It is also an essential part of the mission for each parish to provide formation for its members, to work for justice, and to participate in ecumenism. Formation should be an ongoing, lifelong process which supports and shapes a Christian life. Through formation, the people of the parish are made more deeply the people of God. To work for justice means the parish is to work to establish a more just society. They can work for justice by identifying critical issues in the world, convening people, and sponsoring and supporting efforts to build a society where there is justice, peace, and freedom for all.²⁸ The parish must also be committed to the unity of all of God’s people. Through ecumenism, parishes can express their common faith in Christ with other Christian churches. They can also work for justice with other churches as well.

In order for a parish community to grow and its mission be maintained, there must be structures in place. There is a need for clear pastoral leadership. “Parish leadership challenges everyone to recognize and accept responsibility to both the Gospel and the church, which is tradition.”²⁹ Leadership encourages collaboration between clergy, religious, and laity. To encourage collaboration, the leadership will need to develop structures which allow for participation in decision-making and ministries of the parish. One

of the best structures to encourage participation is the parish council. The function of the parish council is to ensure the mission of the parish is being carried out and to formulate policies which encourage the mission and ministry of the parish.

“The parish is basic to the life of the church. It is in the parish that the most intimate concerns of individuals and the broadest reaches of the church’s mission come together.”³⁰ What the Second Vatican Council, the Code of Canon Law, and the U.S. Bishops have said about parish until now do not describe clustered parishes. But in a sense they do. There are some aspects of parish that do not change when clustering occurs. Clusters have people gathered in community and the mission is already lived out in the individual parishes. What does not transfer from the documents is structure. The basic tenets the USCCB offers are necessary for the structure of a cluster, but they need to be enhanced.

Before I can begin to address what the structure of a cluster should be, it is helpful to look to those who have been working with clustering. Men and women who work in diocesan planning offices across the United States are an excellent resource. Through an email questionnaire, I asked several Directors of Pastoral Planning their thoughts about clustering. I was especially interested in what makes clustering a successful experience for parishes in their dioceses. The answers they provided inspired hope in me that clustering can be a positive experience, even though for some it is the end of parish life as they know it.

Successful Clustering

When I asked the diocesan Directors of Pastoral Planning what are the elements that are needed for a successful cluster, they offered statements such as the ones below:

- A common commitment to word, sacrament, service, and stewardship.
- A clear understanding of and commitment to cooperation.
- Having leadership that respects the dignity of all with the ability to develop consensus for action.
- The development of a collaborative mentality.
- The development of a larger vision of the church and its mission.
- Clear communication.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 645.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 646.

Many of the responses were the same. There was a strong emphasis on good leadership, communication, and collaboration between the parishes in a cluster. Good leadership and communication are necessary in a parish that stands on its own, but collaboration is essential for clustered parishes.

I also asked the directors what could hinder a successful clustering experience and below are some of the answers they offered:

- Individualism and parochialism valued more than common good.
- Fear of rejection and criticism by other parishes.
- A society that keeps everyone very busy and fosters observation over participation.
- Unsupportive pastors and pastoral staffs.
- Struggle for parish survival takes precedence over mission.
- Poor communication.
- Perceiving that the need to change is imposed from outside the parish community.
- Weak pastoral leadership.
- Parishioners giving priority to what has been and reluctance to move out of their comfort zones.

I find it interesting that many of their answers are the exact opposite of what was offered as successful elements necessary for clustering, such as weak leadership and poor communication. There also seems to be some fear for parishioners of moving into a new experience of parish. The fear is normal. Many people fear change.

I also find it interesting that one person identified, “A society that fosters observation over participation due to multiple commitments,” as hindering a successful cluster. I think the respondent was trying to find a nice way to describe the “busyness” of people’s lives. In order for a cluster to be successful, the members of the parishes must be committed to it. Given the multiple commitments of people in today’s society, it will be very difficult to get them involved in the life of the parish.

Clustering can seem like a daunting experience. Many parishioners and ministers to whom I have talked or listened do not like it and do not see it as a positive step for the church. “All we need to do is ordain women and married men and that will solve the problem. Then we don’t need to share a priest,” is a comment I have heard often. Whether I agree or disagree with them does not matter. The church is not in that place now and we have a problem which we need to solve.

Where Two or Three are Gathered

Through my work, however, I no longer see clustering as such a daunting experience. I see it as an opportunity to create a new understanding of church. By bringing parishes together, our experience of God can only be enhanced. The words of the Gospel of Matthew come to mind for me: “Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt 18:19-20). With words such as these from Jesus, how can the possibilities of clustering two or three or four or five parishes be anything but hopeful? Wouldn’t it seem that the more people who are gathered together in God’s name would only enhance relationships with God and each other? I think that there is nothing but a deeper understanding of the Body of Christ to be found. All the members of the Body of Christ need to be involved in the life of a cluster: the lay and the ordained, including the bishop. The laity can take ownership of their parish in a way they have not done previously. The ordained can work collaboratively with the lay members to further the mission of the diocese and the Roman Catholic Church. A new understanding of parish is an excellent way for all members, lay and ordained, to work as the Body of Christ.

We Are Clustered . . . Now What?

Often clustering can become what it was in my childhood, simply the clergy serving multiple parishes and passing around the smaller parishes from larger parish to larger parish. That cannot be what clustered parishes look like. Pastoral staffs cannot handle an increased workload that serving two, three, four, or even five parishes will bring. I think the words of Vic Klimoski, in the preface of Katarina Schuth’s book, say it best:

It is not just bishops and their staffs who have to figure out what to do each year as priests retire or die, thus decreasing the number of those available for assignment. It is not the priest’s duty to run himself ragged just so St. Ann’s Parish doesn’t have to give up its 9:00 a.m. Sunday Mass. *The cluster model belongs to the church, and we together have a responsibility to pray steadfastly for guidance, to assist each other through the grief and anger that might arise, and to be courageous in developing or adapting structures that bring sanity*

*and efficiency into the cluster's life. This is a sacrificial call to lay people, but a call that resonates with the theology of baptism and the eloquent vision of the church as the Body of Christ.*³¹

The words above inspired me to accept the responsibility of the cluster model belonging to me. I will lay out in the rest of the paper a process that will call forth the gifts of the people of the parish. What I propose will not be easy, nor will it be accomplished overnight, but it needs to be done. I propose a movement from cooperation between the parishes in a cluster to a formal collaborative ministry. It will lead the cluster to what Philip Murnion terms a covenant communion.³²

So, why begin with cooperation? Why not just jump right in and build a collaborative ministry in the cluster? We all know change is not something that comes easy for people. For the last 40 years, parish life has been a certain way. When you change the way a person gathers for worship or experiences church, you are changing something very personal to him or her. In the bishops' document on the parish to which I referred earlier, it is stated "The parish is for most Catholics the single most important part of the church. This is where for them the mission of Christ continues. This is where they publicly express their faith, joining with others to give proof of their communion with one another."³³

Parish Cooperation

In the book, *Sharing More Than a Pastor*, which is a study of clustering in the Diocese of Superior, Wisconsin, Joan McKeown describes a process to build cooperation between the parishes in a cluster.³³

McKeown first recommends inviting all the parishes to one parish's social event. Perhaps one parish holds an annual fall festival. The members of the other parishes in the cluster should be invited, but the invitation needs to be more than a bulletin notice. Representatives from the parish should extend personal invitations to the other parishes at their Masses. Staff members and parishioners could encourage individuals they encounter to attend the activity. It would be an opportunity for people from

the individual parishes to begin to get to know each other.³⁴

The next suggestion McKeown makes is to hold a non-threatening cluster-wide social event. The event should be non-competitive. A softball game pitting parishes against one another would not build community, nor help the people to get to know each other. One event could be a hymn sing with a social afterwards. In order to avoid conflicts over who will host it, choose the largest parish for this first gathering in the hopes that many people will attend. The responsibilities for the hymn sing and the social should be divided between the parishes, making sure people from each parish are working together on planning the event. It is also a good idea to have those hosting the social be from each parish. Get the parishioners working together in the kitchen, which can be a very social place.³⁵

After holding the social event, hold a one time adult or youth formation event. Perhaps the event can be a catechist in-service for all the parishes or a day of reflection surrounding a season or feast of the liturgical year. Again it is important to make sure that staff members or parishioners from each parish are involved in the planning. Moving from a social event to a faith formation event can begin to move people together around issues of faith.³⁶

The fourth step McKeown offers is to initiate a short term activity. Bible studies or faith sharing groups with members from each parish that last only a few weeks would work well. Promote them as a cluster-wide event. Many dioceses have begun using a program called *Why Catholic?* A program like *Why Catholic?* offers people the opportunity to build small faith-sharing communities. By bringing people from the various parishes together, they will begin to know each other on more than a social level.³⁷

Finally, begin to establish cooperation in current programs. McKeown suggests focusing on the areas and programs of the parish with the most open-minded people who have the least sense of parochialism. It will be difficult for people to give up ownership of a program with which they have worked for a long time. Another option would be to choose a program where the need for the cluster is the greatest. Perhaps it is a program which is not working well

³¹ Victor Klimoski, preface to *Priestly Ministry in Multiple Parishes*, by Katarina Schuth (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2006), xiv–xv; emphasis added.

³² Philip Murnion, "Parish: Covenant Community," *Church* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 5–10.

³³ Joan McKeown, *Sharing More Than a Pastor* (Grantsburg, WI: ARC Research Company, 1993).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 69–70.

in any of the parishes.³⁸

McKeown proposes that the more the parishioners work jointly, the less they will sit and wait for “Father” to make all the decisions.³⁹ They will begin to explore new possibilities for the cluster on their own. This, in my mind, is the beginning of formal collaborative ministry. Cooperation among the parishes in the cluster is about the parishioners getting to know one another. It is an antidote to parochialism. Without it, the cluster cannot move to collaborative ministry.

Collaborative Ministry

Collaboration in ministry is a response to the call received in baptism to recognize the charisms of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰ Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano take the definition even further; collaboration is the “identification, release, and union of all the gifts in ministry for the sake of mission.” They highlight three key elements of collaboration: “the essence of collaborative ministry is gift, collaborative ministry is a vehicle for ministry and the goal is always the mission of Jesus Christ.”⁴¹ Sofield and Juliano base some of their work on the work of Bishop Howard Hubbard from the Diocese of Albany, New York. Bishop Hubbard’s words sum up collaborative ministry well: It is based on one’s baptismal call, every member of the church has received this call, and the call is given to “advance the mission and ministry of Jesus in our world.”⁴²

The implementation of collaborative ministry will not be easy. It will require a commitment on the part of staff and parishioners. It will require people to give up ownership of programs of which they have been a part for many years. It will require patience, because collaborative ministry cannot be implemented overnight.

In their book, *Collaboration: Uniting Our Gifts in Ministry*, Sofield and Juliano offer a process to help parishes implement collaborative ministry. Below I will outline and explain their process. It is important to note that I believe collaborative ministry should first be implemented with the staff members from each parish. After that has occurred, then it can be

implemented with parishioners.

The first step is to examine one’s beliefs and behaviors about collaboration and to confront those that hinder one’s ability to collaborate. In order for collaboration to be successfully implemented, all of people’s biases, concerns, and hopes for collaboration should be brought out into the open. It is necessary to confront the concerns and biases people may have or they will continue to cause problems in the life of the cluster.⁴³

The next step is to develop a clear vision of ministry which guides the actions of and decisions made by the cluster. Developing a vision at times can be a meaningless process; it can produce a statement that has no real meaning. Sofield and Juliano offer criteria for developing a vision to help the implementation process become more than that. The vision must:

- Give a general direction for ministry;
- Be accompanied by specific goals;
- Be expansive rather than restrictive;
- Be owned by those affected by it; the vision cannot be developed without the people who are affected by it;
- Move to action as a result of concrete implementation steps.⁴⁴

The third step is to develop a method to discern the gifts of the community. However one develops this method, Sofield and Juliano give certain conditions that will help create a climate in which people will feel free to discern their gifts. I would recommend developing a staff day of reflection.

- Offer adequate time for private, prayerful reflection.
- Physical surroundings should be conducive to dialogue, allowing participants to share the gifts they have identified.
- Participants should know each other well (which is developed during the cooperation between the parishes).
- Examine ways in which their gifts can be used in ministry.
- An objective presentation can set the tone and direction for gift discernment.⁴⁵

The fourth step is to clarify the roles of the members. The most effective ministry occurs when the role one takes on in the cluster is compatible with his or her gifts. Clarifying one’s role also includes the need to evaluate to what extent the ministry is be-

³⁸ Ibid., 70–71.

³⁹ Ibid., 71.

⁴⁰ Norman Cooper, *Collaborative Ministry: Communion, Contention, Commitment* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 6.

⁴¹ Loughlan Sofield and Carroll Juliano, *Collaboration: Uniting our Gifts in Ministry* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2000), 17.

⁴² Ibid., 148.

⁴³ Ibid., 148–49.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 153–56.

ing performed collaboratively as well as whether the ministry could continue without the specific minister in the role.⁴⁶

The final step is to empower a group to implement collaboration following the use of collaborative ministry among staff members. The above steps should be repeated with parishioners in some manner, especially the step of gift discernment. Implementation is not necessarily the sole responsibility of the staff. One example Sofield and Juliano offer is the parish pastoral council. Regardless of who implements collaboration, Sofield and Juliano offer three tasks to help accomplish the implementation:

- Identify the needs of the community (I change that to cluster).
- Discern the gifts and resources available.
- Establish the structures to bring about a marriage between the needs and the gifts and resources.⁴⁷

As I said before, collaborative ministry will not happen overnight nor will it happen without hard work. But when collaborative ministry is in place, the people of the cluster will become more fully the Body of Christ. They will become what Philip Murnion calls a covenant communion.

Covenant Communion

The parish, according to Murnion, needs to move beyond community into a covenant communion. I believe that a cluster needs to do the same. There needs to be a deeper relationship among the people in a parish or a cluster. Community can be a very broad, generic term that applies to many groups of people. In order to understand the term covenant communion, I will highlight what Murnion characterizes as a covenant communion.

First, Murnion points out that the communion and the covenant are formed by God: it is God, through Christ and the Holy Spirit, who calls and empowers people into communion. “It is within the parish that we express that the communion of the church is neither our choice nor an answer to *our* needs. It is our response to God’s love for us, which is present in the action of the Eucharist and the life of the Church.”⁴⁸

Second, the covenant communion must be as inclusive as possible, which begins with baptism. We do not need to earn our inclusion or meet certain

requirements to be a member of a parish or a cluster. The parish needs to keep calling people into more deeply committed relationships with God and one another, regardless of financial status, race, or sinfulness.⁴⁹

Third, the covenant communion entails a call to stewardship. Many people assume that the term stewardship means a financial contribution. But Murnion uses it to designate more than monetary gifts. Stewardship is the commitment of one’s gifts to the mission of the church and for the good of the community.⁵⁰ Through collaborative ministry, the members of the cluster have committed their gifts for the mission of the church and for the good of the community.

Finally, the parish as covenant communion encourages people to live out the communion with all of God’s family. It extends beyond the church building and the Catholic community.⁵¹ Parishioners cannot be focused solely on the life within the walls of the parish or boundaries of the cluster. All God’s people should be treated as such. Through the celebration of Eucharist and common ministry, the people of the cluster should be prepared to serve God’s world.

Murnion describes the role of covenant communions as:

supporting and demanding, encouraging free expression without sacrificing expertise or standards of authenticity, acknowledging each person’s responsibility for conscience and life as well as the community’s obligation to reveal the personal and public demands of discipleship. They are expressions of the mystery of God’s action, the moral demands of God’s family, and the requirements of mutual responsibility.⁵²

Clustered communities can become a covenant communion. They can live out what Murnion describes and through their lives, can bring people into deeper relationship with God and each other.

Moving Forward in Hope

Cooperation to collaboration to covenant communion is a model for a new understanding of parish as a member of a cluster. It is a structure that can be implemented to help bring hope and life to a par-

⁴⁶ Ibid., 156–60.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 160–61.

⁴⁸ Murnion, “Parish: Covenant Community,” 7.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7–8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 8.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

ish. As I have said before, clustering can seem daunting and so can the movement from cooperation to collaboration to covenant communion. But, I would like to return to the scripture quote from Matthew: “Again, I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (18:19-20). Learning to work and worship together is a challenge for any individual parish. It will become an even bigger challenge as more and more parishes are clustered. But if we only recall the words from the Gospel of Matthew, we can be reminded that this new experience of being church can bring us into deeper relationship with God and with each other. Wherever we are gathered, God is present.

Clustered parishes are becoming more and more common. I have spent half of my life in clustered parishes. It is not a new phenomenon for me. But it is in many parishes today, especially in urban areas. Clustering has been the past for some, the present for many, and most likely will be the future for all of us. ✝

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Vignettes from the Vineyard

Helen Rolfson, OSF

I am very grateful to God for all the years I have been granted in the service of teaching people who have zeal for ministry. The privilege of teaching theology and spirituality makes me practically the luckiest person in the world, as well, for I get to spend my time where my heart is. Have I become a better teacher along the way, for all those years of practice? I only know that I learned a lot from my students and colleagues about pedagogy, but principally in teaching the way I would want to be taught as an adult learner. It has also been a joy to teach in a department where there have been little or no petty jealousies. The more one learns about academia, the more one realizes that colleagues at other institutions often have harrowing tales to tell of departmental in-fighting. Here, rather, I have benefited from a hospitable environment, made possible by large-spirited colleagues and administrators.

As a little girl, I got to know Saint John's by way of my Benedictine uncle. On a visit to him, it was thrilling to enter campus by way of a route through the woods, after which a view of the "twin towers" would emerge. Praying Vespers in what is now the Great Hall is also one of those memories that echo every time I pass through that hallowed space. (Even back then, it was clear that a bigger worship space was needed for the needs of the entire community!) I used to tell friends who would inquire about my having entered the Franciscans instead of the Benedictines that had I been masculine instead of feminine, I probably would have asked to enter Saint John's, as it always gave off the aura of signal beauty and the hospitable care given by many people. While I am a committed Franciscan (the celebration of my golden jubilee of profession is next year), I have a special spot in my heart for the Benedictine spirit, and it was thanks to the invitation of Sister Mary Anthony Wagner, OSB, then dean of theology here, that I entered the Saint John's scene to teach Liturgiology. (Never mind that I had to find out what that was.)

I later had the charge to join a committee investigating the feasibility of a Monastic Studies program here in the School of Theology. A consultation was held in a very blizzard-ridden January, in which many wise monastic men and women were invited to discuss the matter and give advice. The consultation opened with a dinner in the Centennial Room in the Quad. The invited guests were very demure and practically kept monastic silence as the dinner began. Then a bat flew in, and began to strafe the tables. That caused a certain fluster. Abbot Jerome stood up and flapped his scapular at the bat, driving it out the door. He sat down, with a satisfied smile for his show of leadership, only to see the bat fly in the other door and zoom even lower over the dinner tables. That led the assembled group to move *under* the tables. Abbot Jerome ousted the bat once more. This time it did not return. (It was found the next day in the dean's office.) That broke the ice, and conversations after that were quite spirited, to say the least. It also didn't hurt that the next general dinner was held in the Student Refectory at the same time as a hypnotism demonstration!

To make a long story short, we decided to run the program. The rest is history. The Monastic Studies Program was launched by a course in Monastic Spiritual Theology, which I was privileged to share with Father Jean Leclercq, OSB, renowned monastic scholar. He was a delight to work with, and would stuff every pocket in his habit with little papers on which he would write bibliography notes. Once he lent me a folder of some articles which were as yet unpublished. I promptly mislaid it, and spent an entire Sunday going through my office looking for it. I finally called him up to confess the loss, expecting thunder to rain on my head. But he was confident the folder would eventually show up, and assured me I shouldn't worry. The next day, it turned up, like the bat, in the foyer of the dean's office! I had absent-mindedly laid it down there before having a visit with the dean. I was left with a great amazement at Father Leclercq's detachment.

The chance to work with graduate students, most of whom were preparing for some form of ministry, was a joy. The January term course in Liturgy and the Arts brought tours to many area churches, as well as guests and artists to the class. Father Abbot Baldwin Dworschak was always on my schedule, as he would share the wonderful story of how the Abbey Church was built. I am so glad that we were able to make a video of his presentation before he died. Frank Kac-

marcik, used to tell us how unique the class was; he knew of no other seminary offering such training.

Christmas Eve and the Easter Vigil were always special moments to share in the Saint John's community. Some of us who lived off campus occasionally braved dreadful weather to get there. But one Easter Vigil eve, I came up the hill with scholars from the Ecumenical Institute, only to behold a fantastic display of Northern Lights flashing across the sky. We stood under the bell banner, watching, and just as the last bells were signaling time to enter the church, the aurora borealis faded away. Such good "liturgical planning" doesn't happen every day and we remained in awe of the spectacular show.

In our personal evaluations, faculty members are often asked to list their publications. That's all well and good, and as it should be, but somehow, I feel even prouder of the publications and public presentations of students or alums at learned societies. They do us all proud. I hope that my own scholarly work over the years has inspired my students to continue to outdo their professor. It has also been a source of much joy to learn that former students have gone on to teach, some of them right here at Saint John's.

Should I tell of some of the interruptions to scholarship that came about by fire? One of my little two-year old neighbors, in an apartment in St. Joseph, in the absence of his parents, put a package of cake mix on the stove burner and turned it up to high. It was just providence that I had not already left for the university. I always thought it would be fun to "break glass in case of fire." Well, I did just that, and put the fire out and rescued the screaming kid. A second occasion came when I called the fire department for an alarm going off on the apartment underneath me. The students living there, the firemen reported, had left a pan of something on the stove, and then left. I eventually moved to St. Cloud, where a few years later, the apartment building burned down. Someone had dropped cigarette ashes into a bag containing Christmas decorations on their balcony. My biggest worry as I sat on the lawn watching the spread of the fire from apartment to apartment and along the roof was the pile of comprehensive exams lying on the dining table, as well as my air ticket to Kalamazoo. I was fortunate in that I lost little by way of smoke or water damage, and all my neighbors were safe. Generous friends took me in, giving me their sewing room as a refuge until I could move to another residence. And in my next place of residence, I awoke about 3:00 one morning, hearing what sounded like an apartment smoke alarm nearby, and smelling smoke. Investigation revealed that it was coming from the apartment immediately below me. After banging on

the door and getting no response, I called 911, and the firemen were out in a matter of minutes. The occupant had made popcorn in the microwave (source of the fire), and then had a stroke and became unconscious as he went for the door. So, soon he was off to the hospital on a stretcher. The poor man eventually died, as he never did recover from the event. At Saint John's, I was astounded to read in the *Record* the log of near-daily responses to smoke alarms on campus! I am grateful to be in a place with its own fire department! I can tell you that the threat of fire wreaks havoc on my powers of concentration.

One of the joys of living and working in the Saint John's environment has been intellectual stimulus afforded by the many resources of such a university as ours. Let me just mention the friendship with many scholars from the Ecumenical Institute. These creative individuals have shared and continue to share the fruit of their labors and their sabbatical "leisure" in a very generous way. When I was on sabbatical myself once, I told myself I would then take the opportunity to go to concerts and lectures with great abandon, as so often the pressures of work hindered me from taking advantage of the many opportunities of enrichment right here on our campus "behind the pine curtain." Well, to my astonishment, I found at the university where I had settled for the semester's research little cultural opportunity at all! It made me doubly grateful to come back to the Saint John's-Saint Ben's area, where I could at least feast occasionally at the rich banquet that is offered here. One comes back with new eyes and learns "to see the place for the first time" (T.S. Eliot). Not only is there great opportunity here, culturally speaking, but it is consistently on a professional level.

I will not give vignettes of all the rich years here. The past years were not all "ups" nor were they all "downs." They contained the normal mixture of joys and sadnesses, as we still await the Parousia. I mention some of the myriad things that have made me very grateful for the chance to serve God here, in this place, at this time. †

The Passion of St. Anthony

Jeremy Schwager

A certain darkness envelops me,
In which dark ones dwell,
And I like a resident alien,
Receive their disapproving stares.

Coming near, I see their desire.
Fear closes in on me.
A winding sheet wrapping tight,
Preventing resistance or escape.

Then they close in, circling,
A great legion of calculating malice.
“A piece of flesh here,
Some dignity there, but keep him alive.”

And so piece-by-piece I disappear,
From the inside, they pull out what once was me,
Until only a shell remains
And a certain lightness pervades.



National Cathedral
Washington DC

John Mark Feilmeyer

The Venerable Bede is arguably one of the most important figures of early medieval Christianity. Born in the late seventh century, Bede became the premier scholar of the monastic communities at Wearmouth and Jarrow and was well-known for his scriptural commentaries and other works. His various writings have offered historians insights into the popular customs, beliefs, and spirituality of his era, while simultaneously expressing medieval writing styles and trends. Bede's most famous work is entitled *The Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation*, and as the title suggests, it was written to document the history of the English people in relation to the Roman church. Bede wanted to show how God had planned for the English to unite under the Roman church and become the English nation. One must recognize, however, that Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* was not a study of history according to modern disciplines, but was shaped and developed according to Bede's own theological agenda. This particular work was composed under the guise of a "salvation history," whose purpose was to explore how God had been manifested through the medium of human time and events.¹

When one considers Bede and the genre of salvation history, it is important to recognize that the *Ecclesiastical History* conveys Bede's own spirituality and theological outlook. Bede pointed out in the preface to the *Ecclesiastical History* that histories were written in order to serve a moral purpose. Bede states:

For if history relates good things of good men, the attentive hearer is excited to imitate that which is good; or if it mentions evil things of wicked persons, nevertheless the religious and pious hearer or reader, shunning that which is hurtful and perverse, is the more earnestly excited to perform those things which he knows to be good, and worthy of God.²

In response to Bede's view, Caitlin Corning states the following:

Bede viewed it as his responsibility to produce a work of history that would edify his readers, he would not present someone as evil and

yet prospering throughout his/her life, without the eventuality of divine punishment. This is not to imply that all the information in the *History* should be viewed as false. However, Bede constructed his material to emphasize certain viewpoints.³

The theological and spiritual viewpoints of the *Ecclesiastical History* did not end with Bede providing examples for imitation. Bede also wished to stress that unity in the church, under the Roman tradition, was of the utmost spiritual importance.⁴ This was especially true when concerning the celebration of Easter and other festivals. Corning points out that "Bede well understood the harm that division could bring to the Church and its mission if it divided into competing groups,"⁵ so to emphasize the importance of unity, Bede gave the Synod of Whitby a central location in the *Ecclesiastical History* (book III of V; right in the middle). At this synod, which took place in the mid-seventh century, the representatives of Rome persuaded the Celtic Christians of Northumbria to conform to Roman practice. By implementing the Roman liturgical rite throughout the British Isles, the dissident Celtic church was brought into communion with Rome and mainstream Christianity. Bede clearly stated his Roman allegiance in the dialogue between Wilfred, who represented Rome, and Colman, who represented the Celtic rite. At the synod Wilfred stated:

You certainly sin, if, having heard the decrees of the Apostolic See, and of the universal church, and that the same is confirmed by holy writ, you refuse to follow them; for, though your fathers were holy, do you think that their small number, in a corner of the remotest island, is to be preferred before the universal church of Christ throughout the world? And if that Columba of yours (and, I may say, ours also, if he was Christ's servant), was a holy man and powerful in miracles, yet could he be preferred before the most blessed prince of the apostles, to whom our Lord said, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the

¹ Osmund Lewry, *The Theology of History* (Notre Dame, IN: Fides Publishers, Inc., 1969), 41–46.

² Bede, Preface.

³ Caitlin Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions: Conflict and Consensus in the Early Medieval Church* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), 69.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁵ *Ibid.*

gates of hell shall not prevail against it, and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven”?⁶

According to Bede the only proper doctrine was the Roman tradition, which “ought to be preferred before all the traditions of the Scots.”⁷ Anything outside the Roman practice was considered to be in error and subject to scrutiny until unity had been achieved.

The strategic placement of the Synod of Whitby in the *Ecclesiastical History* suggests that Bede viewed the adoption of Roman practice as a climax, or turning-point in the history of the English and Irish churches. Bede wanted to stress the harmony that there was between the “divine law” and the “human law.” In class⁸, a fellow-student commented on the relationship between divine law and human law and mentioned the harmony that is recognizable in the church when Catholics throughout the world are celebrating a great feast with a common rite. One might ask what American Catholics would learn of other Catholic cultures if they knew how much they had in common through Christ and the church. Awareness would cultivate the harmony that would lead to a new appreciation for other cultures and increased faith through fellowship. Where can we find the leadership necessary for this type of unity? Bede found it in Rome. The harmony and unity he sought could only be realized through communion with the Roman church and its customs. Thomas O’Loughlin states what is most important to this communion:

What was at stake was the harmony between human and divine law. God had created the universe in an orderly and numbered way; everywhere its order was a testimony to the ideas in mind of God as he created, and to see these patterns in material creation was to see beyond matter into the divine purposes. . . . So fixing any festival, much less the central festival of Easter, was not just a matter of ecclesiastical decision, but of tuning in to the law in the universe around one. Christ had suffered at the time of the Passover; that was when the divinely chosen “hour had come” and it was this key moment in the whole history of the universe that they wanted to relive at Easter. . . . Getting the arithmetic right was a matter of the basic

law of the creation and the divine plan.⁹ Bede felt that Rome knew the “law in the universe” and with that, the precise times and dates in which liturgical celebrations were to be carried out. Celebrating on the correct day ensured that the universal church was fully orthodox and always on par with God in heaven.

Bede’s spirituality can also be seen in the role that he gave to Scripture in the *Ecclesiastical History*. The Easter controversy provided Bede with an opportunity to use Scripture to justify why the Roman Easter was more orthodox. One example of Bede’s use of Scripture to support Roman authority can be found in his description of the conversion of the northern Picts. Bede describes the Picts as being “rude and barbarous,” yet “because they had not laid aside the fervent grace of charity, they were worthy to be informed in the true knowledge of this particular.”¹⁰ From Bede’s perspective only Rome had the scriptural authority to teach the “true knowledge” to the Picts. Bede cites Philippians 3:15 where Paul refers to those of a different attitude (the Celtic church, according to Bede) being corrected by God (the Roman church, according to Bede). Keeping up with the genre of salvation history, Bede wants to stress that it was God’s will that the Picts were to be converted and Bede uses this biblical proof-text to justify Rome’s place in that conversion.

Scripture also played a major role in the Synod of Whitby due to each side citing specific biblical passages and biblical traditions as evidence for their arguments. Colman cited the Johannine tradition of celebrating Easter between the fourteenth and the twentieth moon of Nisan, while Wilfred represented the synoptic tradition of keeping Easter from the fifteenth to the twenty-first moon of Nisan. The difference between the two was clearly biblical. The Celts rightly believed that Christ’s passion took place on the same day in which the Passover lambs were slain (John 19:14). The Romans, however, believed that Christ’s passion took place on the day of Passover and that the last supper was a Jewish Passover meal. This would have meant that the Jewish Sanhedrin would have broken tradition and left their homes on the night of Passover in order to search for Christ to arrest him. With the two practices laid out Bede once again used Scripture to justify the Roman liturgical tradition, despite its inaccuracy. Bede used St. Peter’s

⁶ Bede, III.25.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Celtic Monasticism with Mary Forman, OSB. Saint John’s School of Theology*Seminary (Spring 2007).

⁹ Thomas O’Loughlin, *Celtic Theology* (New York: Continuum, 2000), 76–77.

¹⁰ Bede, III.4.

authority from Matthew 16:16-19 to justify not only his own belief in Roman authority as stated above, but also to prove Rome's authority in scriptural interpretation. Christ had given the ultimate authority to St. Peter and his successors in Rome when Peter received the "keys to the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 16:19). This divinely mandated authority outweighed any authority that the Celtic church believed St. Columba to have had. Bede interpreted Scripture in a way which highlighted the Spirit's actions within the church, including inspiring it to uphold the synoptic tradition. It was the Holy Spirit who had inspired and guided the Roman church since the time of St. Peter; Bede used this divine inspiration and authority as evidence supporting the Roman customs. Although Bede spoke little about the Spirit in his *Ecclesiastical History*, it is implied that the Spirit's presence was perpetually felt throughout the land due to the church's role as the intermediary between God and his people.

The Holy Spirit not only inspired the church to profess the correct doctrine, but it also gave the church the divine authority that served as its basis for ecclesiastical supremacy. As stated above, authority played a major role in the *Ecclesiastical History*, especially when one considers the way Bede used the authority of Scripture as evidence to support his pro-Roman argument. Aside from Scripture Bede also cited the authority of the universal church as evidence for the orthodoxy of the Roman rite. At the Synod of Whitby, Wilfred attested to the universality of the Roman rite:

The Easter which we observe, we saw celebrated by all at Rome, where the blessed apostles, Peter and Paul, lived, taught, suffered, and were buried; we saw the same done in Italy and in France, when we traveled through those countries for pilgrimage and prayer. We found the same practiced in Africa, Asia, Egypt, Greece, and all the world, wherever the church of Christ is spread abroad, through several nations and tongues, at one and the same time; except only these and their accomplices in obstinacy, I mean the Picts and the Britons, who foolishly, in these two remote islands of the world, and only in part even of them, oppose all the rest of the universe.¹¹

Bede also invoked the authority of the decisions of the Council of Nice as well as the authority of the

¹¹ Ibid., III.25.

church father Eusebius, whose *Church History* carried a certain measure of authority in its own right. Bede affirmed their authority by relating: "That this is the true Easter, and the only one to be kept by the faithful, was not newly decreed by the council of Nice, but only confirmed afresh; as the Church History informs us."¹²

When looking at Bede in the context of history one sees a person whose spiritual life dictated his intellectual career. His many writings included biblical commentaries, histories, and works of science, which were all written with the purpose of admonishing his audience to follow true doctrine and live exemplary lives. As a product of "the Golden Age of Northumbria," Bede was the first historian to comment upon the "Saxons" or to portray the English as a religious nation under Christ.¹³ The general culture of Bede's day was one where monastic life flourished and helped to lead the church and society through the supposed "Dark Ages." Bede's own monastic school was influenced by Canterbury, which was, in turn, influenced by Rome, leading Bede to support Roman practice and develop a loyalty to Roman authority.¹⁴ His school also influenced him to take up an interest in calculations,¹⁵ which were believed to reflect the relationship between heaven and earth that was mentioned above.

When a modern historian attempts to use a salvation history (or any spiritual writing for that matter) to reconstruct the past, he or she must remain aware of several things. Philip Sheldrake points out that modern historians must remain aware of the fact that the "spirituality of ideas [in religious writing] is inherently elitist" and that "the [primary] evidence is never complete."¹⁶ Sheldrake also states that "all history is 'controlled history,' as it reflects the interests of chroniclers and other interpreters."¹⁷ Sheldrake advises critical historians to "look beyond the explicit meaning of texts" and to "note the assumptions or bias and, as far as they can, make allowances."¹⁸ With this in mind historians can look at the *Ecclesiastical*

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 351.

¹⁴ Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., 70.

¹⁶ Philip Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 19.

¹⁷ Ibid., 20; see Handout I.3 "Outline of Lecture on Historical Approaches to Monastic History" by Mary Forman, OSB (Spring 2007).

¹⁸ Sheldrake, *Spirituality and History*, 20.

History and note how Bede's agenda and sources had influenced and altered his work. Corning points out how Rome's mission to the Celtic church was aided by the Frankish Merovingians, yet Bede makes no mention of this.¹⁹ Bede's silence on the Merovingian contribution "could reflect the lack of information in his sources."²⁰ At the same time, "Bede may have decided not to focus on the Merovingians in order to highlight the relationship between the papacy and the English Church, something that was important in Bede's own time."²¹ By attempting to understand Bede in his own context, historians stand to make clearer observations and better interpretations when studying his medieval sources. Historians must also bear in mind that Bede's work is primarily a secondary text and "must be used carefully when analyzing Celtic-Roman interactions."²² The events recalled at the beginning of the *Ecclesiastical History* took place over 130 years before St. Augustine's arrival in Canterbury (AD 597) and Bede's sources were limited to the accessible, surviving documents and oral traditions that were still circulating.²³

Henry Mayr-Harting is a modern historian who has commented on Bede and the *Ecclesiastical History* in his work *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England*. Mayr-Harting possesses the characteristics of a well-versed historian due to his use of a variety of primary and secondary sources. His primary methodology uses various primary texts composed by Bede in an attempt to make an argument related to Bede's personality. He supports his argument by applying his own research and consulting the opinions of other scholars related in secondary sources. Mayr-Harting used not only the *Ecclesiastical History*, but also Bede's grammar books, sermons, and biblical commentaries to help convey the spirituality and overall personality that influenced the way Bede thought and wrote.²⁴ Additionally, Mayr-Harting also critiques Bede's methodology of compiling sources, demonstrating why Bede has always been considered a reliable source of information. He points out how Bede used Roman archives that had been brought to Canterbury, local ecclesiastical and court records,

annals, oral histories, legends and hagiographies (like the *Life of Wilfred*), and other ecclesiastical histories in an attempt to relay accurate, factual history with the unique purpose of edifying and instructing his Latin literate Christian audience.²⁵

Mayr-Harting also pays close attention to Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* by giving consideration to the genre of the literature. He recognizes the authenticity of the work as a product of salvation history by noting its main purposes of edification and promotion of unity in the nation under God and Rome.²⁶ Mayr-Harting also brings his readers up to date as to the work's origins and the era in which it was written, paying attention to Bede's monastic tradition and the influence that it had over him²⁷ and the eschatological beliefs of the early medieval period.²⁸ Mayr-Harting recognizes the state of the evidence that he analyzed by calling to mind the different dating systems that Bede had to consider and also by examining the gaps that would have confronted Bede. However, Mayr-Harting recognizes enough about Bede and his environment to make the assertion that as a scholar, Bede would have been well-prepared to handle such obstacles.²⁹ Mayr-Harting also recognizes the relationships between the *Ecclesiastical History* and other works popular in Bede's time, attesting to possible influences from people such as Augustine, Gildas, Isidore of Seville, and Orosius.³⁰

The most basic judgment that Mayr-Harting proposes is that Bede's work was influenced and characterized by the social and ecclesiastical affairs of the seventh century. According to Mayr-Harting the purpose of the *Ecclesiastical History* was to first instruct the faithful by providing moral examples to imitate and, second, to show that God had mandated for the English to be united to him under the guidance of the Roman church.³¹ Medieval monks were trained to see the spiritual side of things and were able to understand how God operated in the daily affairs of the people. Mayr-Harting points out that Bede and his contemporaries were not trained to see the cause-and-effect relationships that people observe today, because in their time things took on special spiritual significance that otherwise would

¹⁹ Corning, *The Celtic and Roman Traditions*, 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²² *Ibid.*, 72.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Henry Mayr-Harting, *The Coming of Christianity to Anglo-Saxon England* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1972), 40.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 45.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

not normally have been associated with it.³²

For the purpose of introducing Bede and his world, Mayr-Harting's judgments are sound. His use of primary and secondary sources has led him to create an accurate and helpful introduction to one of the most famous pieces of Anglo-Saxon literature. His attention to the spirituality and social context which fueled the composition and influenced its outcome are impressive considering the numbers of historians who study the Middle Ages and attempt to steer clear of anything religious. Mayr-Harting's work is well researched and is presented in such a manner that both high school and college level students will find it helpful.

The *Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation* is certainly one of the greatest examples of the salvation history genre that exists from the Middle Ages. It serves as a window into a far-away era which allows us to peer into a world unlike our own. However, Bede would be the first to say that his book was written in order to draw people closer to Christ; this is something that still speaks to us today. Historians can attempt to put together the pieces of Bede's life and try to decipher why and how he did what he did. What has to be kept in mind is that God was Bede's reason for everything, whether in school, work, or prayer, all was centered on God. If modern Christians read Bede's works in that light, it can still be possible to see how his writings can edify and help to inspire us to live truly Christian lives. It might also teach us something about true devotion to God through our everyday lives. †

³² Ibid., 48.

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