
To Give Drink to the Thirsty

Br Mark O'Connor, fms

“I thirst.” – John 19:28

Modern science tells us that water is the stuff of life; it is vital for all living organisms and about 60 per cent of the average adult’s body weight is water - at birth, this may be as high as 75 per cent.

No wonder, then, that our faith sees ‘water’ as a divine symbol of God’s life in us and urges us to ‘give water’ physically and spiritually to others. As G.K Chesterton once remarked: ‘All water is holy water!’

There is a profound link between a spiritual thirst, prayer and encountering Christ today. Mother Teresa put it well when, after four hours at prayer, she once said to a gathering of people:

Jesus wants me to tell you again ... how much is the love he has for each one of you - beyond all what you can imagine. Not only he loves you, even more - he longs for you. He misses you when you don't come close. He thirsts for you. He loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy. Why does Jesus say 'I thirst'? What does it mean? Something so hard to explain in words - ... 'I thirst' is something much deeper than just Jesus saying 'I love you'. Until you know deep inside that Jesus thirsts for you - you can't begin to know who he wants to be for you. Or who he wants you to be for him."



All of us search in our own ways and at our own pace for the great beauty of God made flesh in Jesus of Nazareth. We 'thirst' for his presence. The writer Frederick Buechner describes a moment where his 'thirst' for God was made real. He was at Sea World in Florida (of all places) on a beautiful day as six killer whales were released into the tank:

What with the dazzle of the sky and sun, the beautiful young people on the platform, the soft southern air, and the crowds all around us watching the performance with a delight matched only by what seemed the delight of the performing whales, it was as if the whole creation—men and women and beasts and sun and water and earth and sky and, for all I know, God himself – was caught up in one great, jubilant dance of unimaginable beauty. And then, right in the midst of it, I was astonished to find that my eyes were filled with tears ... I believe there is no mystery about why we shed tears ... We shed tears because we were given a glimpse of the way life was created to be and is not.

(The Longing for Home, pp. 126-127).



Recollections and Reflections
Frederick Buechner
kindle edition



There is also no mystery to the imperative of the gospel that we respond to those who are thirsting at *all* levels. Certainly, we are now, rightly, very conscious that we need to care for our planet. Many on the planet lack in the basic access to water needed for dignity, and organisations like Caritas need our support as they assist these suffering people. In our land of drought and flood no one can seriously practise the works of mercy unless he or she cares for the earth and the poor - as God's good creation.

And in our inner lives - where we are alone before the living God - our 'thirst' for God needs to be addressed. Maybe we are 'thirsting' but for the wrong things! Mary Oliver's poem 'Thirst' provides one way forward. It suggests we all need a long 'conversation in our hearts' 'on how we find the 'living water' as we age and 'dry up'! Let her prayer and wisdom be ours.

THIRST

Mary Oliver

*Another morning and I wake with thirst
for the goodness I do not have.*

*I walk out to the pond and all the way God
has given us such beautiful lessons.*

*Oh Lord, I was never a quick scholar but
sulked and hunched over my books past the
hour and the bell; grant me, in your mercy,
a little more time.*

*Love for the earth and love for you are
having such a long conversation in my
heart.*

*Who knows what will finally happen or
where I will be sent, yet already I have
given a great many things away, expecting
to be told to pack nothing, except the
prayers which, with this thirst,
I am slowly learning.*

Beacon Press, Boston, 2006, pp. 1, 52, 69

Rolling the dice on the Gospel

Richard Rohr OFM: 23/01/2011



They hadn't understood about the loaves! The Gospels use those words to describe the crowd that Jesus had miraculously fed with five barley loaves and two fish. They ate, but they didn't understand. What didn't they understand?

This is the story: Jesus had been preaching to a large crowd, several thousand people. But they were in a remote place and, after a time, the people had been without food for a long time. They were hungry, so famished in fact that they lacked the strength to return to their own towns and villages. The disciples approached Jesus and asked him whether they should go into the neighboring towns and buy food for the crowd. Jesus told them instead to feed the people themselves. They protested that they had too little food, almost none. Jesus asked them what they, in fact, did have. Their answer: "Only five barley loaves and two fish." And this came with a question: What good is that among so many? The equation is hopeless: so little food, so many people.

And so Jesus asked them to bring the loaves and fish to him. He blessed the food and asked the disciples to distribute it among the hungry thousands. We know the rest of the story: They set out the food; everyone ate as much as he or she wanted, and they gathered up twelve baskets of scraps left over afterwards. And the crowd was impressed, so much in fact that the next day they followed Jesus around the lake, hoping for another such feeding. Jesus, for his part, was saddened by their lack of understanding: They hadn't understood about the loaves.

What hadn't they understood? Two things:

First: When the disciples initially approach Jesus and ask him whether they should go into the neighboring towns and buy bread, their question betrays that they are unaware that they are with the bread of life. They are in the presence of that which is the object of all the world's hungers and which, in its bounty, is unlimited and infinite. Yet they want to go off and buy food elsewhere. The lesson: When you are with the bread of life there is no need to go off to buy food, or anything else, elsewhere! You have all the resources you need to feed every kind of hunger. The disciples' wanting to go off to buy food elsewhere betrays their lack of awareness of this. They didn't see the incongruity, the irony, in their request: Jesus is the bread of life, food for the life of the world, and they ask him if they should go off elsewhere to buy what is needed to feed the crowds.

The second thing they didn't understand was the meaning of the equation: so little food, so many people. A few small loaves of bread and a few fish are hopelessly inadequate to feed a crowd of thousands. It goes against common sense to put such a pathetically meager fare before so many people. How can five loaves and two fish feed a crowd of thousands?

Sometimes well-meaning homilists have tried to explain what might have happened by suggesting that Jesus' invitation to share drew out from the people the privately guarded resources of food that each had brought and, when everyone shared what he or she had, all

were fed and there was food to spare. Such a homily has its own good lesson, but the point of the story is precisely the hopelessness of the equation. In essence, the resources of the Gospel always seem hopelessly dwarfed by the world's power, the world's hunger, the world's sin, and the resources that the world itself seems to offer.

Five loaves and two fish set out to feed a crowd of thousands is the Gospel equivalent of the famous story in the Jewish scriptures of the young shepherd boy, David, standing before the giant, Goliath: A young boy, barefoot, holding a boy's plaything, a slingshot, standing before a giant, a trained soldier, clothed in iron, with a sword-bearer carrying his weapons, is also a

hopeless equation: So little power against so much strength. But the young boy triumphs because God is on his side. It's the same with the loaves and the fish.

What do we need to understand about the loaves? We need to understand that we are with the bread of life, everything we need to feed the world we already have. We don't need to go anywhere to buy anything. We have the resources already; though on the surface those resources will always look over-matched, hopeless, dwarfed, nonsensical, wishful thinking. On the surface, invariably, we will look like David before Goliath, puny and pathetic, not up to the task of defeating a giant or feeding a hungry, greedy world.



REMAR MINISTRY TEAM - 2011

Hannah, Laura, Jake, Br Peter Walsh (MLFT), Simone (Co-ordinator), Jasmine & Kiran

The Sacrifice of Love

Br Mark O'Connor, fms

The Anglican writer J.B. Phillips once wrote a beautiful little book of meditations entitled 'Your God is too Small!' He pointed out how so often we all have false images of God and these prevent us from seeing the real God at work in our lives.

Sometimes however we actually make things difficult for ourselves and others by not properly appreciating the real depths of our own faith.

For we can think we 'know' what a certain concept means but we actually get it a little off centre! We substitute the wondrous and life-giving mystery of God with something that diminishes us and even puts some people off!

One word like this that often – but need not mislead – is the concept of 'sacrifice'.

Talk of 'sacrifice' is a vital aspect of Christian life as it is understood in our living and praying of the Eucharist. But often it gets misused. Let's reclaim it for our daily life.

The *Sacrifice* of the Mass is at the heart of our faith. But all too often the poverty of our understanding of 'sacrifice' betrays us.

Sacrifice has nothing to do with some capricious god who demands the destruction of our love and life - let alone our humanity. No, our God loves us infinitely and beyond our wildest dreams. Sin exists for sure but it hurts us, not God!

The Christian gift of love then, the gift of self, doesn't diminish me in any way. Christian sacrifice is fundamentally different from simply 'giving up' things. It is not a negative but a positive!

None of us can ever 'force' God! Do this 'sacrifice' and God will make it happen - is not prayer but magic.

Recently an American Jesuit, Robert J. Daly an emeritus professor of theology at Boston College has helped many come to a deeper understanding of the real importance of the Catholic doctrine of 'sacrifice'.

His book is "*Sacrifice Unveiled: The True Meaning of Christian Sacrifice*." Its thesis is remarkably simple, straightforward, but one with enormous implications for how we Catholics understand our faith and how we believe and pray the Eucharist. It's all about self-giving Love

Daly believes the "absolutely key reality of authentic Christian sacrifice" is the "self-giving love between the Father and the Son" – not about a cross, not about a victim, but about the gift of love between the Father and the Son. I think he's right, and not just about Christian sacrifice, but about God, which means the most fundamental things.

Most of his book isn't about what Christian sacrifice is; it's about what it is not and how what it is not has controlled our use and experience of the idea of sacrifice. The word has both a range of meaning and so much history - that's really what Daly has to take on. He argues persuasively that almost all of our ordinary ideas of sacrifice and even some of the New Testament itself run counter to a true Trinitarian understanding of Christian sacrifice.

"Christian sacrifice," he writes, ". . . is not primarily a ceremony or ritual; nor is it something we 'do' or 'give up.' For it is, first and foremost . . . a mutually self-giving event that takes place between persons."

In the first instance, those persons are the Persons of the Trinity. The self-giving event

among them is love, love that existed among them before time and creation, love that exists beyond time and creation, love that exists beyond love.

In Daly's view, the starting point for thinking about God is the love and life God the Trinity has revealed to us about God's self. The life of the Triune God starts not with the birth, life and death of Jesus, not with sin and sacrifice, but with Love.

The Trinity then is at the heart of it all: True love between the Father and Son is always gift between them, not a demand. The gift

of love between the Father and the Son does not mean either is diminished in any way.

Let's celebrate the Sacrifice of the Mass but make it clear that the mystery we are proclaiming is not about a vengeful God demanding a 'blood' sacrifice to appease him .

No ! Let's link the Love that moves the heavens and the stars from all eternity - with the love that moves our hearts and minds as we reach out to others in the 'sacrifice of love'

WANTED

If any community has any spare Office books or "People's Companion to the Breviary" not being used, we have use for a few more of both books here at Fitzroy.



Many thanks

Br Paul Kane

The Reagan Centenary

George Weigel, *The Catholic Difference*, January 12, 2011



February 6 is the centenary of the birth of **Ronald Wilson Reagan**, one of the most intriguing public figures of our time.

Clark Clifford, the ultimate Washington insider, dismissed him as an "amiable dunce." Yet Reagan's posthumously published diaries and speech notes show a man of considerable insight and intelligence, who was shrewd enough to understand that the contempt of the elites was a political asset in securing the loyalty of the electorate and in getting what he wanted out of Congress and the federal bureaucracy.

He was feared by arms controllers and the foreign policy establishment as a man likely

to blunder into a nuclear Armageddon. Yet recent studies by Martin and Annelise Anderson demonstrate that, unlike the liberal poobahs of deterrence, Reagan never learned to live with the bomb and bent every effort to rid the world of nuclear weapons, through both disarmament and the development of effective strategic defense.

His anti-communism was derided as primitive, unsophisticated, and a danger to world peace. Yet the historical record shows that his "simplistic" prescription for ending the Cold war -- "We win; they lose" -- turned out to be the key to the victory of imperfect democracies over a pluperfect tyranny.

Few great public figures of late modernity have been so misunderstood in their lifetime or revered at their death -- with the exception of another man who was never supposed to become the titanic figure he became, **Pope John Paul II**. And, as I try to show in *The End and the Beginning: Pope John Paul II -- The Victory of Freedom, the Last Years, the Legacy*, these two unexpected giants of the late 20th century had strikingly parallel biographies, despite the obvious differences in their backgrounds and interests.

They were both orphaned young: the future pope, literally; the future president, virtually, given the alcoholism of his father.

They were both men of the theater, whose extensive acting experience gave them both crucial skills and a conviction: that the word of truth, spoken clearly and forcefully enough, could cut through the static of evil's lies, rally hearts and souls, and create possibilities where only obstacles were apparent.

Their understanding of, and loathing for, communism came to both of them early: Reagan, through his battles with Hollywood communists for control of the Screen Actors Guild; John Paul II, through his experience of the brutalitarian period of Polish communism after World War II. Both knew that the crucial battle with communism was in the realm of the human spirit, for communism proposed a false, yet seductive, view of the human future that could best be matched by a nobler vision of human freedom.

They were both dismissed as "conservatives" by pundits for whom "conservative" was a polite placeholder for "reactionary." Yet the truth of the matter was that both were radicals: Reagan, in his convictions about ridding the world of nuclear weapons; John Paul, in the depth of his Christian discipleship.

There was no "holy alliance" between them, as some overly imaginative reporters have alleged. But there was deep mutual respect. Shortly before Christmas 2001, John Paul II asked me, "How is President Reagan?" As it happened, I had just run into former attorney general Edwin Meese, who had told me a story that I shared with the Pope. Meese had gone to the christening of the U.S.S. Ronald Reagan



earlier that year, and had brought the former president (whose illness prevented him from attending) the typical ship's baseball cap, emblazoned "U.S.S. Ronald Reagan CV-76," that had been given out on the occasion. Reagan, a gentleman to the end, responded, "Thank you, Ed. That's very kind. But why would anyone name a ship after me?" Twelve years after leaving office, the most consequential president since Franklin Roosevelt had no memory of having led his country, and the free world, for eight years.

John Paul II, who could not imagine the unreflected-upon life, was saddened by my tale, and asked that I get word of his solidarity in prayer to Mrs. Reagan. It's a comfort to imagine these two happy warriors now, in different circumstances, beyond the reach of either misunderstanding or sorrow.

REMEMBER ME

Br Mark O'Connor, fms

The last words of a person soon to die are often laden with significance. Or at least Aquinas thought so.

What St Thomas Aquinas has to say about Christ's choice of his last words is well worth setting down:

"The last things to be said, especially by friends who are about to leave us, are those that are best remembered. At such a time, our love for our friends is greatest; and what we love most is what sinks deepest into our hearts"

(Summa Theologiae 3.73.5)

Scripture scholars agree that those last words for Jesus included a poignant plea of a doomed young man that his friends remember him. 'Do this in memory of me': Luke's Gospel agrees with Paul's account in First Corinthians in having Jesus give that command to those who were eating with him at the Last Supper.

So why is remembering so essential? What happens when we remember Jesus? What does it mean to 'remember' Jesus in the Eucharist?

Frank McCourt in his autobiography, *Angela's Ashes*, gives us a clue. He tells of a confession he once made as a young boy in Limerick, Ireland.

His mother had just given birth and their in-laws from the North had sent five pounds to buy milk for the new baby. But his father, an alcoholic, had taken the money and was drinking it up in the pubs. His mother had sent him, a young boy, to find his dad and bring him home. But young Frankie can't find his father. What he finds instead is a drunken sailor in a pub, asleep, with a largely untouched plate of fish and chips in front of him.



Ravenously hungry, he takes the fish and chips outside and eats them. Then, feeling guilty for stealing, he decides he had better go to confession. It's Saturday afternoon and he goes to a church and confesses to a priest that he stole fish and chips from a drunken man.

The priest asks him why he did this and Frankie answers that he was hungry, that there is not a scrap of food in their house, and that his mother is raging by the fire because his father is drinking away the money meant to buy milk for the new baby. The priest, hearing all this, suddenly becomes quiet. Instead of scolding Frankie and giving him a penance, he does something else (Mccourt's words):

"I wonder if the priest is asleep because he's very quiet 'til he says, 'My child, I sit here, I hear the sins of the poor, I assign the absolution. I should be on my knees washing their feet. ... Go. Pray for me.' He blesses me in Latin, talks to himself in English and I wonder what I did to him."

These words wonderfully describe one of the central meanings of the Eucharist. We 'remember' Jesus when on our knees washing each other's feet . We 'remember' Jesus when we serve each other with humility and self effacement. We 'remember' – make present again the Body of Jesus - whenever we live out in our daily lives the vision of St Teresa of Avila (1515–1582). Few have put it better:



Christ Has No Body

*Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands, yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with which he looks
compassion on this world.*

BROTHER DANIEL LYNCH - NOVICE



On Sunday March 6, one month after his arrival in Canberra, Daniel Lynch was formally accepted into the Novitiate Formation Program in a simple, prayerful ceremony by Br Jeffrey Crowe, Provincial. Supporting Daniel were the Canberra Community including Br Kevin Herlihy. We were joined by Br Michael Flanagan, Daniel's Master of Postulants, Br Tony Leon, his Vocation Director, and Br Michael Hill, the Chair of the Oceania Formation Commission. Br Tony Caddy, Formation Director, Br Patrick Connell, newly professed, and Ash Higgins, postulant, were present with us from Melbourne with Gerard Barklmore – postulant from Forbes.

During the Ceremony Daniel was presented with the Institute Cross by Br Jeffrey, the Constitutions by Br Tony Shears, a Prayer candle by Br Lawrie Mc Cane, and an Icon of Jesus & Mary by Br Michael Flanagan.

Daniel was assured of the prayerful support and encouragement of the Brothers and all Marists in Oceania as he begins this significant journey of Novitiate formation.

The Canberra Community



PLEASE NOTE : The date for the St Colman's Shepparton Old Boys' Association Reunion has been changed from Sunday July 10, 2011 to the weekend of **August 19-20, 2011** For details contact Ray McPhee:

[<raymcphee@iprimus.com.au>](mailto:raymcphee@iprimus.com.au)

or PO Box 7310. Shepparton, 3632

Time for a Smile

During a visit to my doctor, I asked him, " How do you determine whether or not an older person should be put in an old-age home?"

"Well" he said, "We fill up a bathtub, then we offer a teaspoon, a teacup and a bucket to the person to empty the bathtub."

"Oh, I understand," I said. "A normal person would use the bucket because it is bigger than the spoon or the the teacup." "No", he said. "A normal person would pull the plug. Do you want a bed near the window?"

A man applying for a job at a Mildura Lemon Orchard seemed to be far too qualified for the job. The foreman frowned and said,

"I have to ask you this: Have you had any actual experience in picking lemons?"

He replied: "I've been divorced three times, bought a Leyland P76, a Beta video player and took up all the Telstra floats. Then I voted for Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. How am I doing so far?"

A father was approached by his small son who told him proudly, 'I know what the Bible means!'

His father smiled and replied, 'What do you mean, you 'know' what the Bible means?'

The son replied, 'I do know!'

'Okay,' said his father. 'What does the Bible mean?' 'That's easy, Daddy...' the young boy replied excitedly, 'It stands for **B**asic **I**nformation **B**efore **L**eaving **E**arth.'

There was a very gracious lady who was mailing an old family Bible to her brother in another part of the country.

'Is there anything breakable in here?' asked the postal clerk.

'Only the Ten Commandments.' answered the lady.

There is the story of a pastor who got up one Sunday and announced to his congregation: 'I have good news and bad news. The good news is, we have enough money to pay for our new building program. The bad news is, it's still out there in your pockets.'

People want the front of the bus, the back of the church, and the center of attention.

While driving in Pennsylvania, a family caught up to an Amish carriage.

The owner of the carriage obviously had a sense of humor, because attached to the back of the carriage was a hand printed sign...

'Energy efficient vehicle: Runs on oats and grass.

Caution: Do not step in exhaust.'

It's a pitch-black night and a ship's captain suddenly sees a light dead ahead on a collision course with his vessel. He sends a signal. 'Change your course immediately ten degrees east.'

The light signals back: 'Change *yours* ten degrees west.'

The indignant captain then signals: 'I am an admiral of Her Majesty's Navy. Change *your* course sir!'

'I'm a seaman, second class,' comes the reply. 'Change your course, sir.'

By now the captain is furious. "I'm a forty-thousand tonne battleship! I'm not changing course!"

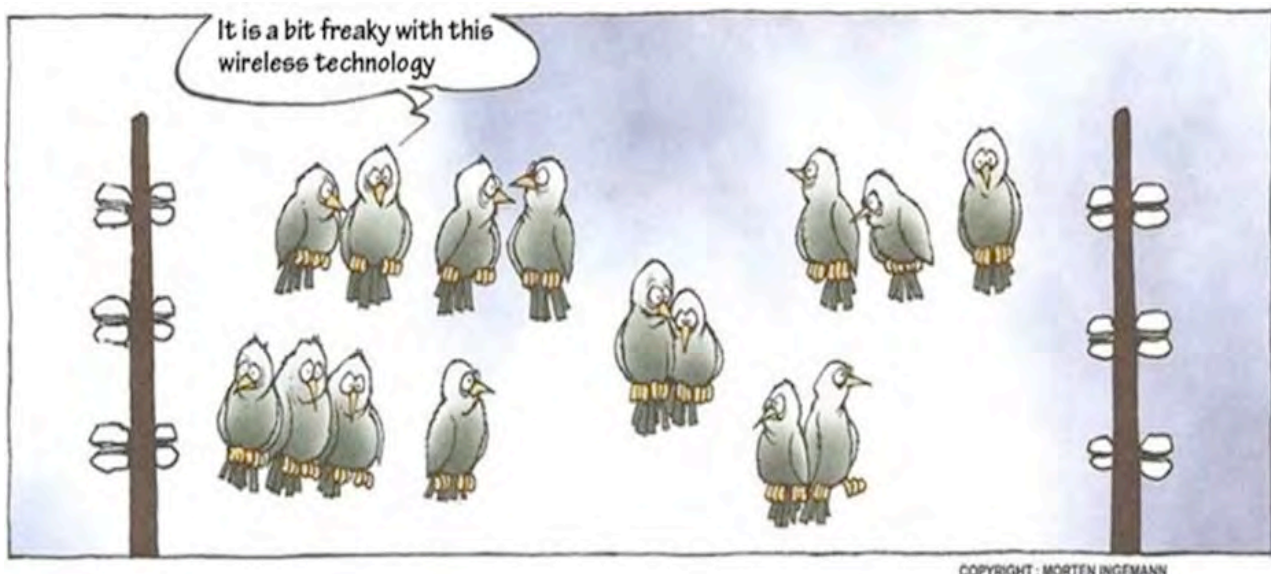
There's one last reply: 'I'm a lighthouse - your call, mate!'



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