
Contempletive Musings

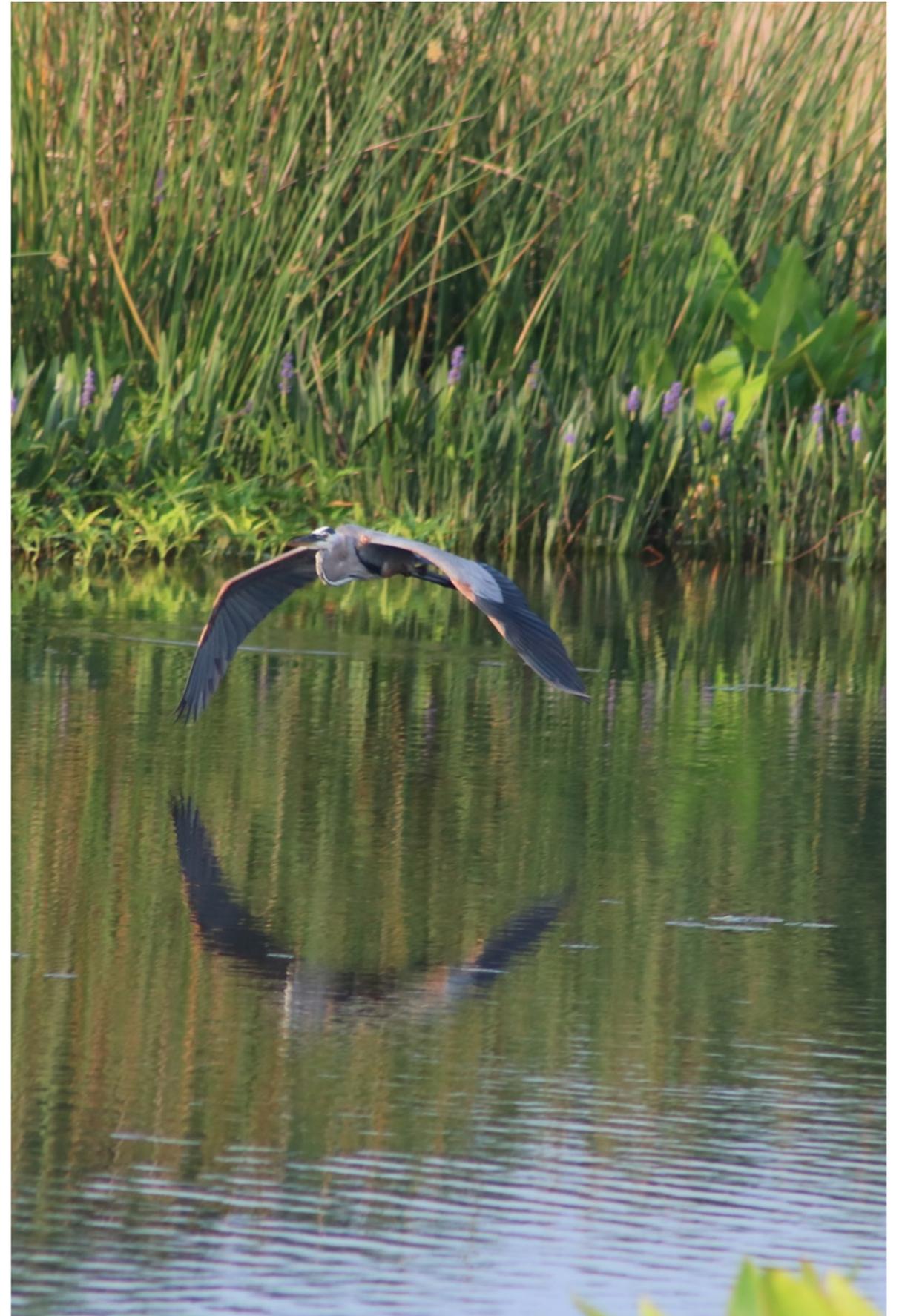
A Series of Essays



LOUIS J SHARP IV

CHAPTER 1

Reflections



Always Tip a Waitress Well

My father, while far from perfect, was always teaching me how to be a Christian by actions and also by words. What I remember were these words and actions; and how they impacted me at the time. Even now as a grandfather, they are there. I think it is important that I document those times, what he said, what he did and finally what it meant to me. I hope that my own family will learn about dad and in some way also learn about me.

“Always tip a waitress well. They have a tough job.” He used to say this often when we were out to dinner. I now understand this as his lesson in compassion for others especially those who work to serve us. Not only do they have a tough job for poor wages but they are often not thanked at all. I never saw dad get angry or upset with anyone who was serving us even though I am sure there were times when he could.

I know that Jesus would have treated waitresses well, in fact he would have probably turned the tables and served them. While dad did not do this at a restaurant, I am sure that he always did that for his secretaries, Gracie and Dorothy. I would not expect anything else. I also learned from this that it is necessary to put yourself second and other first. If he could do this for those he did not know, how much easier it must have

been for his own family. What I need to learn is the patience and compassion to do the same in my own life.

This servant attitude is probably why so many of the probation officers really enjoyed my dad and were so willing to treat him as an equal when we went fishing in North Carolina or even later when they would get together in retirement.

“You will understand when you are a dad.” I heard this many nights. I think it was his punctuation mark for any teaching he was passing on. It was usually preceded by a lesson or a story as I was being tucked in. During my teen years it may have come on the golf course or as we traveled alone. What I remember is this statement. The lessons were learned and assimilated in my memory even though the actual words I cannot remember. I know he was initiating me into manhood and fatherhood.

It almost seems as if he was giving me the catechism of life. It was based on the more familiar catechism but was much more human and understandable. The other thing that I remember is that it was more the beatitudes than the ten commandments. It was proactive not reactive. You will understand when you are a dad.

“You will give your children even the food off your plate.” Dad not only said this but he also did it. I think he was saying how important we were and how unimportant he was, particularly when we were little. The world did not revolve around him and he was telling us that it will not revolve around us when we matured. I think he was showing us how to behave as ma-

ture men in this world. We must always give of ourselves. That is one of my struggles in life.

Dad also practiced this even when his own children were not involved, as a scout leader, as a boss at work, in helping with church and in dealing with the less fortunate.

“When you get to a certain level in your job, someone is always trying to cut you down.” How true this turned out to be. It just taught me to be kind to everyone and to trust in my own performance to make my way in life. I only wish I had trusted in God more.

I was aware of this and thus was not as surprised when it occurred. I was better able to meet it with love and compassion. I remember being passed over for a job because I was too nice. That was a job I would not have wanted if I had to be “not nice”.

I think dad left his job in Washington because he got tired of being attacked by his boss at the time.

“This is how you put your utensils when you are finished eating.” This is the one statement that my children probably remember as mom and dad taught them on our visits to St. Louis. I think what dad was trying to teach was to be polite and civil. It was much more than table manners however. It was also teaching us to follow the rules and do not be unruly. To him table manners were just the tip of the iceberg. It was important that we show respect for others through manners and civility.

Dad was one of the most polite men I have ever known. He never drew attention to himself or was loud and boisterous. That is contrary to what many men consider the norm of behavior. That was a great example for us.

“Try one bite of everything.” This was the rule at dinner but I now realize it is broader in scope than eating. Dad always encouraged me to be adventuresome, and to try different things in life. He did not just throw me to the wolves. He was always supportive and affirming, and could usually talk me into at least trying. It was so important to me to be encouraged because I was so shy and reticent. I know that I am not ever going to get over that but I also know that I can try things because of dad. His teaching was how to fight for things that I wanted even if it seemed a daunting task. Dad gave me courage to reach for my stars.

There were times when I did not reach, or try and I usually felt bad afterwards knowing that I made a poor decision. I always decided differently next time.

“Each person has his own unique gifts.” This is the one thing that dad said that has stuck with me the longest and was most far reaching in its impact on my life and that of my children. It was manifest in me by my love and admiration for my brother. I was never jealous of anything that he did or had. Our time together at golf or with family is a special gift given by my father through my brother’s life. I think this same atti-

tude has passed over to my children who thoroughly enjoy each other, support each other and work together in love.

My brother makes me who I am thanks to my father and his work. In some ways to know Rozier is to know me. I hope my own children can say the same.

“Your mom was a master in cutting the cord.” I think this was dad’s way of saying that it is time to leave the nest. He was not throwing me out of the house but letting me know that I was growing up and maturing. He was assuring me that I would be ok in the world, that they would always love me, but that I could make our own way. I was able to better understand and deal with the feeling of separation. I cannot explain in any other way how I was able to head off to Notre Dame or Caltech without the usual trepidation that sometimes accompanies that first separation. They had made me know, it was alright to be separated because their love was always there to draw on when needed.

That was a great gift to me. I have drawn on it many times in my married life to deal with competitive pressures of the two families, especially around the holidays.

“Don’t worry about us. Take care of your own family.” This was a lesson taught later in life as we had grown into our families. He realized that we had the pressures of our own wife and children and also the sharing with my in-laws. That was one of his last gifts to us because it made it so much easier to balance all of our priorities in our busyness. The real gift as I now see it was given in their last few years as they became

more infirmed, mom with her heart issues and dad with his cancer. In fact they never really asked for any help until just a week before dad died. I miss them so much each day but am also thankful for all they taught with their lives lived in love.

The cutting of the cord made life so much easier. And while I always worried about them and always like to visit, I did not have the crushing feeling of responsibility that sometimes gets put on a young family. This may have been their greatest gift given in love.

“Never go to a restaurant where you cannot afford the most expensive item on the menu.” This was always a curious statement to me but I think he was just saying like the Boy Scout motto, be prepared. Life throws you many curves, just be ready. But maybe he was also saying that I need to trust in God. Live a good life and do you best. Live the life of the beatitudes. Love your neighbor. Follow my example. I want him to know that I have tried to do just that even with my own sinfulness and faults. I may feel broken at times but never hopeless. That is a great legacy that dad left with me.

“This is a historic event.” I will end with this statement. It is really his note to me that there are many things in this world that are more important than me. I am insignificant in the grand scheme of things but I am still important to him. His life and that of mother’s gave me positive proof of how loved I was. This is what I want to pass on to my children and grandchildren. If it makes it to the next generation, then I have

done what mom and dad wanted for me. It will be my reward on earth until I can join Jesus in heaven.

Choices

So much has been written about Robert Frost's poem, *The Road Not Taken*, that I do not want to dwell on it here in any depth. But it does really speak of choices made or not made, and that is a universal issue for most of us. I would like to explore the issue of choices in my own life. The title of this is rather curious but I will get into that later.

Growing up, I made a lot of choices but mostly rather trivial. What to eat. What to wear. One of the first big choices that I had to make was where to go to high school. Mom and dad really helped me with this choice, giving advice and laying out the options. It came down that I chose Good Counsel, a new catholic boy's high school near home. It was perfect for me, academically challenging with just the right blend of discipline. I do not think that I have ever wondered what would have been if I had gone to The Priory or Gonzaga. Being that I was in the first class to enter Good Counsel, I was able to participate in ways that would not have been as easy for me at the other two schools given my rather introverted personality.

College is always one of the biggest choices facing a young man or woman. It was no different for me. I am not sure how the journey to Notre Dame even began. I do have some pictures of me at a very early age wearing a Notre Dame 1966 shirt. But it began with my choice to select the early admis-

sion option. How I ever ventured to head off to the cold of northern Indiana, I sometimes wonder but this was probably my most profound choice because it directly affected my life journey that is still ongoing. I realize that Notre Dame affected my vocation and my spirituality profoundly. How it affected my vocation is pretty obvious but the manner in which it affected my spirituality is not quite so clear cut. It supported my faith, in that it provided reinforcement for my practice of Catholicism during a time that is now called Vatican II.

As I look back on this time, my faith probably was in autopilot mode; too busy with other things; maybe not mature enough to really embrace the faith. But I had enough training by my parents and school to know that I had to keep it up. The most profound affect on my faith and spirituality was meeting Patti-ann.

When I met her, I thought the normal things about her. She was attractive, desirable, outgoing, serious, caring, and loving. She would make a good wife and mother. What I did not realize is that she will be my conduit, my partner in getting to heaven. We had not been dating long when we decided to get married. That was a huge choice of which I am not sure I really understood the depth fully at that time. It was the first decision that I made that was really permanent. I remember looking at my wedding ring on the Sunday after the wedding and thinking about what I had committed to. It was awe inspiring.

My next big choice was to go to Caltech rather than Princeton or MIT. From a chemistry standpoint, they would have been rather equal, I believe. But what Caltech gave me was an ability to think in really new ways. From what I have subsequently heard, it excelled in encouraging their students to combine and integrate various fields of science. That was perfect for me since I am an intuitive person, who really enjoys looking at big picture issues. How different that would have been if I had gone to the other school, I am not sure.

This leads me to the story of Brazil. As I was finishing my PhD at Caltech, after Pattiann and I were married, my research director asked if I would be interested in taking a faculty position at a university in Brazil. How different our lives would have been? I declined that chance. What I learned is that it is not just the positive choices that are made but also the choices not to do something that are equally important. That was a less traveled road that I did not take.

Besides the choice to get married to Pattiann, the most important choices have been about work. I have changed jobs several times; have changed positions within companies several times; and have changed industries several times. Always I tried to choose what was best for our family and not me. I realize that if someone asks who I work for, the answer is always, my family. I never burned bridges when I left a position but I also think that in choosing family, I probably never reached the position that I could have in the various companies. I know that I chose correctly in all the cases as evidenced by the joy that my children and Pattiann spread in this world. I

think that they all know that they were more important to me than my job or my position.

I have written many times of the short life of my granddaughter, Amanda. The doctors told us at Children's Hospital, that she was making the choice of life or death for us. But the most important choice I made during that time was the choice of accepting the love of God. I chose to see His love in the many friends that supported us, in the pulling together of our family, and in what Amanda did for us. I have never felt abandoned. That is why I have always said about that time, that I was blessed. I chose God not bitterness. I chose God not despair. I chose to look at her brief life as a gift to me.

What I realize is that I have never looked back and wished that I had chosen differently. Is this because I always chose correctly? I think it is just because I have tried to live in the joy of life and not to worry about the road taken. To me it is sad to hear people who talk about wishing they had chosen differently, had taken a different path in life, or are not content with where they are. I hope that my children realize that life is a series of choices, do the best you can and trust that God will lead you to where you are going. That way you will not worry about the road to Brazil.

Gentleness

Once in a while we meet a gentle person. Gentleness is a virtue hard to find in a society that admires toughness and roughness. We are encouraged to get things done and to get them done fast, even when people get hurt in the process. Success, accomplishment, and productivity count. But the cost is high. There is no place for gentleness in such a milieu.

Gentle is the one who does "not break the crushed reed, or snuff the faltering wick" (Matthew 12:20). Gentle is the one who is attentive to the strengths and weaknesses of the other and enjoys being together more than accomplishing something. A gentle person treads lightly, listens carefully, looks tenderly, and touches with reverence. A gentle person knows that true growth requires nurture, not force. Let's dress ourselves with gentleness. In our tough and often unbending world our gentleness can be a vivid reminder of the presence of God among us.

From Henri Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*

As I read the excerpt from Henri Nouwen shown above, I was reminded of the reflection that I wrote about my father, who was one of the gentlest men that I ever knew. He was the embodiment of the description above. He always treaded lightly, listened carefully and was reverent to everyone that he met. I

have seen that same gentleness in his grandsons, Kevin and Jay. As brothers they loved to compete with each other but when it came to others at school, at play or in the family, they were very gentle. I have seen the gentleness that Kevin uses when he is hugging Regan. I have also seen the gentleness that Jay uses when he is checking out the ears of one of his nieces or nephews. Those little ones are never afraid even though doctors can be scary at times.

Men who are supposed to be tough or aggressive in life can be and need to be gentle as well. This is usually most evident in their treatment of children and their wives. I remember Fr. Peter Riga, a theology professor at Notre Dame, discussing this with his class. He said that we would all be surprised at how gentle and tender we, as men, can be. This was pretty shocking to hear at Notre Dame which was all male at the time and quite rough and tumble. This has stuck with me ever since that class in 1965.

Gentleness is a quality that I really admire and am drawn to when seeking friendship. I have noticed that quality in several of the men of Christ Renews His Parish. They have a quiet, respectful way of speaking of their wives, families and really of anyone that they talk about. They exude gentleness as a maple tree will exude sap in the spring. They are passionate about life, driven, but in a calm, compassionate way. They stand out in the crowd but never draw attention to themselves.

Perhaps this is how Jesus might have acted as He walked the roads of Judea and Galilee. Many of his parables modeled gentleness. He was the shepherd looking for the one lost sheep and bringing it back to the flock. He is depicted in art as gently holding this sheep as He brings it back. He grasps the hand of Jairius' daughter when he brings her back to life. That also is a picture of gentleness. It is not very often that men show their gentle side but I believe it is what Jesus has modeled for us and what should be expected from each of us as we try to emulate how He lived on earth.

The importance of showing gentleness is brought out in various writings of the New Testament particularly as the writers admonished the early Christians. How much more is that needed in these times of striving for “me” and the lack of commitment in marriage and other relationships?

Ephesians 4:1-3

I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace:

Phillipians 4:5

Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near.

Colossians 3:12

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,

1 Timothy 6:11

But you, man of God, avoid all this. Instead, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience, and gentleness.

1 Peter 3:3-4

Your adornment should not be an external one: braiding the hair, wearing gold jewelry, or dressing in fine clothes, but rather the hidden character of the heart, expressed in the imperishable beauty of a gentle and calm disposition, which is precious in the sight of God.

A soft touch and a kind word are so needed in this world. I think that is what Henri Nouwen is saying in the opening quote above and what is mentioned in the readings as well.

Most difficult at times for me is to develop an inner gentleness that is so pervasive that it manifests itself automatically to others. That gentleness can then overcome the feelings of frustration that lead to inner turmoil and unnecessary consternation. Perhaps this is what leads to the overarching trust in the Lord that I am seeking. This is what is described in the “Blessed are the meek” beatitude. Trying to peel back the layers of myself and to let go of anger and frustration is the goal of gentleness for me. I must deepen my prayer life, reconcile my inner

anger when it flairs and make this a part of my spiritual growth so that I can fully live as a gentle man.

Patriarch of the Family

I remember that immediately after my mother's death in 1991, that I had this realization that I was, now, the patriarch of the family. I did not have the same feeling after dad died just the year before, probably because I was, at that time, deferring to mom. It might have also been because I did not feel worthy of that title. With mom's death I had no other choice. But even then I am not sure that I felt worthy. In some ways I, probably, subconsciously felt like Moses.

Exodus 3:10-14, 4:1, 4:10

Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" He answered, "I will be with you; and this shall be your proof that it is I who has sent you: when you bring my people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very mountain." "But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

"But," objected Moses, "suppose they will not believe me, nor listen to my plea? For they may say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

Moses, however, said to the LORD, "If you please, LORD, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past, nor recently, nor now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and tongue."

I was arguing with God about what He was requiring of me. I was not prepared because I was not sure of my spirituality or my worthiness. That was over 15 years ago, but I now realize that I do indeed have the strength, insight and faith to take on that role. That is the maturity that comes with age and a good background. I still am not always sure of my worthiness but I do get affirmation from the children, my CRHP brothers and our Called and Gifted class.

I think that my writing has given me a chance to reflect back on myself and to use that reflection to better understand what I am called to do. I think that I am getting to be recognized as a wise man, not by my own thinking but as it has been shown back to me by others. I am running out of arguments as did Moses. I should follow God's call as did Moses but realizing that I am still imperfect as he was.

In my reading of Richard Rohr, he keeps indicating that men need to be mentored by wise men and not just follow their peers. That is necessary to move them to a mature and healthy life. I know that my dad did a great job with that and in fact, I do not ever remember needing another mentor on

life issues. I see that my brother was equally well mentored by dad. I used to think that what dad and mom, as well, were doing was making us independent. But that is really the mentoring that Rohr is talking about. I need to pass that on to my children and grandchildren. I have done that with my sons to some extent but I realize that it is not over until they are ready to be wise men themselves. I need to share my spirituality with them and this is what my writing can help. I need to prepare them to be the patriarchs of the family when I am gone.

Perhaps my calling is to serve as a mentor in some way to those who need that. That would also include my grandchildren when they are old enough but also other young men and not so young men. Being a spiritual director for CRHP may be one path for that. I must be open for other opportunities as well.

A Big Tent

In listening to a presentation by Ronald Rolheiser at the Festival of Faith on what Catholic means, I was struck by his story that in 2004 two of the top movies were “The Passion of the Christ” and “Fahrenheit 9/11” by Mel Gibson and Michael Moore respectively. Both being Catholic but with radically different views. Rolheiser also gave as an example the views of John Paul II, conservative liturgically and liberal socially. The main thrust of his talk was that Catholic means that many different views are prevalent and welcomed within the Roman church; but, regrettably, the different sides do not talk to one another. They are outright nasty to each other and it seems that whoever yells the loudest wins. This is also the tactic used in our government at this time with the Democrats and Republicans, Conservatives and Liberals at odds over everything and not being able to seek common ground.

While this was interesting from an academic standpoint, I said to myself, “If the conservatives only would listen, they would think or act differently. They are so intransigent. They are heartless.” However this divisiveness was really brought home to me personally this week in a series of emails from a local, Catholic man. He is a proponent of a very conservative view of life, politics and the church and is quite vocal about it.

I had asked to be taken off his email list and he said he would not because I was a member of the Parish Pastoral Council and had my head in the sand about what the parishioners thought about his viewpoint. Initially I was angered because I felt that he was wrong in his opinion about our pastor, immigration, the marriage protection act and gay issues in society. But I now realize that I must try to bridge the gap of divisiveness that is in me and seek to find common ground with those who have radically different opinions than I. I also must be sensitive to them realizing that they may not be ready to seek the common ground.

I am truly heartened to think about our church having the capacity to welcome everyone. This is the church that enjoys Godspell and Jesus Christ Superstar at the same time basking in the warmth of Gregorian Chant and the Messiah. It is the same church that was led by Pius XII in a comfortable, latin-based liturgy and then by John XXIII who turned us on our ear. The change is refreshing to some and distressing to others. What a wonderful entity that can absorb all of that and still be faithful to Jesus’ mission. It is Opus Dei and the Jesuits. The church survives with all of our bickering, consternation and scandals. How wonderful is the Body of Christ!

I must continue to pursue inner peace and reconciliation within myself. I must continue to participate in the sacramental life of the church. I must continue to respect the opinions of others and seek an understanding. I must continue to embrace all of humanity as Jesus did. How wonderful is the Body of Christ!

Charisms

I was fortunate to be asked to be part of a charisms discernment workshop at St. Joseph this past summer. The concept of charisms and the depth that we studied them was new to me. But the overall concept of gifts that the Holy Spirit would confer on men and women is not new based on several references in the Pauline scripture.

1 Corinth 12:4-10

There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are different forms of service but the same Lord; there are different workings but the same God who produces all of them in everyone. To each individual the manifestation of the Spirit is given for some benefit. To one is given through the Spirit the expression of wisdom; to another the expression of knowledge according to the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit; to another mighty deeds; to another prophecy; to another discernment of spirits; to another varieties of tongues; to another interpretation of tongues.

Ephesians 4:11-16

And he gave some as apostles, others as prophets, others as evangelists, others as pastors and teachers, to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of faith and knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the extent of the full stature of Christ, so that we may no longer be infants, tossed by waves and swept along by every wind of teaching arising from human trickery, from their cunning in the interests of deceitful scheming. Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

Romans 12:6-8

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith; if ministry, in ministering; if one is a teacher, in teaching; if one exhorts, in exhortation; if one contributes, in generosity; if one is over others, with diligence; if one does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness

My previous thoughts about these gifts were that they were given to the clergy and to the saints most of whom were relig-

ious. I did not consider that they could be given to ordinary people. It was just not in my thoughts. Some of that confusion probably arose because I thought they were the same as the 7 gifts of the Holy Spirit or I thought that they were just manifestations of the grace that God gives us periodically to deal with life situations. What the course taught me was that they were most definitely given to everyone and that they were permanent gifts given so that they can be used to do the work of the Kingdom. In fact if we look at the writings of the Second Vatican Council we see that mentioned in *Lumen Gentium* and *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

These documents indicate that the charisms are given to everyone of every rank as God wills and they are to be used for the needs of the Church. They also state that the charisms cannot be sought after or negotiated for but are freely given by God. All men share in God's saving redemption and the activity to attain this goal is called the apostolate. This is carried on through all members of the Church. Thus it can be said that the laity share in the priestly office of Christ. This is an awesome responsibility that is given to each of us. I am humbled by this and probably would echo the words of the centurion, "I am not worthy.." if asked.

I have been discerning the charisms that I might have and this is most difficult. The ones that I feel that I need to work on are knowledge, writing and teaching. At this point, knowledge is the most obvious to me. I love to dig into things and could spend hours doing so. This is what makes the Called and

Gifted program so important to me. I am learning something new all the time. I have been this way ever since I can remember. It was my interest in nature as a boy scout, science as a undergraduate and graduate student and a myriad of other things in my adulthood. The lay formation program is just an extension of that love. Some of this is probably related to my Myers-Briggs personality profile, INTP. I am never so happy as when I am learning something. As soon as it is learned, I move on to another topic, but it is always learning. Charisms however are not to be used just for oneself but to be shared with the larger community. For this reason, the charism of knowledge is usually associated with other charisms so that this knowledge can be shared.

The second charism that I am trying to discern is writing. This is one manner in which I am trying to share myself with others. While I have never been a prolific writer, I have written a number of very technical papers in chemistry. What I realized after my CRHP weekend in 2004, was that I had a bunch of stories bouncing around in my head that I needed to put to paper. It is the way that I can get my ideas together and make some sense of them. Most of my early writings were about the love that I have for my family and by writing them I can express that love to them. What I now realize is that I also need to write about some of the things that are going on inside of me as I ponder some of the reading and learning that I am doing. While it is sometimes hard to get started, once going I get into a trance until I have my ideas down. I get a lot of pleasure from just putting pen to paper. Ideas for these writ-

ings come at all times during the day and night. Many times it is when I am driving in the car and it is quiet and at other times it is during mass when I hear a reading.

I have shared these writings with my wife, Pattiann, and my children. Some I have shared with others in the family and even outside of the family. I find that I have an internal need to share these but I am somewhat reluctant because of being an introvert I suspect. I think that I feel that I am exposing myself to the reader and that is somewhat scary for me. This reluctance is what makes me have doubts about this as a charism.

The third charism that I am discerning is the charism of teaching. As a former assistant professor of chemistry, it is not hard to figure that teaching might be a charism. However many professors really do not like to teach. I am not one of them however. Being in front of a class or crowd and speaking is a real high. While I may have some butterflies, I can tell that I am doing a good job. I also feel that I have a talent for explaining a complex subject in a rather simple way. Recently I have had the pleasure of doing the same thing at the CRHP men's group when I can present a topic of scripture or a theological subject to them.

By continuing to work on this discernment, I hope that I can really decide which charisms that I am blessed with and can use them in my ministry to witness to the goodness of God and how I have been blessed in this life.

Conversion

In our first class on the Sacraments, we were challenged to share moments of conversion within a small group. My first reaction was stunned silence. I did not feel that I had ever undergone a time of conversion. I guess I expected that conversion was similar to what St. Paul encountered on the road to Damascus.

Acts 9:1-8

Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his

eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus.

However for me, I have never been struck in a way that had such a dramatic impact. In fact, I would be surprised if many people have ever been affected in that way. As I began to contemplate the idea of conversion, I realize that perhaps I have been affected but in a rather quiet way.

I remember my confirmation in 3rd grade as a time of conversion. I became very interested in science and nature. I attributed that interest to St. Francis whose name I took at my confirmation. I have written about that on several occasions and while I see that time as a conversion now, I am not sure that I realized it at the time. I have had a special devotion to St. Francis ever since however.

The closest thing in my life to St. Paul's conversion probably happened in May and June of 2004. I attended the second men's CRHP retreat and was truly moved by the experience. I began writing stories of my life and found an intimacy with the men of my team that is hard to describe. It is probably similar to the foxhole bonding that occurs in the military. We all shared our stories and became friends. Only my brother and my sons are closer male friends. I believe what happened is that I was opened to the work of God's grace in my life. I was able to truly be at ease when in their company in a way that was not possible before.

The second thing that happened is that I was invited by my wife to attend an information meeting about the lay ministry formation program offered by the archdiocese. Since it happened so close to coming off the retreat, I was open to the moving of the Holy Spirit. We both discerned to join the program in the fall of 2004. I think that I was converted at the opening retreat. It has continued to grow on me as I work toward completion of my courses. I am feeling now that this group of remarkable women and men are my sisters and brothers in Christ. I will be sad when this program is over. I only hope that we have a way of staying connected as a group.

As I look at my changing life, I now realize that I am undergoing a conversion with each story that I write. I have realized that I may have the charism of writing and each of the stories that I produce gives me a time of conversion. I write to delineate my story and my understanding of God in my life. I have to get the information down and it produces in me a sense of peace and satisfaction. Simply, I have to write to live. This is not the knock down conversion that some people go through, but a time in which I feel that I have a glimpse of what God is like. My writings are my attempt, however feeble, to put this experience to words. I find that I must continue to strive toward perfection in how I describe what is happening to me.

I think now that if that opening question is asked again in class, I can say that I have a conversion almost every day but in a quiet, introspective way.

Leadership of the Servant

As I approach the days of my retirement, I am thinking back to my role as a leader at work and in various other settings both secular and ecclesial. The concept of leadership has been written about extensively, but what is most important to me is how I act when put in a leadership position. I try to lead in a manner that is consistent with the way that I want to be led. The scriptures give me many examples of leaders, from Moses to David to Jesus. What can I learn from them?

Moses is the reluctant leader who tries to argue his way out of leadership by bringing up a series of obstacles to God.

Exodus 3:4-14

God called out to him from the bush, "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am." God said, "Come no nearer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. But the LORD said, "I have witnessed the affliction of my people in Egypt and have heard their cry of complaint against their slave drivers, so I know well what they are suffering. Therefore I have come down to rescue them from the hands of the Egyptians

and lead them out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the country of the Canaanites.....Come, now! I will send you to Pharaoh to lead my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the Israelites out of Egypt?" He answered, "I will be with you"..... "But," said Moses to God, "when I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' if they ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?" God replied, "I am who am." Then he added, "This is what you shall tell the Israelites: I AM sent me to you."

Exodus 4:1

"But," objected Moses, "suppose they will not believe me, nor listen to my plea? For they may say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'"

Exodus 4:10

Moses, however, said to the LORD, "If you please, LORD, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past, nor recently, nor now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and tongue."

Exodus 4:13

Yet he insisted, "If you please, Lord, send someone else!"

In each case God tells him that he will be equipped properly. God will give him what is needed to overcome what is ahead. Moses put his trust in God although eventually, he showed a moment of weakness and thus was denied entry into the promised land.

Numbers 20:9-12

So Moses took the staff from its place before the LORD, as he was ordered. He and Aaron assembled the community in front of the rock, where he said to them, "Listen to me, you rebels! Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?" Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff, and water gushed out in abundance for the community and their livestock to drink. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you were not faithful to me in showing forth my sanctity before the Israelites, you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them."

I also think that I am not really the person to be the leader at times. And while I do not try to talk my way out of it, I do have my doubts about my ability to assume the leader's role. These doubts are held inside and I usually try to either cover them up or learn enough to overcome them. I only wish that I had Moses' trust in the Lord.

David was a different type of leader. He rose from the ranks of the insignificant to be the greatest king of Israel. But his story was also a story of overstepping his authority at times. His story is also about seeking reconciliation with God and,

through God's infinite mercy, being given the forgiveness that he sought.

1Samuel 17:32-37

Then David spoke to Saul: "Let your majesty not lose courage. I am at your service to go and fight this Philistine." But Saul answered David, "You cannot go up against this Philistine and fight with him, for you are only a youth, while he has been a warrior from his youth." Then David told Saul: "Your servant used to tend his father's sheep, and whenever a lion or bear came to carry off a sheep from the flock, I would go after it and attack it and rescue the prey from its mouth. If it attacked me, I would seize it by the jaw, strike it, and kill it. Your servant has killed both a lion and a bear, and this uncircumcised Philistine will be as one of them, because he has insulted the armies of the living God." David continued: "The LORD, who delivered me from the claws of the lion and the bear, will also keep me safe from the clutches of this Philistine." Saul answered David, "Go! the LORD will be with you."

David is the type of leader that really does not fit my style. I think that he has too much self confidence for me. I am never that way. Even when I outwardly have confidence in my ability, deep down the questions lurk.

But Jesus was truly a different type of leader. He had a radical message of leadership for the world. To be a leader you must be the servant to all. To be a leader you start by washing the feet of your followers. To be a leader you lead from humil-

ity. To be a leader you realize that your authority comes from God. To be a leader you lead from strength that comes from your weakness.

Luke 12:49-53

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

John 13:4-9

he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

John 13:12-16

So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him."

Mark 9:33

Then he sat down, called the Twelve, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to be first, he shall be the last of all and the servant of all."

This is the type of leadership with which I am most comfortable. This is a leader who shows me how to do something by first doing it himself. This is why He set the earth on fire. He leads by being a slave. He leads by being crucified for us. His leadership has survived for 2000 years.

This style of leadership is demonstrated in the statement that Lt. Richard Winters said to Lt. Buck Compton in Band of Brothers. "Never take anything from your men." Jesus never took. He only gave and gave unconditionally.

I strive to be like that but I never can achieve that total giving. That does not mean that I do not keep trying. Leadership is

about being a servant. It is about being Christ like. The hardest part for me is to be so totally trusting in God that I can give completely of myself to those I serve and thus lead by example.

But even though I feel more comfortable with one leadership style than another, I can learn something from each example. I must learn trust. I must learn to push the envelope but ask for forgiveness. I must learn

Loneliness

Loneliness seems to be present in my life so often. While I need time alone to reflect and regroup, being truly alone is unnerving to me. I wonder how Jesus must have felt when He was in the Garden of Gethsemane. How discouraged He must have felt when His disciples slept and abandoned Him.

Luke 22:39-44

Then going out he went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed him. When he arrived at the place he said to them, "Pray that you may not undergo the test." After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.)

Luke describes it as an agony and I must concur. For me the loneliness is a restlessness that I feel. It is a longing to be with someone even if we do not have to talk. It is the pain that I described in my poem, "Agony in the Lonely Garden", as a rough blanket that is pulled across my bare shoulders. It is not pain like an injury but a hole or emptiness in my life.

Perhaps the most discouraging part is that it is a time when the temptations of being selfish are almost irresistible. I focus on myself, and forget about others even God. I need to talk to someone, be with someone, but no one is there. I blame myself for not being able to cope with this. If I could only stay busy, it would be better. But, in fact, it is only deferring the pain, transferring it to a later time. The evil one is patient. He waits for me to be vulnerable.

These times can occur when I am busy, like being at the class reunion at Notre Dame, being home by myself or even being with others that I know. I think this is what happens when I go to Indianapolis and spend the time sitting around. Pattiann will always say that I seem so distant. I am, because I am so immensely lonely. I then feel unloved, and extremely selfish.

Is this just the times when I cannot control the fire that is within me and do not have the motivation that I need to move in a positive direction? Therefore I do not move in any direction at all, and thus simply think of myself as lonely. Or is my loneliness just the feeling of my inner energy not having any place to express itself, without the love and encouragement of Pattiann, or someone else? I think this fire is the need to be engaged, to talk, to be with someone. Ronald Rolheiser describes in his book, *The Holy Longing*, a naiveté about the nature of spiritual energy. He describes this energy as imperialistic, all consuming. In earlier times society had rules for controlling this energy. These were the taboos that prevented us from being consumed. But in more modern times, we think

that we can control it ourselves. But we cannot without the help of God. Rolheiser says that spirituality is about properly handling these fires, these powerful energies that flow through us.

John Shea in telling a story about the woman with the hemorrhage touching Jesus' cloak and being healed also talks about the fact that loneliness and pain go hand in hand. He talks about people being healed of pain by being touched by someone. Not the faith healing type situation that you see depicted but, simply, being touched by another person. Is this what I need but do not know it?

I am now realizing that these situations may be an opportunity to take this loneliness, understand it, and use the time to pray and try to get closer to God by turning toward Him. It is a time of challenge for my spirituality to find the focus that I need to give myself to God's work.

Lost in my Thoughts

One of the things that I have noticed is that there are times when I get lost in my thoughts about God and what impact that has on my life. Most times it is difficult to get into that mind pattern because of distractions. Is this the way that God talks to me?

When I am overcome with thoughts about my life, how it is impacted by God, or how I need to follow Him, it is as if I am a sailboat on plane going faster than is normally possible. This is when I feel that He is talking to me. I just need to be a better listener. The thing that bothers me though is that I cannot just get into this mode when I want. It only happens infrequently. I wrote about it on several earlier occasions as I described my morning drive to work that time after the first theological reflection or the time that I spent two hours in silence in the chapel at the seminary.

I so wish I could bottle that and open it at any time when I feel that I need a good talking to by the Lord. I so want to be able to turn it on like a light switch when I feel lost in the dark. I know that He is ready to speak to me always and maybe I just do not listen well enough. I need to have patience and just keep talking to Him and then maybe I will be able to get lost in my thoughts with the Lord more frequently.

Marriage and Jesus

Within our country at the present, there is an attempt to garner support for the Defense of Marriage act in Congress and various state legislatures. As I see it, the group that is most vociferous about this sees it as a black and white issue, in which marriage is between only a man and a woman. While I agree with that, I have a hard time reconciling the act with the fact that Jesus opens his arms to everyone.

I view the Defense of Marriage act as being a somewhat grey area because the underlying issue is not so much a defense of marriage but an attack on alternate lifestyles. I do not believe that marriage needs to be defended in this way. I think that marriage needs to be defended from the onslaught of divorce and lack of commitment.

Matthew 19: 4-11

He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate." They said to him, "Then why did Moses command that the man give the

woman a bill of divorce and dismiss (her)?" He said to them, "Because of the hardness of your hearts Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. I say to you, whoever divorces his wife (unless the marriage is unlawful) and marries another commits adultery." [His] disciples said to him, "If that is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." He answered, "Not all can accept [this] word, but only those to whom that is granted.

That is the threat to marriage not alternate lifestyles. If one looks at the numbers, approximately half the marriages end in divorce. There are not that many gay and lesbian partnerships. Perhaps I am wrong but I feel that the real push of the Defense of Marriage act is to prevent these couples from receiving civil rights in the same way as married couples. This is a political issue not a church issue. Say it like it is.

If you really follow what Jesus did as well as what he said, he befriended the sinners;

Luke 7:37-38

Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.

ate with the outcasts,

Luke 5: 29-32

Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

and embraced the least in society.

Mark 5: 25-29

There was a woman afflicted with hemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction.

At the same time, He castigated the Pharisees and the hypocrites.

Matthew 23:13

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You lock the kingdom of heaven before human beings. You do not en-

ter yourselves, nor do you allow entrance to those trying to enter."

He challenged them to look with love on the unloved, and not to just follow the rules. He challenged us all to do the same.

Matthew 7:9-12

Which one of you would hand his son a stone when he asks for a loaf of bread, or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things to those who ask him. "Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets.

To me this is the deepest meaning of the gospel message, and why I find the political arguments cast in the clothes of religion so disturbing. Working with God's children, regardless of who they are, gives one a deep sense of spirituality. It provides a glimpse of the Kingdom of God.

Men need Men

“Men need Men” is one of the statements that have come out of several of the Christ Renews His Parish group weekends of which I have been a part. That is very true for me from my experience as well. It is important to have a safe place to discuss what is going on in my life. While I am comfortable in discussing spirituality and life with Pattiann, I do not find that same comfort level with other women or in a mixed group. In a group of men I can say things and they know where I am coming from. I also enjoy listening to their stories as well and relate them to my own life. I hear stories of how important fathers are to men and, I guess, we in some fashion serve as “fathers” for each other.

I have been reading From Wild Man to Wise Man by Richard Rohr and much of what he says is related to the same issue of “Men needing Men”. He talked about the need to be initiated as a young man. Rohr wrote that:

“but Dad’s love sent me into the bigger world. It is no wonder that those Jesus affirmed were called the ‘sent ones’ or apostles. That’s what men do for men. They give one another energy for life, and especially life in the outer world. It is the old roots and wings metaphor: mother love roots us in our souls, ourselves and our bodies; father love allows us to

do something good with all those wonderful roots. It teaches us to fly.

When a father tells a child that he can do something, he can do it. I don’t know why that is, except to say that there is some mysterious energy that passes from the male to his children.....Father energy is some sort of creative energy that can make things be when they are not, and without which things cannot come to be. When male energy is absent, creation does not happen, either in the human soul or in the world.”

I think that I was fortunate in this respect. My father spent time, many evenings, doing that for my brother and me. I have written about that experience several times before but I did not realize that others recognized this as a universal need for children, and boys, in particular.

Dad would talk to me about what it was like to be a father and how I should act when I got older. He would also talk to me about how I should treat other people. It was really a lesson in social justice before that was a hot topic. It is kind of ironic because dad was involved in the criminal justice system as a probation officer but he was never jaded. He always thought people could change or be rehabilitated. Dad would also spend some time talking about what was going on in the world and the impact of that. I remember watching a visit by the Soviet Premier to the United States and dad saying how historical this would be in the future. On some occasions he would talk about his job, how he sometimes felt threatened by people

trying to undermine him and then ultimately why he retired early. I always knew what was important to him and how he thought about it. I saw him work through his cancer and how he dealt with that and with mom's illness. I distinctly remember him passing off his care and that of mom to my brother and I just a week before he died. Even today I catch myself talking like dad about certain subjects. Almost all of what dad talked about I have seen in my own life.

I think that I did some of the same things for my sons but I am not sure that I am as skilled at it as my father was. Someone told me that young men are like clams. Their shells are closed most of the time but on occasion they open them to take in nutrition and get rid of the garbage. If you catch them at that point you can pour information into them as they are so receptive. I found that to be true with Jay and Kevin. Even today as they are grown men, I see the clam shell open and I can enter their mind and soul. I suspect that this is what Richard Rohr is talking about.

One surprising thing that Rohr mentions is that usually fathers are not good initiators for their sons. That usually the boys look to coaches, uncles, scout leaders as mentors. Perhaps this is because of conflict with the father, the fact that fathers and sons are in love with the same woman (mother), or that fathers are just not interested. It may be that fathers did not have a role model from their own father to carry out the initiation. I was so lucky. If men are not properly initiated or mentored, they get lost in their life journey and thus become frustrated or follow the god of success, money, prestige, and

status. They never really understand what it takes to be happy and wise. I see a huge need for the training of boys and men to understand this requirement for proper initiation and to be initiated themselves. Fathers should challenge their sons, but then show a way through the predicament.

Richard Rohr talks about the journey of men from being wild to being wise. Early on each man thinks that he can conquer the world. He has all sorts of life goals related to success, money, marriage, and living the good life. Life just does not work that way. There are setbacks, frustrations, ceilings, divorces and in general just a bunch of roadblocks that occur. By middle age, men realize that they are not going to make all of their goals and they can either become frustrated and bitter or continue pursuing the goals in what some call a midlife crisis. A properly initiated man can move through the time of unrealized goals and become wise. He has learned lessons that he can use to mentor others and thus achieve true happiness in this. In India, this is a progression from student to householder to seeker to wise man. In contemporary America, it might be student to young adult, to pre-retirement, to wise man. Richard Rohr indicates that it is a growth in true spirituality which leads to wisdom and happiness of life.

It is amazing to see in the men of Christ Renews His Parish, a chance to share their life's journey with others. Thus younger men learn from the "elder statesmen" of the group. What they went through and how they achieved their sense of spirituality. Sometimes they also see the bad choices made and the

dead ends pursued. But all are learning experiences. That is why it is so impactful to have a mixture of ages on a weekend.

As I move into retirement, I hope that I also am moving into being a wise man. My brother and I laugh about retirement and the fact that we would like to start a consulting company whose purpose is to “figure things out”. Is that not what a wise man can do? He can figure things out because of his experience and then pass that wisdom on to someone younger so they can learn from him. That is the stage of life that I am striving for so that I can further develop my spirituality and move closer to God. That is why “Men need men”.

New Life

John 3:1-8

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

This is a scripture passage that I thought I understood, but, as I contemplate it further, I get more intrigued. I think that the term “Born Again” has connotations of televangelism that I am not sure I am comfortable with in my life, because I think this is a fake. But I am beginning to realize that I have under-

gone a number of “births” that make me who I am today. I also realize that they will continue in the future in my journey home from where I am at this time.

I was born in Washington, D.C. at the end of World War II to Louis and Mary Sharp. I was the first of their two sons. Even though I do not remember, I was give new life in the church at St. Peter’s by baptism shortly thereafter. But new life now means to me a change in outlook or a fork in the road. Many of these “changes” are scary and unnerving but they happen anyway.

My first true recollection of a change in my life came after my confirmation in third grade. I took the name Francis after St. Francis of Assisi, my brother and my grandfather. I immediately became interested in nature and science. That may have been a natural result of growing older but to this day I continue to relate it back to my patron at confirmation. I do not remember ever considering a life path that did not include science or nature. St. Francis at confirmation gave me a new life which is now my old life.

My next new life experience came about when I met and then married Pattiann. It was not just starting our life together but it also includes her challenging me to be a better person, a better disciple. Pattiann pushes and pulls me on this path. I need that even though it is sometimes uncomfortable. She encourages me to put my Christianity to practice in numerous ways. I became a better husband, father, and grandfather with her as the beacon in my life. That new life has lasted for

39 years. There are many births to new life with her along the way as we grow in age and experience with the years.

As everyone warned, life seems to be moving ever faster as I grow older. So too are my times of births to new life. Just before our first grandchild arrived, I found out that I needed cardiac bypass surgery. While this was literally almost a “new birth”, I did receive a remarkable gift in that I experienced a deep sense of the love and care of the community for me in all of the thoughtful letters and prayers. They came from some people that I hardly knew. It felt as though I was warmed from the inside. I was given a new life of love that I still carry with me. I was changed for good. I became more outgoing in my own expression of love for others and more comfortable.

Mark 12:31

The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

In September of 2002, Amanda, our second granddaughter, was born and because of a heart defect she only lived for seven hours. It was a birth and death the same day. While I was devastated as her grandfather, I now realize that her life, as short as it was, has not really ended but only transferred to heaven. She is at peace and has given me immense amounts of peace and love. I also realize that each of my new life experiences builds on the ones that come before. I could not have survived and been transformed by Amanda if my parents, my wife and my heart operation with its outpouring of love had

not come before in my life. Exactly one year later, my daughter was blessed with a new life in the birth of Hailey.

While Hailey will never replace the loss of Amanda, she brings her own brand of new life to me in her infectious smile, bubbly personality, and “devil may care” attitude. God gave me another new life to love and cherish as she grows into a young woman. Amanda and Hailey have changed me for good. Their handprints are on my heart.

After my new life experiences of birth, confirmation, the love of my wife, my new heart, and the love for my grandchildren, I was primed to undergo a new birth in Christianity that was my experience with Christ Renews His Parish. I just did not know it yet. As I look back now, maybe it should have been called Christ Rebirths His Parish.

One person in particular led me to that weekend. He was Kevin Murphy. Kevin was a magnet for me, the lighthouse showing the way. I was so changed that I hardly recognize myself anymore. While my surgery opened my heart, literally and figuratively, CRHP opened my soul. I am still a man and a sinner, but I am a man and sinner in a new life. The fork in the road had been taken and I was heading in a new direction. Murph was the first person I went to after the weekend and said that stories were rattling inside of me, in my heart and in my soul. I have been writing stories and poems ever since.

The new direction led me to St. Mary's Seminary as I joined the Lay Ministry Formation program with my wife after my original CRHP weekend. The classes were wonderful and I

was pouring things into my mind each week, but I had not really been touched. That was until I met a wonderful professor of scripture who was Italian, humorous and the tallest in her family. Pauline Viviano birthed a new life of scripture in me. I could not wait for class and her zinger at the end of each class that left me thinking for the entire week. I was reading scripture with a new awareness and was using it as a source of inspiration for prayer. Pauline changed me for good.

Matthew 4:4

He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"

My experience with CRHP has continued and has led me to be involved with many other men, helping to give them an opportunity like I had to experience a transformation. One man in particular, who has given me back new life more than I can express, is Tom Zimmer. I was as nervous in asking him to attend as he was in answering but he has continued to amaze me with his faith and spirituality. He has been a true inspiration to me in his response. I am lucky to know him and am in awe of his commitment and faith.

The new life that I have expressed in some ways culminated one morning on my drive to work. While I had received love from others and had been awakened to a new spiritual life of scripture and prayer, I had never felt that I was truly on the right path. I was looking for confirmation. That morning as I was driving and thinking, I had a revelation that could only

have come from the Holy Spirit that indicated that I could really converse with God through my contemplation, study and writing. That is how I would be with my friend. It was like a new baptism, a new confirmation, a new birth in my spiritual life. It was real. It was a bright sun-filled opening of my heart and soul. It was as if I had been at the Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. I have not been the same since.

Matthew 17: 1-5

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

As I look forward, I know that there will continue to be examples of rebirth and new life for me. I am not sure where God is directing me. It may be in exploring my charisms or it may be in seeking spiritual direction to find this new life. But I relish that thought, knowing that God loves me. I also realize that the changes in me were brought about by grace from the Holy Spirit and from many in the community who were present to me and showed their love. I am forever grateful to my

parents, to St. Francis, to Pattiann, to Amanda and Hailey, to Kevin Murphy, to Pauline Viviano, and to Tom Zimmer. You are my new life in Jesus. As said in the song, “For Good” from Wicked, “Who can say if I have been changed for the better, but because I knew you, I have been changed for good.”

A Paschal New Life

Ronald Rolheiser in his book, *Forgotten Among the Lilies*, discusses two kinds of death. Terminal death is the kind of death that ends life with its possibilities. Paschal death, however, is a death that leads in the end to a new life. I remember being in a discussion group when the topic of dying to the present leading to new life came up. I said that I did not really understand that concept very well. The discussion that evening did not really give me a satisfactory explanation but I have continued to work on that question. It also has worked on me.

Rolheiser gave a very good explanation based on the story of David losing his child.

2 Samuel 12:15-24

Then Nathan returned to his house. The LORD struck the child that the wife of Uriah had borne to David, and it became desperately ill. David besought God for the child. He kept a fast, retiring for the night to lie on the ground clothed in sackcloth. The elders of his house stood beside him urging him to rise from the ground; but he would not, nor would he take food with them. On the seventh day, the child died.

David's servants, however, were afraid to tell him that the child was dead, for they said: "When the child was alive, we spoke to him, but he would not listen to what we said. How

can we tell him the child is dead? He may do some harm!" But David noticed his servants whispering among themselves and realized that the child was dead. He asked his servants, "Is the child dead?" They replied, "Yes, he is." Rising from the ground, David washed and anointed himself, and changed his clothes. Then he went to the house of the LORD and worshiped. He returned to his own house, where at his request food was set before him, and he ate. His servants said to him: "What is this you are doing? While the child was living, you fasted and wept and kept vigil; now that the child is dead, you rise and take food." He replied: "While the child was living, I fasted and wept, thinking, 'Perhaps the LORD will grant me the child's life.' But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." Then David comforted his wife Bathsheba. He went and slept with her; and she conceived and bore him a son, who was named Solomon.

David acted in a paschal way by realizing that new life comes from death. David understood this but his servants did not. That is why he gave them the answer that is highlighted above. I think this explanation by Rolheiser gave me a clearer understanding of paschal death and the Paschal mystery.

In our own family, we had the tragedy of losing Amanda. On the day before her birthday, one year later, Hailey was born. Colleen talks about God sending her to us so that we would not be so sad on the next day remembering Amanda on her birthday. But I look at it now in light of the concept of a paschal death and realize that Hailey is the new life that came

from the tragedy of Amanda's death. Hailey is the Paschal New Life in our family. She is the sign that our family has continued on with life while not really ever forgetting Amanda. Hailey is the embodiment of our resurrection from death, our ascension to move beyond the tragedy and our Pentecost as we celebrate her life with us. We topped off our Pentecost when she was baptized into the church.

I am still not sure that I fully understand the depth of the Paschal mystery, but at least I have a more real life example of how it works in my life. I will continue to work on this and to probe the depths to which this leads me in my faith journey.

Pastoring

Ezekiel 34:1-11

Thus the word of the LORD came to me: Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, in these words prophesy to them (to the shepherds): Thus says the Lord GOD: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who have been pasturing themselves! Should not shepherds, rather, pasture sheep? You have fed off their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered the fatlings, but the sheep you have not pastured. You did not strengthen the weak nor heal the sick nor bind up the injured. You did not bring back the strayed nor seek the lost, but you lorded it over them harshly and brutally. So they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered and wandered over all the mountains and high hills; my sheep were scattered over the whole earth, with no one to look after them or to search for them. Therefore, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, says the Lord GOD, because my sheep have been given over to pillage, and because my sheep have become food for every wild beast, for lack of a shepherd; because my shepherds did not look after my sheep, but pastured themselves and did not pasture my sheep; because of this, shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: Thus says the Lord GOD: I swear I am coming against these shepherds. I will claim my sheep from them

and put a stop to their shepherding my sheep so that they may no longer pasture themselves. I will save my sheep, that they may no longer be food for their mouths. For thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will look after and tend my sheep.

As I was listening to the first reading this morning, I was struck by this reading from Ezekiel. While this is obviously written as a reprimand or warning to the leaders of Israel that they are not doing a good job leading their people, I was more struck what it said to me. The word that is used over and over here is “pasturing” but I think it speaks to me of “pastoring”. God through the scripture is speaking out against those who are into pastoring for the benefit that they get rather than for what they can give to others. I see that in others but mostly I see that in myself much of the time. Do I become a member of the Parish Council to serve or because I want to feel important? Do I lead a book discussion group because I want to lead others to a better understanding of their spirituality or because I want to be noticed? It is always so difficult to remember that it is not about me. It is difficult to be totally selfless.

This is precisely what Jesus is asking us to do and as members of His body, the Church, we are called to follow Him. I guess because of my pride, my self-centeredness, my sinfulness, I am not always good at this.

Pastoring is not only done in conjunction with church events or programs. It also occurs throughout my life. Every time someone asks for help or wants some of my time, I have an opportunity to pastor. This is true whether they are family,

friends or total strangers. Many times I agree to help but then regret it because it is taking time away from what I would be rather doing. I think that this is what Ezekiel is talking against.

As I look deep into myself, I realize that on the spur of the moment, or at the first instant I really do offer my help without any regrets or second thoughts. So basically I give of myself without question or concern. Deep down I do what Jesus asks. Sometimes afterward I have thoughts of selfishness or putting myself first. Those are my moments of sin of which I am not very proud. Prayer helps but I am still dogged by these moments of weakness. I must continually ask in my prayers for the light of grace to direct me on the path of totally giving of myself.

Peter's Choice

While going through a Theological Reflection with our Called and Gifted group, the image of Peter's denial of Jesus came to my mind. The discussion was about that momentary point when you are asked to respond to a situation which is difficult and you briefly hesitate in your choice. My response was to contemplate what Peter went through at that moment when he was confronted in the courtyard by the crowd.

Matthew 26:31-35

Then Jesus said to them, "This night all of you will have your faith in me shaken, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be dispersed'; but after I have been raised up, I shall go before you to Galilee." Peter said to him in reply, "Though all may have their faith in you shaken, mine will never be." Jesus said to him, "Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will deny me three times." Peter said to him, "Even though I should have to die with you, I will not deny you." And all the disciples spoke likewise.

Matthew 26:69-75

Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. One of the maids came over to him and said, "You too were with Jesus

the Galilean." But he denied it in front of everyone, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about!" As he went out to the gate, another girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazorean." Again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man!"

A little later the bystanders came over and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; even your speech gives you away." At that he began to curse and to swear, "I do not know the man." And immediately a cock crowed. Then Peter remembered the word that Jesus had spoken: "Before the cock crows you will deny me three times." He went out and began to weep bitterly.

I am sure that Peter thought that he was strong enough to stand up for Jesus and really had no intention of denying Him. But when that instant came that he was asked by the woman if he was with Jesus, he chose the easy way out. How difficult that choice must have been, but how human was Peter in this story? He was closed to a moment of grace. In fact he denied Jesus three times. Three lost opportunities for receiving grace. How often do I choose the way Peter did and deny Jesus by failing to accept the grace that is offered? These may be choices of omission or commission but are equally times of sin.

One of my CRHP brothers said in his story that love is a choice everyday. I might contend that love is a choice every instant when confronted with an opportunity of grace. If I choose love, then I choose to accept the grace that is offered.

The other side of Peter's choice is that even though he denied Jesus, he wept and repented. He came back, was the "rock" on which the Church was founded, and made the ultimate choice in dying for Jesus. I think this was shown in the end of the Gospel of John.

John 21:14-17

This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead. When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep.

How must I deal with that moment of hesitation? I do not think that the hesitation is really the question, but the choice. It was also pointed out in our theological reflection by someone else, that perhaps it is a question of training. If we train ourselves to choose the right path, then we will automatically choose correctly. I must continue to pray, to make a choice of grace in small ways so that when a big moment of choice comes, I automatically accept the grace.

It gives me comfort that Peter, who made a wrong choice, was able to repent, so that he could make the right choice at the end of his life.

Conversion

As I think back on my CRHP weekend three years ago, what happened to me is best described as a conversion. The Greek term is metanoia, a radical change, a complete conversion, a turning away from sinfulness to serve the living God. My name is Lou Sharp and this is a brief story of my response to my CRHP weekend.

The changes that occurred in me were first manifest in a statement that I made to Kevin Murphy during a break on Sunday of the weekend. I said that I had a “bunch of stories rattling around inside”. He said that is ok, just revel in them. As I decompressed from the weekend, I decided that I just had to write down what was in my head. I wrote about my mother and father, who had been deceased for some time, and how they had impacted my life. It came so easily. I just could not believe it. I was discovering the Father’s love for me through them.

Over the next few months, I continued to write mostly about my family but then began to write about my journey with God. These were either reflections on scripture passages, writings on my spirituality, or poetry. I am still not sure where this all came from but it was there and had to be put on paper. I was encountering Jesus through the scriptures, and in all aspects

of my life. He was real and alive in me. I was just trying to document this.

About the same time, right after the weekend, my wife asked me to accompany her to a meeting about the Called and Gifted program of Lay Ministry formation that was offered at Mundelein seminary. I thought it was just another “program of the month” that she encouraged me to go to. But I remember coming back from the meeting saying that I had to do it and I would even do it if she did not join me. I knew I was being called to something else.

I realized that I not only had to write but I had to share these with others. God was calling me to evangelization. Now that is really scary to me. I am very introverted and do not usually open myself up to others until I know them very well. But I did share my stories and poems with my family, my brothers and sisters in Called and Gifted and even other friends. As I said it is really scary.

If I could use a symbol to describe my life and my journey, it would be an orange. Think about what it looks like. A tough skin that has some fragrance but if you taste the skin it is somewhat bitter. Now imagine cutting it open. And then turn it inside out. What happens? The pulp is now exposed. It is juicy. It is fragrant. You can eat it, smell it, and let it drip down your fingers. It is converted from a tough, bitter fruit to a messy, but delicious treat. You just revel in it and enjoy it. That was my life ripped open and ready to be given to Jesus in enjoyment.

Let me get back to the definition of conversion. I was changed, turned around from self centeredness and being closed to others, to open myself to the Lord and the community. It is still ongoing. I do not know where He is leading me but I am willing to go.

Each of you will have a different response to the weekend. It may have happened already or it may be in the future. You may describe it as a conversion or you may just say that it touched you and you do not have words for it. As Kevin Murphy told me, that is ok. Just go with it and enjoy. Remember the orange.

Let me close by sharing with you the saying that is on the medal that I wear around my neck. "I have called you by your name. You are mine." To me those are the words of Jesus calling me to be His disciple. That is the impact that CRHP has had on me. I know that you will journey with Jesus through this process of formation. Just be open to Him.

Faith Journey

I was born during the war in Washington, DC, the first son of Louis and Mary Sharp. My only brother, Rozier, was born three years later. I had a very normal childhood, privileged in many ways, playing sports, enjoying the outdoors, and visiting with family in Missouri. I was named after my father, I am Lou Sharp.

My parents had a huge impact on my life. I would describe my dad as a very gentle man who invested a lot of time and effort into myself and my brother. He would tuck me in almost every night and was always passing on his wisdom to me quietly. These were life stories. He would tell me how a man and dad should act in certain situations. I was many times almost embarrassed to hear these stories but they have stuck with me throughout my life. This is how he showed me love and how I learned to love others. My mom was the stronger more courageous one. She was introverted, as am I, and taught me how to deal with my shyness. She faced a lot of health issues in her life but never complained and was always positive. I did not see either of my parents as particularly pious but both as very spiritual in different ways. Mom taught me love, as well, not by words but by actions. I took both of them with me on my journey in faith.

We always went to church, were active in St. Bernadette's parish in Silver Spring, Maryland, and that is where I attended grade school. I became an altar boy in the 5th grade and since we lived close to church, I served a lot of 6:30 AM masses. I also attended a catholic high school and then on to Notre Dame for college. During my college years the pope convened the Second Vatican Council. So while I had been educated in the more structured atmosphere I remember being excited about what was going on in the church. My parents, unlike many others, readily embraced the changes. I now think that they were living the Vatican II church prior to the council and that is what they had taught me.

During my senior year at Notre Dame, I met my wife, Pattian, and we decided to get married on our second date. But that did not actually take place until my last year in grad school. She came from a strong Irish/German catholic family and complimented me very well. We have been married 43 years. She can push me to do the right thing especially to get out of my introverted, self centered ways and to live my faith in the world.

We have three children and now seven grandchildren.

While we were raising the children, working on careers, living life, we again always were very faithful in going to mass, trying to live a good and moral life, and in general being good Catholics. Being dutiful first-borns, we would not do any different. But I was on cruise control in my spirituality. I did things like

attending mass and the sacraments out of habit. I didn't need to think much about it.

I have always struggled with private prayer. It is not that I did not pray, in fact, I have a novena that I say when times are tough. I just did not make it a priority in my life. I prayed for needs only. I don't think that I really understood God as love but only as a stern father. This is so contrary to my experience of my own father.

This all started to change seven years ago when I attended my first CRHP weekend. As I went through the weekend, I heard my story in the men's witnesses. The memories that were dredged up made me realize that God manifested His unconditional love for me in my parents. In fact, I remembered that when they died, I was not particularly sad but thankful for their lives and love. However this was only the beginning in my search for a deeper spirituality and involvement with God. That CRHP weekend was the most significant thing that had happened to me in a long time. It jarred me out of the "doing it by habit" mode. I wasn't sure where I was going or how I was going to get there but at least I was awake.

This started to clear up when I attended an information session for the Called & Gifted, Lay Ministry formation program at Mundelein seminary a few weeks later. Pattiann had pushed me to attend but I became hooked on what I heard and we both signed up to attend the 2 year program. As I said earlier, there were memories stirring in me and I think this Called & Gifted program provided me with the insight to un-

derstand what was happening. I was required to write reflections on various subjects from scripture, how I envisioned God in my life, and who Jesus was for me. I was facing myself in the mirror, asking questions, and beginning to get a grip on who I really was.

I knew that I needed to spend more time in private prayer and I found that I could do this at noon each day during my lunch break if I just made it a priority. I read scripture and contemplated what it meant for me, losing myself in the stories. The prayer was unstructured and conversational, but the time and space were consistent and structured. I continue with that today but I still have to work at it to prevent falling into my old, habitual ways. Since I am retired, I have to find time in the morning to pray. Five years ago, I started keeping a prayer journal that I try to write in each day or so. I also took time to read books on spirituality and learned how others have struggled with their own journey. That gives me comfort to know that I am not alone.

During that 2 year course, there were a few points of light that really touched my soul.

One of those happened as I was going to work. It was after a class in which we were working on a theological reflection for a story that Pattiann told. In the morning I was working on the insights that I had heard when I had this overwhelming feeling of being in the presence of God and it was clear how I was to be in contact with Him. It was in spending quiet time in His presence and contemplating His influence on my life. I

hope this doesn't sound too spooky but it was very real for me, very comfortable and was what I imagine the apostles must have seen at the Transfiguration. Words cannot describe it fully and I have not been able to go back there since.

My biggest struggle is in trusting the Lord. The lack of trust has caused me to be very hard on myself when I slip and to worry a lot. I then get into what I call a dry period or a desert time. I can almost chart that on a calendar when I look back at my journal. When I mention some of my worries to my wife, she just says "You need to trust in God because you are not in control". It seems so easy for her but it just isn't there for me yet. I have to keep at it until I have a greater trust.

The community of believers has become very important to me. But this was really brought home by two family incidents, in which I saw the community's love for me. The first happened 9 years ago when my granddaughter, Amanda, was born. It turns out she had a heart defect and she went into cardiac arrest for 30 minutes at birth. Despite all the doctors could do, she lived only 7 hours. Needless to say I was devastated because I was with her at Children's Hospital. At her funeral the outpouring of love from so many of our friends who came from all over the country to be with my daughter and son-in-law was overwhelming. I now see her as being given to us just to love even for the short time.

Four years ago in February, my daughter-in-law went into premature labor about 10 weeks early. Our grandson, Louis, was born three days later. I thought, "Here, we go again". I pulled

out the novena and said that. He has turned out to be just fine and went home in about 7 weeks from birth. But what was remarkable, was that we heard people who knew about this and were praying for the baby. There were CRHP people from all different parishes, our friends in Called & Gifted, classrooms in Indiana and Kansas. What a remarkable outpouring of prayers. That has really cemented my understanding of the power of community and how their love can transform and heal others.

As I continue on my journey of faith, there are so many things to work on and improve but I also realize that I am not alone. The Holy Spirit is with me. I am working on prayer and trust. I must give more of myself to the community and to causes of social justice but at least I am awake and moving.

Evangelization

Matthew 10:5-14

Jesus sent out these twelve after instructing them thus, "Do not go into pagan territory or enter a Samaritan town. Go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, make this proclamation: 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, drive out demons. Without cost you have received; without cost you are to give. Do not take gold or silver or copper for your belts; no sack for the journey, or a second tunic, or sandals, or walking stick. The laborer deserves his keep. Whatever town or village you enter, look for a worthy person in it, and stay there until you leave. As you enter a house, wish it peace. If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; if not, let your peace return to you. Whoever will not receive you or listen to your words--go outside that house or town and shake the dust from your feet.

Mark 4:1-20

On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, "Hear

this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold." He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables, so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven.'" Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. But those

sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."

Both of these stories speak of evangelization to me. What do I make of this? As I traveled to Australia last month, I came upon the city center and there was a set of steps where people could get on their soap box and talk about different things. That reminded me of the times that I see people in the streets of Chicago reading from the bible or preaching to the passersby. There are times when Jehovah's Witness members come to the door and pass out literature. Those are the ways that I have traditionally thought about evangelization. But that is really not my experience.

When I was about 12 or 13 years old, we were always building forts in the backyard. Occasionally we would sleep out in the fort at night. On one of these occasions, I was there with Bill Lawrence, our neighbor. His family was Lutheran. In the evening he asked me about the Catholic Church. Even though I had been educated for a number of years, I really did not know how to answer. I remember feeling so inadequate. I am not sure now if it was because I was surprised, just not knowledgeable enough or just too introverted to be comfortable. I ended up just teaching him the Hail Mary. That was a moment in which I could have evangelized and I really did not do a good job. It was interesting that the entire Lawrence family converted to Catholicism about a year later. I do not know why Bill asked me the questions but I was inadequate. The thing is that I am not sure how much better I would be now if the questions came out of the blue.

A second story is the film clip that I saw at Parish Pastoral Council training several years ago. It was about potato farming. Being a city slicker, I really did not know much about farming but from what I learned, it takes about three years of preparing the soil to be ready for the first potato crop. The root of the story is that it takes a while for a crop to develop. In evangelization, it may take a while to bring in the crop.

This second story is more compatible with how I would feel comfortable evangelizing. In some ways as a parent, I am evangelizing my own children. I teach them to be Catholic. I teach them to pray, to go to church and to be thankful to God. But mostly I teach them by how I act. As I live my life they observe and then hopefully follow the example. I am now doing the same for my grandchildren.

Retirement

Pattiann and I are about to begin our retirement which is both exciting and scary at the same time. What is around the river bend? She and I have worked all of our life and it will be exhilarating to not have to go each day to the same place. I have been doing chemistry for forty years. But this is also a passage in life and passages are scary at times. It is letting go of the trapeze and hoping to catch the next trapeze. What are the uncertainties? What will it be like? What will I do with myself? Will we have enough resources to live as we would like? How will my relationship with Pattiann change when I am around all day? There are lots of challenges ahead but with those challenges comes opportunities to do something different, to serve God and to serve my brothers. I need to remember what is written in Matthew 6.

Matthew 6:25-29

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat (or drink), or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why

are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them.

Based on this passage, I must trust in God to give us what we need and to provide the direction that I seek to follow Jesus and to serve the Body of Christ. His call will come like that to Samuel but maybe not so dramatic and overt. It may be more like an opportunity placed in my path. I have to be aware of that opportunity when it arises. It may come in several calls as with Samuel.

1 Samuel 3:8-11

The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, "Here I am. You called me." Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth. So he said to Samuel, "Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'" When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, "Samuel, Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak, for your servant is listening." The LORD said to Samuel: "I am about to do something in Israel that will cause the ears of everyone who hears it to ring.

I also have to be prepared to follow the call as noted in the verses from Luke. Jesus is saying that I should drop everything and answer His call to follow. That is the really scary part because it is uncertain where that will lead. Retirement

however does give me more time and removes some barriers. I will continue to seek His path for me as I see it.

Luke 9: 59-62

And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "(Lord,) let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." (To him) Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

Overall retirement does not mean that I will stop doing things, only that I will change the path that I am following. I will have more time to pursue my writing and to expand my service in Jesus' name. If the call is to serve men's ministry, then so be it. If it is to do something else, then so be it. Sometimes the greatest growth comes at the sharp bends in the road. I must remember that also growth comes, at times, with pain. I need to be prepared and remember what was written by Matthew above. Trust in the Lord.

One of the real advantages will be having more time to spend with my brother. I have never lived very close to him and I have learned to depend on him much more since our parents have died. He is so different and yet so much the same. It is always comforting to talk to him because in some ways it is like talking to dad again. Having more time will be a pure joy for me.

I hope that I will also be able to maintain my time for writing reflections. Much of the inspiration comes at time when riding to work in the car with music playing. I will have to keep time to do the same. I need to remember that I am doing that as a way of becoming closer to God and not just feeding my ego. It also helps me to put things in perspective, to remember, and to order my life. I pray that the Lord will lead me to heaven as I reorder my life patterns.

Sacred Silence

As mentioned in earlier papers about prayer, silence is important to me. It is not just any silence but a true sacred silence. I have found out in the last year or so, that I need silence for my private prayer life. It is then possible to listen to what God is trying to tell me. As an example, when I am at home, the furnace and the sump pump are running. I cannot hear them because there is always a lot of other noise. When I wake up in the middle of the night, the sound of the furnace and sump pump seem to be so loud. With the voice of God, it is the same. I need some sacred silence.

John Shea tells the story about the Angel Gabriel announcing the forthcoming birth of John the Baptist to his father, Zechariah. When Zechariah questioned Gabriel, he was struck dumb. It was as if he was placed into an enforced silence so that he could ponder what God was doing to him and for him. He was being forced into sacred silence.

In the gospel of John, Jesus dealt with the people that were questioning him about the woman caught in adultery.

John 8:6-11

Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened

up and said to them, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he bent down and wrote on the ground. And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She replied, "No one, sir." Then Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, (and) from now on do not sin any more."

While it did not specifically say that He used silence, I feel that it implied it. He was writing in the dirt and not saying anything. The others also did not really keep talking. It was as if He had given them a time out as is now popular with disciplining young children. They are allowed to sit or stand in silence. In doing so they could ponder the question that Jesus had asked them. They were allowed to be silent to have the word of God work in their lives. Each of them then departed without any further questions.

Silence is intimidating to many people. It can be cold or scary. But I find that sacred silence is very warming. It is as bright as a new sunrise. Sacred silence is one way that I am in contact with God. On the drive to work, if I turn off the radio or CD player, I can get lost in my thoughts and prayers and actually listen to what God is saying to me. It has at times given me moments of lucidity or pure joy. So much so that even though I try to capture this in my writing, I cannot nearly do it justice.

As an introvert, silence is mostly my friend. It allows me to process what is going on inside and put it into some order. On very rare occasions, I have been so totally lost in my thoughts that I feel I am in the presence of the divine. What I also find is that I have to have the ground properly plowed and planted for my mind to blossom in sacred silence.

As a minister I would like to use sacred silence as one tool to tap into ones inner thoughts and see if we can then encounter the divine. This is done when using conversational prayer as we did in our summer Called & Gifted group and to some extent it is done in our theological reflection exercises. Perhaps I can explore this further in my ministry in the future and with my own personal spiritual direction.

As I contemplate the picture In His Silence by Juan Gonzalez, I see a figure with their eyes closed, inclined toward what appears to be a flaming halo and inclined away from a branch of thorns. Perhaps this represents the burning desire that is in each of us to move toward the divine. In some ways that is how I have encounters with God in my silence. I see things very clearly and have a feeling of total euphoria, a flaming in my heart. I feel the warmth of His Spirit beaming down and encircling me.

I will continue to use these moments of silence as a window into my relationship with God, with Jesus, with my family and with others. I must also use it as an opportunity to dig deeply into myself. In some ways this is what I am after in my life.

Science and Creation

In studying Genesis, during our class on Old Testament, I was intrigued by the discussion that there are two separate stories of creation in the bible and that both stories are true but neither happened. Also there are a number of stories in the popular press about the controversy about creationism, evolution and intelligent design. Being trained as a Ph.D. scientist, I have never really seen a conflict between scientific theories and my Catholic faith. To me they are in two different realms.

We have been given our intellect by God and we are giving glory to him if we use it to pray, try to understand our place on earth in a theological sense, or study nature using the scientific method. Was it not mentioned in Genesis that man was given dominion over all the earth and its creatures?

Genesis 1:26-30

Then God said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground."

God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them. God blessed them,

saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth."

God also said: "See, I give you every seed-bearing plant all over the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the animals of the land, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the ground, I give all the green plants for food." And so it happened.

We can therefore have this dominion over all the creatures by studying them in a scientific sense so that we understand what makes them up, how they work, and how they interact with man and each other. I find this totally compatible with the words presented in Genesis. God did not give us nature as a slave to be abused but as a gift that we should cherish. As with any gift, we have a duty to understand it so that we can better preserve and enjoy it. It is also a gift in that it gives us a glimpse as to how loving is our God and how marvelous are his creatures.

But science and theology are very different in their focus for me. Science, whether it is chemistry, physics or biology, is the way that I use the talents from my creator to glorify Him. As I study science, I realize that it is incredibly deep. As I peel back one layer of knowledge, there is another one waiting to be tackled. At some point my brain becomes overloaded and I cannot go any further. One of the things that I cannot study by the scientific method is the meaning of life. That is the realm of

theology in my mind. This is very similar to the ideas in the presentation by Brian Greene (Public Radio, All Things Considered, May 30, 2005). He reported:

“None of these scientific achievements have told us why we're here or given us the answer to life's meaning -- questions science may never address. But just as our experience playing baseball is enormously richer if we know the rules of the game, the better we understand the universe's rules -- the laws of physics -- the more deeply we can appreciate our lives within it.” (The entire report is shown at the end of this reflection paper.)

He goes further to say, “I believe that the breathtaking ideas of science can nourish not only the mind but also the soul.”

Science develops knowledge that leads to theories, some of which lead to what we call the laws of nature. But all of science is subject to revision as we get new data to review. As an example, look at the original theories about combustion. Based on early evidence the theory of phlogiston was developed to explain the results. Now phlogiston was developed to explain that when a substance is combusted, one sees smoke rising and one also sees that the weight of a material may increase. This was easily explained as phlogiston being given off during combustion, and thus it must have negative mass. In the 21st century this seems ridiculous but that is because the theory has changed based on new data.

As another example, Newton devised laws of motion which ruled for a number of years until the quantum theory of the

early 20th century came about. That did not mean that Newton was wrong as in the case of phlogiston, but that if you looked at a deeper level at motion, then Newton's theories could not explain everything. That is how science works and because theory can change does not make it incapable of explaining nature.

The same cannot be said about theological discussions. Faith is a major part of our belief system because God cannot be theorized like science. St. Thomas used philosophical arguments to try to prove the existence of God. While I studied them in class a number of years ago, I remember not being very satisfied with my understanding. I need faith to believe in God not philosophical arguments.

In the recent press, there seems to be many discussions of arguments about Creationism vs. Evolution going on in state and local school boards. As I tried to point out earlier, I do not see the controversy. Creationism is an attempt to explain the big question as to where do we come from and how did it all happen. It is a theological or philosophical explanation of our existence and is prevalent in all societies in recorded history. They just each have their own wording. The clash of these ideas comes about if one reads the account of creation in the bible literally. And if one is literal then how does one explain the two different stories of creation (Genesis 1:1 – 2:3 and Genesis 2:4-25)? I just look at Creationism and Evolution as attempts by man to explain the very basis of life in two different ways, faith based and science based.

Similar arguments are put forth in the International Theological Commission report on Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God (La Civiltà Cattolica 2004, IV, 254-286). (Full text shown in addendum). “Pope John Paul II stated some years ago that ‘new knowledge leads to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis. It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge’(“Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on Evolution”1996).”

Later they write. “Mainly concerned with evolution as it ‘involves the question of man,’ however, Pope John Paul’s message is specifically critical of materialistic theories of human origins and insists on the relevance of philosophy and theology for an adequate understanding of the ‘ontological leap’ to the human which cannot be explained in purely scientific terms.”

They go on to discuss the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo and how it relates to the Big Bang theory of cosmology. “The doctrine of creatio ex nihilo is thus a singular affirmation of the truly personal character of creation and its order toward a personal creature who is fashioned as the imago Dei and who responds not to a ground, force or energy, but to a personal creator.”

And this is followed by, “With respect to the creatio ex nihilo, theologians can note that the Big Bang theory does not contradict this doctrine insofar as it can be said that the supposition of an absolute beginning is not scientifically inadmissible.

Since the Big Bang theory does not in fact exclude the possibility of an antecedent stage of matter, it can be noted that the theory appears to provide merely indirect support for the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo which as such can only be known by faith.”

However I believe that the crux of their argument is given by, “While science can study these causal chains, it falls to theology to locate this account of the special creation of the human soul within the overarching plan of the triune God to share the communion of trinitarian life with human persons who are created out of nothing in the image and likeness of God, and who, in his name and according to his plan, exercise a creative stewardship and sovereignty over the physical universe.”

Very recently, the idea of intelligent design is getting a lot of play in the press. I believe it is an attempt to bring Creationism and Evolution together but in fact it only muddies the water. At first glimpse it may seem to make sense but I think that it means that God is like a puppeteer pulling the strings of man and nature. Does that mean that God provides the intelligence to design polio myelitis, Ebola virus or hurricane Katrina? How can a God that loves us so unconditionally create things that harm his creatures?

Dr. Gary Belovsky, of the University of Notre Dame, expressed his ideas about Creationism and Evolution in an article entitled “Darwinism and Catholicism should be compatible” posted on the Notre Dame website (article shown in Addendum). While his article explains his disagreement with some

statements from Cardinal Schonborn, it also fits with some of what I am trying to explain. Dr. Belovsky says, “Neo-Darwinism informs us that many birth defects are understandable, probabilistic events, not God’s punishment.”

He goes on to explain, “Combining science and religion is dangerous, because science relies on observation and religion relies on faith. God’s existence cannot be scientifically proven, because God cannot be measured; individuals must personally accept God’s existence on faith. Intelligent Design resurrects the antiquated notion of biology as natural theology. Biology is the essence of our material existence during our brief sojourn on earth, whereas theology addresses our spiritual existence that is not part of the material world.”

Perhaps his concluding statement sums up what I have been trying to say in this reflection. “There will always be a place for God in peoples’ lives, because there are ultimate questions that science cannot answer, e.g., how did the “big-bang” creation of the universe get its start? However, to search for all answers to our existence using faith alone is an abdication of human intelligence.”

The Servant as Served

As I began to read the book *Lessons from the School of Suffering* by Fr. Jim Willig, I was stunned by the description that he had of the feeling of being loved by the many parishioners that attended the mass before he went in for cancer surgery, and the love that he felt from his family when they supported him during his many discussions of his illnesses. I thought about Jesus in Luke 7: 36-50.

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."

Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and

the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly."

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little." He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Jesus was the proverbial servant to all and was always challenging the apostles to be servant to others. How did he feel being served?

To answer this, I tried to look at my own experience during my by-pass surgery in 2000. My father had taught me how to be a servant to my wife, my children and my neighbors. He did this with words and with his examples. A man would give anything to see that his family was provided with whatever they needed. While there are times when selfishness takes

over, when I might say, "I'm tired of being a dad today", in general, it is easy for me to be the servant to my family. Even now as my children are grown and independent, I feel that I have to pick up the tab at dinner, buy them something that they need, or give them fatherly advice. Is it my pride that makes me loathe to being served by them?

When I was in the hospital after my surgery, I was so moved by the cards that my family and many friends sent expressing their love and the hope for my fast recovery. It was powerfully emotional to me, not normally an emotional person. At the time, I figured that it was the effect of the anesthetic but this emotional rush has continued now for over five years. It can be triggered by watching a movie, like the Lion King, or a song in church or a show on television. It is seeing the love expressed by Simba for his father or the words of a song like "How Beautiful" ...This is a reminder of the love that I experienced in the hospital. The support letters from my CRHP weekend just reopened the feelings again. I could hardly read them because of the emotion. It is again the feeling of being unconditionally loved by family and friends that sweeps over my like a breaker at the beach.

I wonder if this is an infinitesimal glimpse of the love that God has for each one of us. Maybe it is my pride that prevents me from seeing this more often. Maybe I should reflect this back to the giver so that they know how much I am moved. Am I being a servant in being served by others? Is this what Jesus is saying to us in Luke?

John 13: 6-15

Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, "Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well."

Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean."

So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do."

Jesus seems to say to Peter that he needs to be served by the washing of the feet, and then to follow the example by washing others. Peter was reluctant, as I might be, to have something done for him. It is the human response that we all have

as men. We are supposed to be in control, the strong ones, out in front. Is there too much emphasis on being the lover rather than the loved? God is the infinite lover and maybe we, in being loved, reflect the love back to Him.

As I pray to experience this overwhelming love, I can reflect back to the time when I felt this love expressed from my family and friends and marvel at the glimpse of God that it gave me.

To Touch His Hand

As I am reflecting on this past weekend, I realize that on Monday night at the shelter I was able to touch a number of people by the simple gesture of handing them a cookie. Normally the evening at the Mary and Joseph House shelter, is just making sandwiches, or adding cheese to those already made. These are then handed out and the men and women as they pick up a cup of soup. Over the last few years this has become a rather routine act. In fact when I have handed out the sandwiches in the past, it is almost antiseptic. They may thank you but most of the time they are worried about what type of bread or meat is on the sandwich.

However last night, while my wife handed out the sandwiches, I had some chocolate chip cookies to pass out. What happened was that I actually touched their hands. I could feel the warmth of each one. But not only were their hands warm but their eyes were warm. I think the gesture was one of being touched by me but also recognizing that besides the physical touch I was reaching out to them. The feeling of the warmth of their hand was what I remember most however. These men are the untouchables of our society, the lepers of Chicago. No one pays them much attention but I was able to do that last night and they touched me back. Some came back for a sec-

ond cookie, or was it for a second touch. It was the touch for me.

I look at this in two different ways. In the first they are coming to me as they might have come to Jesus; to be touched; to be cared for. It is humbling, almost embarrassing, for me to think this way. It was the woman wanting to touch Jesus to be cured. Jesus cured by touch. It was a laying on of hands.

Luke 5:12-13

Now there was a man full of leprosy in one of the towns where he was; and when he saw Jesus, he fell prostrate, pleaded with him, and said, "Lord, if you wish, you can make me clean." Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, "I do will it. Be made clean."

Matthew 9:20-21

A woman suffering hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the tassel on his cloak. She said to herself, "If only I can touch his cloak, I shall be cured."

Mark 5:41

He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!"

The second way to look at this is that I was touching Jesus. He was the leper, the outcast, the homeless man and I was touching Him by handing Him a cookie. It was similar to Francis, hugging the leper because he saw Jesus in that per-

son. The feeling of warmth in the touch is the feeling of warmth of Jesus touching my life.

Matthew 25:34-40

Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' And the king will say to them in reply, 'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'

I contrast this to the earlier days of the weekend when I was with people that I love and who have a lot of blessing in their lives but seem to be complaining most of the time. I am that way myself many times. In spite of the negativity that I heard all weekend and the feeling of negativity that I had, my prayers were answered because I was given Jesus to serve and the insight to realize what was happening. In touching the hands of the men at the shelter, I was able to touch Jesus' hands and be touched myself by the experience.

Trust in the Lord

How do you develop trust in the Lord? That is a question that I have been struggling with recently. I feel that I need to work on this issue but I am somewhat in the dark as to how to proceed. There are a number of scripture references to trust in the Lord. In fact the Old Testament is full of stories of people struggling with the same question. David trusted in the Lord and even though he committed adultery and murder, the Lord blessed him because he continually trusted in God.

2 Samuel 7:9-13

Now then, speak thus to my servant David, 'The LORD of hosts has this to say: It was I who took you from the pasture and from the care of the flock to be commander of my people Israel. I have been with you wherever you went, and I have destroyed all your enemies before you. And I will make you famous like the great ones of the earth. I will fix a place for my people Israel; I will plant them so that they may dwell in their place without further disturbance. Neither shall the wicked continue to afflict them as they did of old, since the time I first appointed judges over my people Israel. I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also reveals to you that he will establish a house for you. And when your time comes and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up

your heir after you, sprung from your loins, and I will make his kingdom firm. It is he who shall build a house for my name. And I will make his royal throne firm forever.

Moses did not trust in the Lord when he struck the rock twice with his staff for water. Because of this he was not able to enter the land that God was giving to the Hebrews.

Numbers 20:10-11

Then, raising his hand, Moses struck the rock twice with his staff, and water gushed out in abundance for the community and their livestock to drink. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you were not faithful to me in showing forth my sanctity before the Israelites, you shall not lead this community into the land I will give them."

Perhaps the most famous example was Abraham, when he trusted in the Lord enough to follow His directions to sacrifice Isaac.

Genesis 22:9-14

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the LORD'S messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you

are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." As Abraham looked about, he spied a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. So he went and took the ram and offered it up as a holocaust in place of his son.

In the New Testament, Jesus talked about trust in the Lord when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The first beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in Spirit" really talks about those who trust completely in God. As I have written before, that is very difficult for me to truly have that type of trust. I think that it is my pride that prevents me from completely turning everything over to God. I always feel that I have to do something to control the situation. That is so typical of a successful adult who feels that they did what was necessary to advance in their life. We are taught to be independent and self sufficient. It is contrary to what God wants of us.

Perhaps I should take direction from my grandchildren who trust completely in their parents to supply them with everything. If I could emulate that, I would be closer to the type of trust in the Lord that I think I should have. Perhaps this is what Jesus is talking about when he says that we should be like little children so that we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

One of the few times in my life that I turned myself over to God was when I was going through the struggles with my heart by-pass operation. I think initially that I knew something was wrong but I could exercise myself out of it. I also tried to tell myself that it was just a normal fact of aging. I

even said my novena for deliverance from this illness hoping that I would make myself better. It was only after receiving the sacrament of the sick and saying the novena that what God wanted for me He would give me that I felt really at peace with myself. I was ready to turn everything over to Him. I was then very comfortable when I went into surgery and even when I had to go back into the second surgery.

Trust in the Lord is elusive. I continually fall back into my pit of needing to control everything in my life even to controlling what God should give me. When I pray I need to implore God to allow me to recognize His will in my life and the grace that He is supplying for that situation.

What Does God Look Like?

In reading *Against An Infinite Horizon*, by Ronald Rolheiser, he described a time when he asked a question of himself. What does God look like? This set off the light bulbs in my head. It raised a lot of questions about how I would answer that same question. Rolheiser describes an incident where he asked that of a friend who was one of his mentors. The answer that he received surprised him and made him realize that to see what God looks like we must see Him in everyone that we meet.

Based on what Rolheiser said, I would like to try to answer the question in my own life. I learned in grade school that I was made in the image and likeness of God. This is also the concept of *Imago Dei* which I learned about on a *Called and Gifted* weekend. If that is the case then I can see what God looks like by looking at those around me.

God looks like Butch at the Joseph and Mary House shelter. He always is looking out for us, waiting for us to arrive, making sure that we are safe. He always wants to talk to us and seems to enjoy our company. He has a wonderful sense of humor but is also very protective. Most people would avoid him because he would look scary. His pants did not fit, nor did his

shoes, but he always cared for us and made sure we were comfortable. His presence also challenged me to be better.

God also has eyes like Regan. They show me how to look on the world with wonder. Her eyes are so trusting and loving. If I am made in the image of God then I too must have eyes like Regan to see with.

God smiles like Luke. He smiles just out of sheer joy of being alive and seeing those whom he loves. Is that not how God is as well? He is calm even when chaos is going on around him. That peacefulness I should emulate at all times.

God looks like new parents being delighted by their child, just loving the little one and only wanting the best for them as they mature. He only wants the best for each of us just as those parents.

God is like the blinding brightness of the new sun rising in the east over the ocean. He brings light and warmth to all whom He touches. He is with us all the time even at night when He is just shining on the other side of the earth.

If I had to depict God in a picture it would be like the picture of surfer Jesus that we use at the men's CRHP Advance weekend. But I think more that He is in each of us and all whom we meet. I just need to be better at recognizing Him.

When I am Afraid

I have been thinking about how I behave when I am afraid. The most obvious thing is that I immediately retreat within myself. I start to feel sorry for myself and get very pessimistic. I know that is very disconcerting to Pattiann and the rest of my family. They comment that I am distant and aloof. I am totally consumed with worry. Those are the times that I have retreated into myself because I am afraid.

Men are not supposed to be afraid of anything or at least not show it. However it is so obvious to me in the way that I behave. When I talk about being in the desert, or in the dungeon, that is usually the sign that something is bothering me and making me afraid. Even last week at Hilton Head, I was feeling that way and having bad dreams where I was not sure that I wanted to go to sleep because I did not want any more of those dreams. Most of the time the fear is all in my head and nothing really comes of it. At times of real fear, I can handle it quite well. An example is when we were racing sailboats with Ron and Cal and the storm blew up quickly. It was really quite frightening but we all reacted to the situation and got it in hand. I think that the adrenaline rush overwhelmed us.

I always try to put up a good front and say that it is nothing but it weighs on my heart and soul intensely. At times I have tried to explain that to others by talking around the subject and when I get the response that I should not feel that way or that it will be alright, it is not really satisfying and does not help. I just need someone to acknowledge that it is alright to be afraid and they care for me just the same. Being afraid is a feeling of being lonely and I need to know that I am not alone in my feelings or in any way.

The most prevalent things that make me frightened are issues of health with myself, Pattiann or any of the children. Other things are those that are not in my control, like job security, relationships, or having to give someone bad news. I can put up a good front but it is totally devastating to me inside.

The funny thing is that once the crisis of fright is over I am on a great high. I talk a lot and feel totally in communion with everyone. Someone has loosed my tongue and I cannot stop the words coming out.

I also spend a lot of time in prayer, usually the Novena, but really any prayer. I also think intensely about being wrapped in the arms of Jesus. I have written prayers and poems about that in the past. I can even be awake early in the morning and simply lie in bed and think about the warmth of Jesus' loving embrace.

I wish I could get over this tendency but I am afraid that it is just part of me and the cross that I have to live with. It does

help me to think about Jesus and His love for me and for each of us. And the times of high are great.

Family



Dear Mom and Dad

As I was reflecting on Mother's day, I felt compelled to write you a letter of appreciation and let you know what a wonderful family you have initiated. Pattiann and I are quite well adjusted to being empty nesters. In fact we will both be retired this year and probably be spending some time together with Rozier and Jane in Florida. But the remarkable ones are the children. They are grown and have children of their own. You would be so proud of them.

Colleen finished at Marquette in chemistry and has been living near us ever since. She married a wonderful man, Gerard Nichol. He is quiet and respectful and I know that you would love him as we do. They now have three children, Madeline, Hailey and Luke. They all have gone to a Montessori day care and I know that you would have the time of your life taking them shopping and just enjoying their enthusiasm. The girls love to play games and I know that dad would enjoy providing a challenge for them. Colleen is a cross between, Pattiann and you, mom. She is very confident and capable. But she also has the uncanny ability to deal with adversity. She needed all of that when they lost their baby, Amanda. I know that you have had a chance to see her in heaven. Colleen was the strong one who helped me get through the loss.

Jay attended Notre Dame and then went to medical school at Illinois. He is now an emergency room physician at Loyola Medical Center. He is still as enthusiastic as ever and married Anna who shares his enthusiasm for everything. They pack as much as they can into every day. Anna is a nurse at Children's Memorial Hospital and was with Jay and I on the day that Amanda died. Jay and Anna are both very kind and gentle and I know that they make wonderful, compassionate listeners to their patients. Jay would be one of those young doctors that you always talked about when you were in the hospital.

Kevin also attended Notre Dame and in fact lived in the same dorm as Jay while they were together. He studied engineering and now works for a small company in Cincinnati. He met his wife, Patti, at Notre Dame. It is really fun having them to talk to about football and other ND things. They have been married for four years and have a wonderful little girl, Regan. I think I know how you felt about seeing our children, because we do not get to see Regan enough. I know that will end as we retire and have the time to travel to Cincinnati much more often. Regan has beautiful eyes and is a typical 1 year old. She is walking, beginning to talk, and getting into everything. Patti and Kevin are so good to her and you would really enjoy being with them. Regan is the one whom dad would hold for hours like he did Colleen.

The grandchildren call us Nana and Papa, which I love. They are so much fun. Sometimes Hailey even calls me Poppy and

then laughs. She does not yet know how special that is to me. When they get older, I will give each of them a copy of your book and tell them the stories of how loving and supportive you both were. I will also try to remind Colleen, Jay and Kevin to tell the little ones their stories of both of you, which are still vivid in their minds. I thank God everyday for you and will never forget all that you did for us.

Love, Louie.

Family

One of the true rewards about marrying Pattiann was being involved in her family. My own family was just four; mom, dad and my brother, Rozier. We lived for most of our entire life together in Maryland, far removed from our relatives in Missouri. I always enjoyed getting together with my extended family on vacation but that usually only occurred for two weeks in the summer.

What I did not expect was the pleasure of being immersed in a large, close-knit family such as the Keating clan. The immersion began on my first trip to Indianapolis in the summer of 1966. I was picked up at the airport by Pattiann for the July 4th weekend and immediately taken to the Grinsteiner funeral home for George Underhill's wake. I got a chance to meet Pattiann's mom, Catherine, and dad, Bob, again, but also Aunt Julia, Uncle Bob, Aunt Helen, Uncky Ed, Aunt Mary Jane and Uncle Kenny. The four women were sisters and the men were as close as brothers. They obviously all enjoyed being together. My most lasting memory was of Aunt Julia saying that she just loved this funeral home because they served coffee and cookies in the basement. I have always thought that this was a strange reaction to a funeral home but I have been with

them many times since while they drink coffee and eat cookies around the kitchen table and have always enjoyed it.

My original champion in the family was Julia Keating, Pattiann's grandmother and the mother of the four women. She persuaded Catherine and Bob that I was okay, not a Notre Dame drunk and safe to be around. She was very perceptive and I think knew that Pattiann saw something in me that was special. I was always treated like another grandson by Grandma Keating. She had a delightful Irish brogue and was the center of all family gatherings. I was very quickly scrutinized by all of the cousins but if I had Grandma's blessing that was the ace in the deck.

Over the next two years, I was able to spend as much time as possible in Indianapolis while we were dating, getting engaged and finally married in June, 1968. I then graduated to being a full fledged member of the Keating clan but I always felt that I was in from the beginning. I only wish I could have gotten to know Grandma more than I did. She died just a week after our wedding. We got a call while on our honeymoon that she was very sick and we drove straight through from Washington D.C. so that we could get to her bedside. I knew how important that was to Pattiann.

The family always does everything together. If someone was moving into a new house, the crew arrived to move furniture, paint, clean or whatever was needed. It did not matter if it was in Indianapolis or not. When we moved onto 15th Street, they were there. In fact we were taught how to hang wallpa-

per by Mary Ann and Sam Rhinesmith one evening. When we were moving into our house in Libertyville, the crew was there over the Thanksgiving holiday to paint and clean the entire house. That is just how things were done. It was always comforting to know that they would help. Each uncle and family had his expertise and knew his role in the work. It was never necessary to have a family reunion because they were always connected and together.

There was always fun to be had in work. We laughed a lot about Uncle Kenny painting in the closet, the dirty pictures on the wall when the wallpaper was steamed off, or picking up the refrigerator over the bar in Eddie's basement. It was hard work but we always felt the warmth of love by being together. The crew could build garages, roof a house or paint Christmas trees. Many a tree was cut down and the stump removed by the same group.

The most fun was usually around celebrations or holidays. We all went to each baptism, first communion, graduation or wedding and then had a party afterwards. Each of the cousins was mothered by the nearest aunt. Aunt Helen was quiet and a great cook. Many of Pattiann's favorite recipes came from her. Aunt Mary Jane was the leader of the party. She could always pack everyone in a car and go. Aunt Julia was the listener. She was always best to talk to when you had something on your mind. She was never judgmental. Catherine was the conscience of the family. You always knew where you stood with her. She has a special place in her heart for the boys.

The major celebration however is the annual Christmas party held each year on December 23. It is hosted by one of the four Keating families each year and features lots of food, children running around, a Christmas play and the annual visit by Santa. What has been most enjoyable is seeing the children grow and bring their own children. Lots of cousins are there and it is getting more difficult to put all the families together. If a boyfriend or girlfriend is brought to the party, it is serious and they get the usual scrutiny from the rest of the family. In fact when Patti and Anna came I gave them a family tree so they would know who everyone was. Pattiann always brings a special dessert; Therese a dip; Jeanine deviled eggs; Mike has his special jokes and John his quarter for the best child actor. Two babies have been born right after the party and we may even have one at the party some day. Hopefully one of the doctors will be present. The big contest is for the role of baby Jesus, who is the youngest baby. Everyone enjoys the time together and is there in spirit even if they cannot travel to the party.

Two special occasions need to be remembered as well. The first happened right after we were first married. Notre Dame got invited to the Cotton Bowl. A number of us were fortunate to be able to go. Eddie and Val, Uncky Ed and Aunt Helen, Hugh and Jeanmarie, Uncle Kenny and Aunt Mary Jane, Pattiann and I flew to Dallas to attend. The two things that I remember most were Aunt Mary Jane saying "You can sleep when you are dead!!" to get us out of our room, and the car trips with six of us in the back seat. We were a double-decker.

We had so much fun that it did not matter that Notre Dame lost to Texas at the end of the game.

The other occasion was the cousin's cruise that a number of us took in 1999. In fact there were 19 of us in total. We laughed from the time we left Indianapolis to the time that we returned. We sat at two different tables for meals but moved around so that we could talk to a different cousin at each meal. We could hang around alone or be with the large group. I most remember the time in the casino when Therese and Donna were hot, the drinks that Kyle and Sean ordered every hour, and the scavenger hunt that we played with the bra on Eddie and the false teeth stolen by Susie.

As we all get older and have mourned the loss of Grandma, Uncky Ed, Aunt Helen, Aunt Mary Jane and Uncle Kenny, I am truly thankful that I have been immersed in this family. They have given so much to me and my family and have made me a true son and not just a son-in-law. All of this comes back to the faith that Grandma Keating had in her granddaughter's impression of a young man from Notre Dame.

Brothers

*The road is long, with many a winding turn
That leads us to who knows where, who knows where
But I'm strong, strong enough to carry him
He ain't heavy - he's my brother*

*So on we go, his welfare is my concern
No burden is he to bare, we'll get there
For I know he would not encumber me
He ain't heavy - he's my brother*

*If I'm laden at all, I'm laden with sadness
That everyone's heart isn't filled with gladness of love for one
another
It's a long long road from which there is no return
While we're on our way to there, why not share
And the load, it doesn't weigh me down at all
He ain't heavy - he's my brother
He ain't heavy - he's my brother, he's my brother, he's my
brother*

This song by the Hollies is an inspiration to anyone who has a brother that he reveres. I am fortunate to be in that category.

My brother, Rozier, is three years younger but has always been an inspiration to me. He was the athlete that I never was. He was daring enough for both of us and would push the envelope when I was not comfortable to do that. He showed bravery while I was timid. I have always appreciated that he led the way.

I remember a number of incidents that made my heart skip a beat. We were riding bikes at Pinecrest and there was a place in the parking lot where you could go over the end of the pavement and cause your bike to jump into the air. All the kids were doing it and the bike would jump slightly. There was, however, one section where the slope was more intense and everyone was afraid to go over that part. Someone dared Rozier to try it and of course he could not pass the dare. I remember being petrified that he would crash and get mangled but he decided to do it anyway. What I remember is him going over the jump and landing on the front wheel of his bike. Somehow he got the back wheel down without crashing and, of course, he was now the hero of the neighborhood.

The most spectacular incident was our attempt to launch a rocket into the upper atmosphere. This was during the race to space that was going on between the US and the USSR and we thought we could contribute to the effort. Our "rocket" was a metal tube with one end smashed closed to form an exhaust nozzle. The rocket was fueled by match heads cut from kitchen matches. The nose cone was a cork and the fins were balsa wood. I am sure that the weight to thrust ratio was negative but we did not think about that. The best part was the ig-

nition system. It was a line of match heads leading to a pile of matches beneath the rocket. The problem was that the match heads would blow away so we decided to stick them to the launch pad with Duco cement. Of course Rozier was elected to light the fuse. He was brave enough and fast enough to get out of the way. What we had not calculated was that the cement was solvent based. Thus when Roz light the end, it immediately shot flame all the way to the pile of matches and caught the fins on fire. This all occurred in about 5 seconds and even Rozier was not that fast. He managed to dive behind a tree as we rocked the neighborhood with an explosion. That was our last foray into interplanetary travel but not of explosive technology.

I was not present to see the most famous incident. The rope swing was a favorite spot in the woods behind the Joyce's house. One could run down the hill, grab the rope and swing out quite a ways. On one attempt, Rozier lost his grip on the rope and plunged head long to the ground. When he got home, he looked like he had gone 10 rounds with Sugar Ray Robinson. I do not know how mom did not panic but she did not. She did take him to the doctor and although he was badly bruised and swollen, nothing was broken or damaged. I think he did get out of exams that year however. No need to unduly panic the girls in school with his appearance. He was swollen for several months and had black eyes for about a year. To this day, I consider it a miracle that he survived the crash.

Rozier was fortunate to go to St. Louis University because he got to share his time with mom and dad. Their house turned

into the fraternity house and they always fondly told of the stories of their many "sons" who would show up on the door step looking for food or a place to sleep. It was also fortunate that when he got so sick with arthritis that mom and dad could be close by to oversee his route back to health. I was living in California at the time, newly married, and working on finishing my thesis. I never realized how sick he was until it was under control. Mom and dad were always so positive when they would talk to Pattiann and me.

While Roz was on the mend, the best thing that happened was that he met Jane. In typical Rozier fashion, it did not take long for them to decide to get married. I think that we got to meet her for the first time at the rehearsal dinner in Marion. She has been his lifelong companion for 36 years. As typical of mom and dad, Rozier and Jane always have a great, positive attitude toward everything. That is a true gift to our family.

Rozier was a huge support to me when dad and then mom died. He got the original calls and passed the news on to me. While I still cannot believe that they are gone, I can hold on to the memory of them with Rozier and Jane during our visits. I realize how similar we are in our attitudes and both of us did what was best for the entire family. We were raised that way, I guess.

As is his custom, Rozier led the way by retiring before I have. That is a scary proposition but he just did it. I am now looking forward to following him next year. Not only will I retire

but Pattiann and I will spend some of the cold months living near Rozier and Jane in Florida. I truly feel like being at home when we are with them.

The last thing that I want to recall was the little incident with Charley. Last August, as hurricane Charley was approaching the west coast of Florida, I was keeping an eye on the developments from work as Rozier and Jane were going to ride it out in their home in North Port. Everyone expected the storm to hit on the coast near Tampa. It was a category 2 storm. I got an ominous email from Rozier about noon on Friday, August 13. It said that Charley had just increased to a category 4 and turned right into Charlotte harbor. It was coming right over them and they were going into the bathroom and covering with a mattress. I, needless to say, was a nervous wreck. Similar to when he was jumping his bike at Pinecrest.

When I got home that evening, I was really worried about the outcome and Pattiann suggested that I give them a call. I did not expect that I would ever get through but Rozier answered the phone and said that everything was alright with them. They did not lose power or have any damage. He had gotten the back wheel of his bike back on the ground again. Since we were going down to visit Florida in a few days, we continued with our plans. There was total devastation between Fort Myers and North Port but he was just north of the worst of it. I was so glad to see them safe and we talked quite a bit about their experience.

As I said in my opening, I think the world of him and know that God is looking out for him and his family. God is so loving in allowing me to have Rozier as my brother.

There is another set of Sharp brothers of whom I am very fond. Jay and Kevin are a little closer in age than Rozier and I but have the same bond. I can look at this relationship from the outside rather than the inside. Jay and Kevin are the best of friends as well. Pattiann and I attribute this to the time when we were relocating back to Illinois from Doylestown and they had to live in Indianapolis while we were searching for a house. They had to sleep together on the double hide-a-bed in the basement of Grandma's house. They also had only each other to play with because there were not any other young children in the neighborhood.

When we finally got into our house in Libertyville, they continued to do everything together whether it was playing soccer in the yard, driving golf balls through our windows or playing basketball against each other in the driveway. They followed each other in all that they did.

This continued through school at St. Joseph, then to Carmel and finally to Notre Dame. They learned to play sports together, sing together, sail together, and share their interests. They were both proud of what each other has accomplished. April 1 is one of their special days. It is Jay's birthday but it is also the day when they plot to trick their sister with an April fool's joke. Each year she gets sucked into their story. This is one of the ways that they show her their love.

I hope that they realize what a special gift a brother is and how much you can share memories as do Rozier and I.

Fathers

One of the issues brought up during my experience on the CRHP retreat was the impact that fathers had on the life of their children, especially the boys. One hears many times of the sociological impact of fathers on child development and what the lack of a father image can do, but it was made real at the retreat. It was not so much the individual stories of fathers but the profound impact that fathers had, as evidenced by the emotional ties, the stories and the love expressed by the sons for their fathers both living and dead.

In my own case, my father while being a quiet, gentle type is the one that I most deeply thought about after my retreat. He expressed his love for me and my brother by always giving his time to us. He encouraged us to do our best at everything and was never critical when we fell short. He just picked us up with words, showed the lesson to be learned and moved us forward. Sometimes he did this from behind and sometimes he did this from in front. That has always been my model for leadership which is part of my being. Perhaps it is best to give a few examples.

Dad and I were playing in the Middle Atlantic Father and Son golf tournament. We had been doing fairly well and were probably in the running for a top finish. I hit an errant drive

into the right rough and since it was a Scotch tournament, dad had to hit the next shot. The ball was in a terrible lie and he wiffed on the shot. Because of that, we fell quickly out of contention. All he could talk about was that he had let me down. Never was it mentioned that I hit a terrible drive. To the day that he died, dad and I still laughed about that time both knowing that we had let each other down. He never ever mentioned that bad drive. We always talked about the time we almost won the tournament. He loved me unconditionally just for being me and the joint experience that we had shared.

My brother, Rozier, is three years younger than I and, as you can imagine, there was some rivalry when we were younger. Dad never had to correct us for overzealous sibling rivalry. It was understood that we were a family and always had to support each other in our triumphs and our down times. It was stressed, by dad, in his evening talks to us that we each were special in our own way. I remember these evening talks given when he was tucking us in bed like they are still happening. It was a time when he taught us how to be a dad. I miss these even today. This need to support each other was most important during the summer of 1965, when my grandfather, Poppy, was dying. Mom spent most of the summer in St. Louis helping my grandmother care for him. Dad, Rozier and I were bachelors for the summer. We really got to bond over the grill, in prayer for Poppy, in doing the laundry and generally in trying to keep the house up. We were all so glad to see mom come home, but were secretly sorry to see our men's time together end.

My father also showed us the utmost respect as adults. When he decided to retire, he went out of his way to travel to South Bend to have dinner with me at Notre Dame. He called one day, said he was coming to town after a meeting in Chicago and would I like to go to dinner. As a hungry college senior, I was always up for a free dinner. Over dinner he said that he had decided to retire from the government and that he and mom would be moving to St. Louis, to be near my grandmother after Poppy died. He had so much respect for me that he went out of his way to tell me this in person. He did not want to do it over the telephone or in a letter. He was sensitive as to how I would feel. How I felt, was really special. He showed that same sense of caring when he called Rozier and I in early 1990 and said “come and move us into a nursing home, because I just can’t take care of mom anymore”. Mom had been increasingly infirmed with a weak heart. Dad had been diagnosed and treated for cancer that past fall. They had decided to leave their condo and go into a nursing facility together because he was not well enough to take care of mom. He was sensitive to her needs and wanted her to be cared for comfortably. He mentioned after we moved them that he was at ease now that they were together and that they would be taken care of without burdening us. Dad died a week later. I think he just kept hanging on to see that mom was in good hands. He never let on how sick he was. He showed his respect to mom and his sons in how he handled this.

As I reflect back on my own fatherhood, and now grandfatherhood, I realize how much I am like him. It is ingrained in me from his examples. I saw that also in the witnesses and life stories shared in our CRHP group. Each of the men was deeply influenced by their own fathers. Each had a story different in the details but the same in the core influence. I am now sure that all children, both male and female, need to be influenced in the same way. It just seems to be more evident in the men because that is their direct role model. I know how fortunate that I am in my life, because you see so many stories of abandonment, abuse or neglect by fathers. What a lost opportunity that is.

I am also lucky in that my fatherhood has been reflected back to me in my sons. While I was doing things naturally, they were obviously influenced by the examples. I will not go into specific details. That will be up to my children to reflect on and perhaps give in a witness some day. What I see is how Kevin cares for his wife Patti, as they work through the confusion that is the first baby with all that entails. I remember how proud he was holding Regan for the first time and saying how beautiful she was. He is just like my dad, passed through me. I also see how Jay and Kevin are the best of friends, friendly rivals but very supportive all the time. They work together to tease their sister each April Fools Day but were absolutely crushed when her daughter, Amanda, died. They all rely on each other and enjoy each other at all of our get-togethers. Seeing this growth in children and the influence

that you have is the truly great reward of fatherhood. They give you so much more than you can ever imagine.

As Pattiann and I are pondering the courses in the Called and Gifted program and attempting to write papers about difficult subjects, perhaps I should look at the lives around me for answers. Our Father in heaven sent his Son to us as the Incarnate One, Jesus. Their love is manifest in the Holy Spirit. While the mystery of the Trinity is central to the Catholic faith, it is also difficult to fathom in its entirety. As you peel away a layer of understanding, it becomes even more deep and beautiful. As I ponder the deep and abiding love that fathers and sons enjoy, is it in a small way not a manifestation of the love of Our Father and his Son? Since we are created in God's image, would not our love for our father and our children be similar, albeit, much less complex? If this love is manifest as the Holy Spirit, how wonderful and powerful it must be. My father always loved me unconditionally; supported me at all times; and led me from behind, in front and from within. Our Father does the same to an infinite degree. He is always providing the grace for His children so that we can be happy with Him in heaven.

While my father has been deceased for 15 years, there is not a day in which I do not think about him and wish that I could only be able to talk to him, to be with him, to be held by him again. How much more wonderful is Our Father's presence? While my father guides me through the memories that he left, Our Father guides with His grace, through the Holy Spirit.

Grandfathers, Grandsons

My grandfather, Poppy, was always a very special person in my life. We were fortunate to get to visit he and Barboo every summer in Ste. Genevieve. Poppy was a quiet man, a banker, but it was obvious he adored both my brother, Rozier, and myself. He was born and raised in that little town along the banks of the Mississippi river and basically lived his entire life there. He did not show a lot of emotion about anything. Mary, his daughter and my mother, was similar in that respect. But Poppy was always so proud of us especially when he would take us on a car ride in the evening or out to dinner at the Flash. He would never get angry that I could see, even when we used the boxwood shrubs around the house as the 400 meter hurdles course.

Our visits to Ste. Genevieve were an idyllic diversion from Washington, DC. We could play in the farm fields, hike in the woods, climb trees and eat green apples. Most of the time, we were simply running and getting dirty. We got to do things that normal city kids would never experience. Poppy would always take us in his car to head out to Rocky Roost, which was the cabin that they had in the woods near Bloomsdale. Since we did not have a refrigerator but only an ice box at Rocky Roost, Poppy would stop on his way at the ice plant and pick up one or two large blocks of ice. He would then drive

like crazy for the 10 miles to Rocky Roost with the ice in the trunk. The rocket ride in the Buick was always great fun.

The other thing I remember was the large barbeque pit that he had there. In the evening he would cook ribs or steaks and corn on the cob and we would gorge ourselves as a large family around the table on the back porch. You never knew which guests might be there as well. Our extended “family” might include Vera Okenfuss, Ruth and Tuffy Howard or Joe and Ann Rozier. There was always a lot of adult talk at the table and afterward in the living room. We were always included in the discussions although mostly as listeners but I enjoyed it just the same. Poppy always treated us as adults and respected us. That was very special as a young boy growing up. The smell of a barbeque pit and the singing of the cicadas even today take me back to the summers at Rocky Roost.

We always took a trip to St. Louis when we visited. Poppy would need to visit his friends at Mercantile Bank for some banking business, and Barboo would spoil us by taking us shopping at the big stores. We would then meet for a late lunch and drive the 60 miles back to Ste. Genevieve.

I was able to continue this ritual up through my college years. It continued even when Poppy got sick with cancer. He never complained and just enjoyed having us there. I think my love of having the family around the dinner table comes from my “training” in Ste. Genevieve. The only regret that I have had about Poppy is that my wife, Pattiann, never got to meet him. He died just months before I met her.

Another grandfather that I was privileged to observe was my own dad. While Poppy was a man of few words, my dad would always teach by talking and discussing with his grandchildren. This is what he knew and it is exactly how he did it with his own sons. With the first grandchild, dad was so proud that at her baptism he held her for hours in his arms because she had fallen asleep and he did not want to wake her. His touching grace is still surfacing as Colleen, Jay and Kevin bring up even now, 15 years after his death, lessons that he taught. His grandfatherhood was marked by quiet patience as he passed on the lessons of how to pull a tooth, fold a napkin or place one's utensils on the plate when finished with dinner. He always enjoyed having any or all of his five grandchildren over to visit.

One of the special treasures that he left was a letter that he wrote to Fr. Ned Joyce at Notre Dame on behalf of Colleen when she was trying to get admitted for college. It turns out that Fr. Joyce was his cousin and that they had spent some time together playing tennis when younger. Even though Colleen did not get admitted, we were able to renew the acquaintance so that when Jay and Kevin were at Notre Dame, we did visit with Fr. Joyce and discuss our family connections. I am not sure if Grandpa Sharp was ever disappointed that his letter did not have the desired effect but he never let on if he was. His was always a positive message.

Pattiann's dad is another great example of how grandfathers should be. He always gives of himself to each of the grandchildren. It is always a practical gift, advice on how to fix some-

thing, helping with remodeling or just coming to their special occasions. I can vividly remember one of his first experiences with a grandchild. When Colleen was born and just freshly home from the hospital, Pattiann and I as new parents did not have a clue how to deal with this little package. Grandpa Dangler came and spent a week just helping us to get her to sleep, wash her and keep up the house as Pattiann recovered. What a godsend that was. Even today, a phone call can be placed at any time of the day or night to discuss an electrical or plumbing problem. He can always diagnose the situation over the phone and get the repair described and a list of the parts needed.

My own journey as a grandfather has just begun. With all the good examples, I cannot help but enjoy it. I am ecstatic about my "girls". Each is so special and at a different point in their lives. I get to practice on Madeline, improve with Hailey and perfect it with Regan. It is a special time in life because the children are raised, the career has been fulfilled and one is left with the time and wisdom to just observe and love the little ones. It is also a time in life when you have forgotten about the pure joy of living that small children bring to each day. They color the world with the brightness of the sun using every crayon at their disposal as they describe each day. No worries are in their lives yet. Fun is going to the park to swing, sitting on your lap to read or hug, or having a piece of chocolate cake. What they do not realize is that this is what is such fun for a grandfather as well.

I also have such a joy in watching my own children as they deal with the daily work of parenthood, knowing how wonderful they are and that they are doing a great job in parenting. I need to take the time to remind them of that as they deal with the inevitable frustrations.

All too soon the little girls will be going to school, getting involved in other things and just being busy. I hope that they always have some time to sit with their grandfather and keep him young.

Add stuff about Jay and Kevin as grandsons

Life Long Friends

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter; he who finds one finds a treasure.

A faithful friend is beyond price, no sum can balance his worth.

A faithful friend is a life-saving remedy, such as he who fears God finds;

For he who fears God behaves accordingly, and his friend will be like himself.

Sirach 6:14-17

This is a wonderful excerpt from scripture that describes best friends. My first model of life long friends was the couple that I grew up with. Mom and dad were married for 46 years and I think that the quote from Sirach goes a long way to describe them. They were 3rd cousins, husband and wife but most of all, best friends. I have described them as individuals in some of the earlier stories but it was their friendship that perhaps was most striking to the outside world. Even today when I get a card from one of their old friends at Christmas, they are spo-

ken of as a couple not as individuals. They seemed to do everything together.

Perhaps the most important thing is that they raised their sons together. I never remember ever being able to play one off on the other. I am not sure that I even tried since I always heard one voice. What it made for was a loving, consistent family that always put our relationships first. It was never about us as individuals but us as family. We were in scouts together, played golf together, and went to Ste. Genevieve together.

I also remember them at dinner, spending what seemed like hours talking, after the meal was over. I never knew what they had to discuss but they seemed to enjoy the time. I imagine that dad was unloading his day at work and mom talking about the frustrations of the day at home. It did not make any difference because it seemed to work for them.

Dad traveled a lot at times and mom would always seem to go to the airport with us to meet him. Rozier and I would get to see the airplanes and mom would get to see dad an extra hour that night. I do not ever go to the Washington airport that it does not bring back those memories. To this day airplanes also give me a warm, family feeling.

After Rozier and I had moved out to start our own families, mom and dad continued to enjoy each other in St. Louis, St. Genevieve, Bermuda, Vail or wherever. They did what good friends do, they just hung out together. What they were doing did not matter, just who they were doing it with. As with all

friends, I am sure that they did not always agree on how things should go but those points of conflict simply case hardened their friendship.

Pattiann and I have had the pleasure of a similar deep friendship throughout our almost 40 years together. It probably started at our first lunch together in Alma, Michigan. But I know that it was expressed in all the letters that we wrote and telephone calls we made from Pasadena to Indianapolis. Being that our families were in Indianapolis and St. Louis, we spent a lot of time while dating traveling back and forth. That was a time when we would just talk for 4 hours straight. Our hopes and aspirations were discussed and refined during these trips so that we just knew each others dreams.

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?

Ecclesiastes 4: 9-11

After the children were born, we could still keep our traveling discussions going. For a number of years, we would pack up the children on Friday night and head to the lake cottage. The kids would go to sleep and we could talk all the way up and then all the way home on Sunday evening. It was always a good time to unload frustrations, talk through issues, plan for the week and solve the world's problems. The only topic that was usually off the table was politics. Last Christmas we got

the chance to have a marathon discussion as we drove to Florida and back. What a glorious time! Even though I am very introverted, my mouth will motor with the best of them when I am with my friend.

This habit of constant discussion has been one of our family traits. If one is invited to our dinner table, they will probably find several conversations going on at once. Now all of the children and their children can join in the fun. There is a lot of laughter and light-hearted banter but always love shared through conversation. I feel sorry for Anna, Patti, and Gerard at times but they have begun to understand the Sharps now.

As mentioned in the quote from Ecclesiastes, friends are there to help you up when you fall. Pattiann has done that so many times for me. I am not sure why she is not tired of the lifting. There are some big times, like when I was nervous about changing jobs, the closing of Dexter, and numerous little times that she does not even realize. Mostly it is just a kind word of encouragement that does it or just a calm voice in the chaos of the situation. I only hope that I have reciprocated that help in her times of need. The main thing is that she is always there for me to prop me up, to encourage and sometimes to spur me on to greater things than I thought possible. That is a great and loving friend.

We know each others thoughts; can order for each other at any restaurant; and just need to be in a room together quietly to enjoy the time. We are now exploring each others spirituality through our journey in Called and Gifted. That gives me

an entire new dimension to learn about my best friend. This is such a great time to be alive.

Our next challenge is to expand our life in retirement. Since this has not occurred yet, I am not sure how that will play out but it appears to be an adventure on the horizon that we will share together. I hope that I can write an expose on that in a few years with such loving memories as has been our past.

And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place.

While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. "But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened.

"But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther.

But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?"

Luke 24:13-32

I only hope that on our road to Emmaus, Pattiann and I walk with Jesus and have our eyes opened as did these two friends.

Mothers, Wives, Daughters

One of the true pleasures of being a son, husband and father is the interaction that we have with the women in our lives. This begins with the love that we receive from our mothers. They are our first caregivers and teach us how to be gentle by their touch and soft voices.

I do not remember much of my early years except through old family pictures that I inherited when my mother passed away. Maybe this is an indication of how effective mother was in her teaching. She was always quiet and gentle even when she was correcting us. Mother came from a family of girls which was dominated in her early days by her maternal grandmother, who was always called “Grandmother”. In many ways, mother was just like her. Mom however never had the privilege of raising daughters but she was a master with her sons. She always told us stories of her childhood, her high school years at Villa Duchesne, and her college years at Trinity College. I still remember each of them to this day and have been able to keep her in my memory through those stories.

As we moved to Silver Spring, Maryland, and began to grow, mom became our Cub Scout leader. All my friends in the neighborhood were in our Cub den. Mom could handle them

all and always kept us busy with some sort of craft adventure. She could get more out of tin cans, string and turkey feathers than anyone I ever knew. I think one of her proudest moments was when our den, which had been working on the Parvuli Dei religious award, was selected to lead the Archdiocesan parade into St. Matthew’s cathedral because we had the most awards for any den in the Washington area. She loved all the boys and many years later when John Bowers was killed in Viet Nam, mom could not go to the funeral. It was too close and too personal. He was like her son as were all the cubs.

Mom was best at teaching us to be independent. I was never very adventuresome as a little boy but I also never had a problem with being home sick when I would go to scout camp; when I left Silver Spring for South Bend, Indiana or when I left to head out to Pasadena for graduate school. In fact when I left for college, I never really moved back home again. If mom was sad over either my brother or me leaving, she never showed that to us. When her father got sick in 1965, mom was confident enough in “her men” to leave us on our own for almost the entire summer as she helped out my grandmother caring for Poppy.

In the spring of 1966, my world got turned upside down in the little town of Alma, Michigan. I had gone to an American Chemical Society Student Affiliates convention and at dinner the most beautiful girl I had ever seen sat down at our table. In many ways, it was pure fate that we were put together. Her group had come into the dinner banquet somewhat late and

had to split up to find seats. She sat down next to me. As it turned out, we hung out together the next day at the talks and I asked her to accompany Terry O'Brien and myself to lunch at some fast food drive-in. I had a new car and she told me later that it was impressive. I also bought her lunch which I think impressed her as well. My mother had always taught me to pay for a girl's lunch. That was the gentlemanly thing to do. As it turns out, it was the most expensive lunch that I have ever had since it has lasted 39 years. When we said goodbye, I was not sure if I would ever see her again but I did get her name and address.

I asked Pattiann to come to Notre Dame later in the spring to attend my senior prom, when they were still popular in college. To my great pleasure she accepted and, after coming up with some friends, we had a great time. I was able to drive her home to Indianapolis and meet her family. As I learned later, her grandmother was the reason that we even got to see each other again because she was the only one who could persuade Pattiann's mother to allow her to come to ND. It is not surprising to me that Grandma Keating saw the benefit in being adventuresome since she, as a young girl, traveled from Ireland to the United States to start a new life with only \$21 in her pocket. She helped found a wonderful, warm family in Indianapolis that I met that day and of which I have become a part. I will always be thankful for her wisdom and keep her constantly in my prayers.

Pattiann came up for my graduation and got to meet my family which was a pleasure for me. My entire family knew some-

thing was more serious about this young woman. In fact on that weekend, she and I decided that we wanted to spend our lives together but it took us two more years to get engaged and married. What I saw in her was a fire to get things accomplished; a passion for loving; and an outgoing, fun personality. In many ways she complimented my quiet, more reserved nature. She also shared the values of family and church that I had. I truly feel that it was a miracle that God allowed us to meet on that fateful day in April 1966 in Alma, Michigan.

Pattiann and I were married in June, 1968 with both families enjoying the festivities. Two things followed immediately. Her beloved Grandma Keating passed away a week later. We were lucky to be able to make it back from our honeymoon to be there in time. About a week after that, we move to Southern California to begin graduate school for her and complete school for myself. It was difficult for her since it was the first time away from home. However we both look back fondly of our time there and feel that it helped us grow together being on our own. We both thought that we knew everything but as we look back we were so naïve.

Our lives have now traversed the entire country, living in Pasadena, South Bend, Indianapolis, Doylestown and finally Libertyville. As all married couples, we had our ups and downs, more ups than downs however. We always persevered, gave up things for the other, and laughed at ourselves. We are the best of friends and truly enjoy just being together. Pattiann has always challenged me to get the best out of me; in many ways how my mother did but with a different flair. She would

critique my decisions in a loving way, and always support me when I needed it. This was always evident when we were working with the children. I know that this is why we have raised such wonderful, loving children who are independent and mature. At the present, Pattiann and I are part of the Lay Ministry formation program and will use this as a platform to improve our relationship with God and each other. We both believe that this is where God is calling us to go as we move toward retirement in 2006.

My life was turned upside down again in 1971, with the birth of our first child, a daughter. As with all married couples, the first child is a challenge. You never know what to expect or how you react. I came from a family where we were not around babies that I can remember. I also came from a family with only boys and so a little baby girl was a double mystery. Pattiann and I had discussed various names but had not settled on one when she was born. I just remember coming to the hospital and having Pattiann say that her name was to be Colleen Therese. It was a perfect name but to this day I am not sure where it came from. We had never discussed that combination before.

As I said before, I am always amazed that the first-born survives with new parents. We had to learn what each cry meant, when she was comfortable and when not. The boys were so much easier because Colleen was the experiment. They knew the boundaries because she tested them. I loved each of the children equally and unconditionally but she was the only girl.

I always knew how boys grew up, but it was marvelous to see how a girl grew.

There are several things that I especially remember. The science fair projects with fruit flies were great fun as long as the flies did not escape in the house. I also enjoyed going to Marquette, helping her study for the dreaded organic chemistry exam and buying that new dress to impress her boyfriend, Gerard. Waiting for her brothers to pull some April Fools joke is a yearly exercise. She loves them so much that she gets sucked in every year. Her enthusiasm with everything is contagious, whether it is sports, shopping or scrapbooking. The night she came home with a ring on her finger, I will never forget. She was going to be Gerard's wife, but always my little girl.

Now she has her own little girl, in fact, two of them, Madeline and Hailey. I equally enjoy seeing her working with them, carrying them, being frustrated at times, as we were, but always loving them unconditionally. The best part is having new little girls that love to jump on your lap, talk to you and urge you on to be better. That is what life is about.

Even with the tragedy of losing, her second daughter, Amanda, Colleen has carried on with the same resolve as her mother and grandmother. While I can never imagine the hurt that Colleen and Gerard must have with what they have gone through, I know that Amanda is totally happy in heaven. We will all have to continue to trust in our faith and trust in God even when things get dark at times. That is a lesson that my

own mother taught me and I think that it has been passed on to her granddaughter.

I have tried to show some of the ways that these remarkable women, all four generations, have enriched my life, through their love for me, their total trust in me and their challenges to make me a better, son, husband, father and grandfather.

Agape, Eros, Whatever

As I was reading an article about love, I was called to contemplate how I see love and what it is to me. Three of the terms in Greek for love are agape, eros and philia. In the Theological Dictionary, eros is the love that leads to self fulfillment. This is the term that Ronald Rolheiser uses in his discussions of spirituality. It is the fire that burns in each of us. It is the thing that drives us. According to Rolheiser, it is what I do with my eros that determines spirituality. Eros is what drives me to accomplishment; what is my passion; and what attracts me to another in a very human, sexual way. It is very inward directed.

Agape is the love talked about in the gospels, especially St. John. It is the selfless love that God shows to us and that we are challenged to show to our neighbors. I think that this is very difficult to really understand and live. It is loving someone who does not outwardly show you love back or, in the case of God, is somewhat difficult for me to really understand. It is the love that I should strive for in my life but is certainly difficult for me.

Philia is the love of good friends and family. It is the love expressed in a hug. It is the acknowledgement of wanting to be

with someone, to be glad to see them, or to be sorry that they are leaving. It is reciprocal and apparent. It is tangible.

This is all very academic however and really does not describe how love affects me. The primary love in my life is for my wife, Pattiann. I would contend that my love for her is a combination of all three of the above descriptions and yet none of them really describes it well. So much has been written about love, what it is and how one “falls in love”, but it is really just such an individual experience. The term “falling in love” indicates an accidental aspect to love and I think that is true.

As I describe what it is for me, I think the essential nature of love is part eros. I am attracted to someone. They become my passion. They make me feel good. I want to be with them because I enjoy them. But the real door opens when I realize that it is mutual and reciprocal. It was that moment for me when Pattiann said that she did not want to leave after graduation. This is the philia part. That is when the euphoria set in for me. This is when I realized that I was to have a new life with Pattiann.

Matthew 19:5

'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife

But there is an agape part as well, because in saying yes to love, I also said yes to a totally selfless part. This was there at the beginning but it is the part that does the most to develop

or grow. It is the part that says let me take your burdens on my shoulders.

Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for your selves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light."

This is the part that counterbalances the eros or selfish type of love. In that respect, it is what gives me the spirituality in my life through Pattiann. It is one way that she leads me to God and, I hope, I lead her to God.

So in the title, "Whatever" is sort of a cynical way to say that terms like agape, eros and philia really do not do justice to what it means to love my wife. It is much more complicated. It is a hybrid and its nature shows up differently at different times. It is not accidental. It is hard work. It must be nurtured and watered to continue to grow.

Daily Mass

My first experience with attending daily mass came about because of my being an altar boy in 5th grade. The mass was still in Latin and was usually celebrated each morning in the little chapel at St. Bernadette's. Even though we only lived a couple of blocks from church, dad would drive me there or we would walk together. It is funny but what I remember most is the smell of the chapel. It was a combination of candles burning, leftover incense and just the old building. But I also remember the warmth of having dad accompany me. He was always so proud of my being a server and would let me know that on our ride or walk to church.

Matthew 26: 26-28

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and giving it to his disciples said, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.

As I got older, I remember that my father started going to daily mass before heading to work. I think that this continued after I left for Notre Dame in 1962. Dad was never overly demonstrative about this but I do remember him going. I would accompany him occasionally. Many times he would be the server for Fr. Stricker when the altar boys did not show up.

When I was at Notre Dame, I would go to daily mass when I was feeling stressed or needed to pray for something. I found the Basilica was really a special place for me. I could pray for exams, for courage, for my family and that I would find someone to spend my life with. These prayers always seemed to be answered as I was always so blessed. I have always felt closest to God in that Basilica when it was quiet. Even when things were hectic in my life, I would feel the warmth of God's love in that church. Even today I have that same feeling.

While I was always at mass on the weekends during my life I did not attend daily except on special occasions. About fifteen years ago, I felt called to start going to daily mass again. I think that I may have been going through a stressful time with work, or worrying about the family. I cannot quite remember but I know that I was called to do it. For the first several years, I would go alone but then Pattiann started to go with me. There were days when I just did not want to drag myself there but I usually went anyway. Now I would not miss it for anything. Pattiann and I have been starting our days with mass for over ten years.

What does this mean to me? I find that my understanding of the mass and its significance has changed over this time. When I was at Notre Dame, daily mass was a time to be alone with God. Now I see daily mass to be a community celebration. I like to feel connected to all of those there, the priest as well as the parishioners and visitors. This is similar to a family meal that we might have at our house. Everyone is around the table, sharing stories of our past and eating together. As the children get more mature, they are better able to share in the conversation. This does not mean that the children are left out of the love that is shared, just that they share in it at a different level when they grow up.

I have found recently that I have begun to enjoy the sharing of the word in daily mass more now since I have taken our Old Testament and New Testament course. Perhaps I have a better contextual understanding than in the past and I also realize how much I was missing without this background knowledge.

Luke 24: 29-32

But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight. Then they said to each

other, "Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?"

1 Corinthians 11: 23-29

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.

Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. A person should examine himself, and so eat the bread and drink the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

I am also deepening my understanding of the liturgy of the Eucharist with the classes that I am taking. This is a mystery that I am working on to achieve a better understanding. I do know that I have a much deeper respect for the times that I

am a Eucharistic minister and how I am privileged to be able to serve the community in this capacity.

I expect that Pattiann and I will continue to share this time together in the mornings and that I will be able to better understand the deep mystery that I am experiencing.

For the Granddaughters

Dear Madeline, Hailey, Regan, and Ellen,

When Nana was on a retreat she listened to a song that made me think a lot of each of you and how you will be when you grow up. You all have the world ahead of you and will be given many choices and opportunities as you change from a little girl to a grown woman. To me this song relates to that growing up process. As young ladies, you will be challenged by the boys both physically and mentally. Always remember that God gives you a free will to choose your own path. Do not ever forget that He will show you the way if you listen to him.

Always stay close to your daddies. They will show you how to love and will be your first love. Even when they put up boundaries for you they do so out of love. You will understand that some day when you get older yourselves. Your mommies will be your role models. They have fought some of the same battles that you will face. How do you balance life as a woman and a mom? Ask your mommy. How do you compete with boys academically? Ask mommy. If they have made any mistakes along the way, they can guide you to avoid them.

You also can look at Nana and the stories of Grandma Sharp. Both of them accomplished a lot in life in a time that was more difficult for women. They lived in a way that they influ-

enced a lot of people and showed their love by working for others. I have written some stories about their lives and you will be able to read them some day to better understand them.

You each have been blessed with a wonderful mind and a soul which is in the image of God. You should develop those to the best of your ability. That way you will never have any regrets about your choices as you get older. Ask mommy and daddy for advice if necessary if the choices get tough.

I am looking forward to your maturation into women. I hope that I can see that for each of you but I do not know what God has in store for me. I do know that you are in good hands and those that love you unconditionally will always be there for you to help. Read the words of the song that I have included below and think about what they mean to you. Remember that the song reminds me of each of you and every time I play it, I get tears in my eyes thinking about you.

All my love, Papa

I Hope You Dance

Lee Ann Womack

*I hope you never lose your sense of wonder
You get your fill to eat
But always keep that hunger
May you never take one single breath for granted
God forbid love ever leave you empty handed*

*I hope you still feel small, when you stand beside the ocean
Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens
Promise me that you'll give faith the fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance*

*I hope you dance
I hope you dance*

*I hope you never fear those mountains in the distance
Never settle for the path of least resistance
Livin' might mean takin' chances, but they're worth takin'
Lovin' might be a mistake, but it's worth makin'*

*Don't let some hell bent heart leave you bitter
When you come close to selling out, reconsider
Give the heavens above more than just a passing glance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance*

*I hope you dance
(Time is a wheel in constant motion)*

*I hope you dance
(Always rolling us along)
I hope you dance
(Tell me who)
I hope you dance
(Wants to look back on their years and wonder)
I hope you dance
(Where those years have gone)*

*I hope you still feel small, when you stand beside the ocean
Whenever one door closes, I hope one more opens
Promise me that you'll give faith a fighting chance
And when you get the choice to sit it out or dance*

*Dance
I hope you dance
I hope you dance
(Time is a wheel in constant motion)
I hope you dance
(Always rolling us along)
I hope you dance
(Tell me who)
I hope you dance
(Wants to look back on their years and wonder)
I hope you dance
(Where those years have gone)
(Tell me who)
(Wants to look back on their years and wonder)
(Where those years have gone)*

Eucharist of Life

Insights by Ronald Rolheiser on the Eucharist, reminded me of a story about Madeline during a mass of remembrance at St. Joseph for those who had lost children during the last year. This was the first one that our family went to after losing our dear Amanda. As you can imagine, those liturgies are rather somber, tense affairs since almost all of the attendees are mourning the loss of children either recently or further in the past. There are a lot of tears shed in silence as the priest celebrates the Eucharist. It was being held in the Koenig Center. Rather early in the mass, Madeline indicated to her mother that she needed to go to the bathroom. Grandma Nichol took her out immediately since she was being potty trained and we did not want an accident. On walking back into the mass, Madeline announced proudly so that everyone could hear, "Mommy, I went potty." You could immediately feel the tension go out of the group as they all realized that this was a celebration even though it was a celebration of lives passed. That little girl without knowing it transformed the entire congregation.

As Rolheiser indicates, we come to the Eucharist from where we are at in life to be fed. We are not always happy and joyful when we are fed. Sometimes our lives are more difficult than

that. But we should pray as we are. We should celebrate our joys, our sorrows, our despairs, our woundedness, our boredom and our tiredness. This is hard for me because at times I feel sorry for myself. I want to get something from the mass to feel uplifted. But I should heed the words of Rolheiser and give it all to God. Then He will give me what I need, not what I think that I need.

How often do I come home from work, tired and lethargic, only to be revived by a quiet meal with my family? Somewhere in the nourishment of the food and the conversation, I am revived and renewed. How much more do I get from the Eucharist, if I stop focusing on myself and focus on Jesus? I can look at the risen Jesus on the wall at St. Joseph and concentrate on His open arms. He appears to be welcoming me with a big hug. Even if I am feeling downtrodden, sinful, confused, or alone, His arms are still open wide. That is so comforting to me. If I can concentrate on that, it has the power to transform me just as Madeline's words, with their delight, transformed the congregation at that mass of remembrance.

God's Children

Children figure prominently in many of the stories and parables presented in scripture. As a parent and grandparent, it is easy to identify with those stories. The passages from Matthew shown below are also present in Mark and Luke's accounts. Obviously they must have made a big impact on the authors. Jesus seems to be indicating to his audience that we all need to be like children in our faith and trust of God. And if we are so, then the kingdom of God will be ours.

Matthew 19:13-14

Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked them, but Jesus said, "Let the children come to me, and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 18:2-6

He called a child over, placed it in their midst, and said, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me."

"Whoever causes one of these little ones, who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

The passages below from Proverbs are more statements of wisdom for parents and indicate how an adult must be a protector of children. I have touched on the duties of being a father and grandfather in some earlier writings, but I think these verses also touch on the profound obligation that adults and parents, in particular, have in protecting children from harm. Matthew in the second quote above indicates this as well. That is why crimes against children are particularly heinous and especially if committed by the parents.

Proverbs 17:6

Grandchildren are the crown of old men, and the glory of children is their parentage.

Proverbs 20:7

When a man walks in integrity and justice, happy are his children after him!

Proverbs 14:26

In the fear of the LORD is a strong defense; even for one's children he will be a refuge

What I would like to reflect on however, is the lessons that I have learned from each of my children and grandchildren that will enable me to be more “childlike”; and hopefully more like what Jesus says we should strive for to enter His kingdom. While my own children are now grown, I think they were teaching me from the time that they were younger.

Colleen has shown me how to be trusting but also very brave. From the time that she was just an infant she showed me how to be trusting. As her daddy, I saw her look to me for guidance and she would always follow that guidance with the utmost trust. I see that same trust even today as she works with Gerard to raise her family. She totally trusts him just like she trusted me.

I have also seen her be so very brave. As a young woman, she bravely headed off to Woodlands Academy when all of her friends from grade school were going to Carmel or Libertyville. Even though there were times when she missed them and thought about what it might be like to be at those other schools, she bravely stuck it out. That also helped her when she started her college career at Marquette. After the summer disappointment of not being accepted to Notre Dame and the end of freshman orientation, I remember her heading back on to campus without looking back to see us leaving in the car. I am sure that she cried a lot as did her mother on the way back to Libertyville, but she forged on and completed her difficult studies in chemistry.

When she was about 15, Pattiann and I had left her in charge of the boys and the house for a day, as we went to a Notre Dame football game at Purdue. Afterwards, we went to Pattiann’s sister’s house and, while there, got a call from Colleen. She said that someone was digging up our front yard and had cut the gas pipe. They had to complete the repair and then come into the house to relight the pilot lights in the furnace and hot water heater. Colleen was trusting enough and brave enough to handle that and she called after it was complete.

Her bravest time was on that fateful day when Amanda was born. I have written about that on several occasions but will always remember how brave she was to handle the tragedy. She will always be my hero for that.

Jay has shown me how to be enthusiastic and aggressive. By aggressive, I mean this in the good sense of the word. Know what you want to accomplish and go get it. He wanted to learn how to read so he just did it at 3 years old. He wanted to play the piano like his sister so he just taught himself until we gave him lessons. Jay was always interested in playing sports and more than made up for his small stature when he was growing up by his enthusiasm and aggressiveness. I always felt that he could have played one on one basketball against Michael Jordan and thought that he would win.

His greatest gift to me is our time together to discuss sports at Notre Dame, his medical adventures, or his world travel. He always uplifts my spirit and paints a wonderful picture with his stories. If I am ever sad, I just need to talk to Jay. Think

about the times he tried out for the Libertyville swim team, climbed Mt Rainier or visited the Sahara. What a gift that was!

Kevin has a wonderful sense of humor but is always so sensitive as to how others feel. He can think up the funniest sayings to go with any occasion and is always sending me a silly card or wonderful picture. His adventures with the pep band at Carmel, his movie adventures at Jewel, or his April 1 stories for Colleen. There are so many occasions when I say, "How does he think of that?" Having shared similar work experiences, I enjoy his stories.

I am also amazed how sensitive he is to the feelings of others. He adores Patti and Regan and is very in touch with their needs. I see a lot of my father in him, in that respect. But he is also so thoughtful of others and sensitive to their needs as well, whether it was another student or a homeless person at the shelter. I saw that when he was just a little guy. He was our "lap baby", always wanting to cuddle.

Madeline is our first grandchild and while that will always be special, what she shows me is her energy and leadership. Her energy allows her to talk non stop, or to always want to do something like play in the yard or read. That keeps me young but I have to admit that I am sometime exhausted just trying to keep up. If I am a little lethargic however, she can always pep me up. I think that I see a natural leader in the way she interacts with other children. She is at the front, bringing oth-

ers along with her. I know that she can capitalize on that as she grows up and expands her friends.

Hailey will always be the one that filled the void that was so painful in our lives. Her special gifts to me are her loving attitude and her adventurous nature. Since she has begun talking she always says "Hi, Papa" when she sees me. She also will come running with open arms to kiss me, and hug me. That is always so sweet. Ever since she began crawling and now that she can walk, she gets that devilish gleam in her eye as she heads up the stairs or gets into the drawer to bring out the Chap Stick. She can climb anything and never seems to take a back seat to her older sister. With the announcement that "Hailey, do it" off she goes.

The first thing I notice about Regan is her big eyes. They follow you everywhere and convey a sense of wonder about all that she looks at. She was our Christmas blizzard surprise last year and we were so glad to have her in our family. I am looking forward to how she will progress as she begins to walk and talk. Her mommy and daddy are most wonderful to her and I know that she will be the star of St. Paul, Minnesota every time she visits there.

Amanda will always be a special gift to me. She taught me how to be loved. I was so fortunate to get to know her during her brief stay with us; and even though she did not know us, because she was so sick, she touched us none the same.

What I have tried to show is that each of the children, no matter how old or young have taught me how to be childlike. I

have learned to trust, to be brave, to be loved and to be loving. They bring me enthusiasm, bravery, a sense of humor and a sense of wonder. I get my energy, adventurous spirit and sensitivity from them. They have demonstrated to me how to be a child of God so that I can be closer to Jesus as I grow older. I thank them all for that.

I Saw a Miracle Last Night

After the end of the women's CRHP retreat in January, I was fortunate enough to hear my daughter read her witness talk to the family. This was a special gift that she gave to me. I got an insight into how she has grown into a woman and the influence that her parents had on that growth.

The real miracle however was what I heard in the witness. If a miracle is defined as a moment when God is seen as active in life then this evening meets that definition. The part of the witness where she is talking about Gerard and how he had always supported her was a manifestation of how God gave them to each other. Sometimes it is difficult to see that in each other amid the business that is living together and raising children. I was able to see that in her story about meeting him and the recovery of feeling so lost after losing Amanda. God was active in that recovery even though they felt that He had abandoned them. He was carrying them without them knowing it at the time.

The story of the baby picture in the doctor's office was God touching her, easing her anxiety. Colleen recognized that as well. When Hailey was born on the day before Amanda's first birthday, we all realized how our Savior had saved us from being so very lonely. He has continued to support Colleen and I

think that she now realizes how truly loved she is by God. That came out in her talk.

The other interesting thing was that Colleen was reading the story to Gerard, Pattiann, Jay, Anna and me. These were exactly the same people that shared in the day of Amanda's life. I saw in their faces the same impact that the witness had on me. I heard God speaking to me through Colleen. What a gift it was.

God held Colleen in his arms; God gave her Gerard; God touched her in the picture; God gave her Hailey; God acted in my life through her witness talk. That is the true miracle of last night.

Amanda

My Dearest Amanda

While I have on several occasions told the story of our short life together, I need to let you know more of how your life was a gift to me. When Nana called me that morning as I was trying to retrieve her sweater from the bridge hall, she was in total panic. That really scared me. I only knew a little about how you and your mommy were doing but luckily I was close to the hospital and I drove as fast as I could go to get there.

I could see you in the nursery with your daddy watching over you. You looked serene but it was obvious that you were sick because you had a lot of tubes and monitors hooked up to you. I went in to see your mommy and she was fine. She then said something to me that crushed my heart but made her my hero for life. She said that she was fine but that she did not think that you would make it. What a brave mommy you have!

When Nana, Aunt Katie and your sister Madeline arrived, we all talked to your daddy and mommy and said our prayers for you. The doctors were working very hard to help you but they just could not do any more. Finally they decided to send you to another hospital where Aunt Anna worked. Some of Anna's nice friends came up in an ambulance to pick you up and bring you down to Children's Hospital.

I was so worried that you would be scared. So I drove down to Aunt Anna's hospital to be there when you arrived. I had called Uncle Jay who was working at Loyola University hospital and he had come right over. When I saw him, he also said something that crushed me as well. He said that you were very sick and it did not look good. He is a doctor and he knows. I sat outside by myself waiting for you to arrive and thought about you. I imagined what it would be like if you survived. I knew it would be very hard for mommy and daddy to take care of you because you had stopped breathing for so long. I was really torn between wanting you to live and wanting you to be in peace. I am still very disappointed in myself that I did not have enough faith.

I called Uncle Kevin, Aunt Patti, Uncle Rozier, Aunt Jane and Great Grandma and Grandpa to tell them about you. They were all praying that you would get better.

When you arrived, the nice nurses said that you really liked the ride. Your mommy always liked to ride in the car when she was a baby. Aunt Anna and her friends were there to greet you and took you up to the room for very sick little babies. The doctors and nurses were so good and tried to make you comfortable. Uncle Jay was looking up on the computer to see if he could tell why you were so sick. We got to see you in the room and you seemed very quiet. I guess you were just sleeping. The nurses asked if I wanted you baptized and I said yes. I think you were baptized three times that day by different people.

You seemed to be doing okay so Uncle Jay, Aunt Anna and Papa went to have some dinner. While we were there, I still could not help to think what it would be like for you to live and when you might get out of the hospital. I just needed more faith. We heard that your daddy was coming down to the hospital to see you again and we were waiting for him. Uncle Jay got a phone call in the restaurant from your doctor saying that your heart had stopped again so Jay told the doctor to give you a shot to start it again and we ran down the street back to the hospital.

When we got there Uncle Jay went in with you and tried to help. I just said my prayers, but I was sick in my heart. After a few minutes, Uncle Jay came out crying saying that you were gone. I have never seen him cry and he works with sick people all the time. Your daddy arrived just a few minutes later and we told him. We were all so sad. I did get to hold you and kiss you and will always remember that. Your sisters would have loved to hold you as well.

You made the decisions for us. You chose to be at peace; and while it is difficult for all of us to give you up, I think you showed us your love. I will never forget you and I know that you are totally happy now. I hope that I have enough faith to know that I will see you again when I get to heaven. Sometimes my faith is not as strong as I would like but I will continue to try harder.

I only knew you for seven hours, but it was very special. I have never had a gift as wonderful as that. You showed me

that you can give love by just being loved. That is the great gift that you gave me.

Love, Papa

Gentle and Courageous

The Man

I do not know as much as I would like of the early life of the man, but his influence was profound on me in his adult life. As best as I know he came from a modest background, liked the outdoors and sports. Many of his stories were about hunting with his father and brother. That always seemed strange to me, because he did not hunt while I knew him and in many ways it seemed out of character to his gentleness. I can only surmise that the enjoyment was being in the outdoors and the companionship not the actual hunting. I base this on his enjoyment of being with his sons on camping trips, fishing on the Outer Banks and going to Douthat State Park for summer vacations. He instilled in me his love for the outdoors and I firmly believe headed me to a lifetime pursuit of scientific endeavors.

He taught me how to row a boat, fly a kite, play golf, and to be a father. While I cherish the outdoor learning, the most profound lessons were taught in the quiet of the evening. Many times as he would tuck me in, he would go over the day's lessons telling me that this is how a father does it and while I may not understand at that moment, I would when I was a father. He was always correct in that, as I have learned over the

years. The focus of the lesson was always that a father would give anything to see that his children were satisfied, even the food off his plate. The gentleness was what came through in all the lessons. This was a picture of how God must treat his children.

It was obvious that he cherished his wife and children and he always reminded us how privileged we were and that we should never take that for granted or take advantage of our place. His job, when I was growing up, was such that he worked at the Supreme Court, visited on occasion Capitol Hill, and even went to parties at the White House. But when entertaining important judges or officials, it was done many times at our house. His sons even got to be the bartenders on those evenings. I remember being taught how to throw a curve ball from Judge Frank Johnson from Alabama. He was the judge that was influential in some of the civil rights decisions in the south. I never could throw a curve ball however.

He treated each of his sons as an individual, challenging us to our abilities and pushing us gently along. With me the challenge was more mental. He would always have me do a quiz if it appeared in the paper. Could I beat him? I always did or at least he indicated that I did. I always felt a winner.

He continued to clip out articles from the newspaper and send them to me until almost the day he died. He would discuss the workings of the government, and indicate which things were particularly historic or notable. He understood our interests and used them to strengthen us. With my brother, it was

more of a physical challenge in the form of sports. He always brought out his best as well. This characteristic also included our wives and children. He could be the proverbial devil's advocate on a political question but always as a way of teaching us to be critical thinkers. These lessons were always geared to our abilities, interests and levels. My children still fondly remember him for his instructions on how to fold a napkin at the dinner table or how to place the utensils properly to indicate that one was finished eating.

He taught my brother, my mother and I to play golf and was truly delighted when we could beat him. Some of my fondest memories were of playing in Father/Son golf tournaments at Brooke Manor, the District tournament or the Middle Atlantic tournament. If he won a golf match with me, he was always encouraging me and if he lost he was delighted that I beat him. The only time that I remember him truly beating me with relish was when, at about 60 years old, he played tennis against my brother and I and pounded us into the court. He had been an outstanding tennis player in his high school and college days and I think there was no way he could make us look good. He was just that good himself.

He treated my mother with the utmost respect. He showed this by how respectful he was of her parents. They were as much his parents as they were hers. He always deferred to her. One of my clearest memories is that every evening, they would dismiss us from the table after dinner and then discuss the day for what seemed like hours together. He would then do the dishes. I remember him mentioning one time, when I

asked why he did the dishes, that he promised her that if she gave baths to the babies then he would do the dishes for the rest of his life. I think that he lived up to that promise. Is this not the characteristics of a gentle man?

While he was most notable for his gentleness, there was a courageous side as well. He did not serve in the armed forces during the war even though he tried to enlist. He used to joke that he had a heart murmur and could not get in even in a time when they were taking men even if they were warm. He served in the civil defense and was working for the government in Washington. I almost feel that God knew his gentleness was a gift to be passed on and He did not want to jeopardize it.

While I only know the story of Boonville by word of mouth and a couple of newspaper clippings, it was obviously a trying time for him. He was, at the time, the head of the Missouri prison system and was charged with cleaning up a scandal at the Boonville prison. For some reason, an argument in the media ensued between himself and the governor concerning the directions of the investigation. Eventually, he very publicly resigned over the situation, reminding me of the Elliot Richardson incident with President Nixon. I am certain that it was not as serious as that but it was courageous to resign a position based on his integrity. At the time he did not have another job and he had two small sons and a wife. About 20 years later, he made another courageous decision to retire from the job he held for most of that time in Washington and enroll in graduate school at St. Louis University. He had the

thoughtfulness to fly to South Bend to tell me his decision over dinner in the Morris Inn at Notre Dame rather than just calling or sending a letter. He wanted it to be in person.

There were several fun years at St. Louis, being “rushed” by my brother’s fraternity, going to class with younger students and getting back into books. He was remembered for his wisdom and courage by Mike Klestinski, one of his classmates at that time. I have gotten to know Mike through my years at St. Joseph parish in Libertyville. It is interesting to see him as his friends saw him. I have kept up the communications with several of his friends through Christmas cards after his death. Merrill Smith, Gracie Woodburn and Ed Barrett, to mention just a few, always had nothing but the highest praise for him. He left his mark on others outside of his family. He treated his friends as he did his family and he treated his family as his friends.

His gentleness and dedication continued during the last years of his life. While my mother was dealing with her heart disease, he continued to care for her, moving her to a condominium that made it easier for them to live and finally deciding to move together to a nursing facility after he said that he just couldn’t take care of her anymore. He was suffering from lung cancer that would take him just one week after the move. He never complained and just said that he was not feeling too well when I talked to him the night before he died.

The Woman

I know much more of her early life since I was privileged to have known her parents and to have visited her hometown many times during my life and hers. She was born into more privilege than he and thus had many advantages. One might expect then that she would have been soft and gentle. But while she was these, especially with her granddaughters, her most distinguishing feature was her courage and toughness. She was born and raised in a family of sisters in Ste. Genevieve, Missouri in a large family house. Many of her early stories were dominated with discussions of the influence of Grandmother Rozier. While I never new Grandmother Rozier, I imagine that she must have been very much like my mother, strong and competent. Mary was always very serious like her father, but never made you feel inferior or less of a person.

She was active in Girl Scouts and was sent to Villa Duchesne, a boarding school in St. Louis for high school. She had many wonderful stories of her life there and maintained contact with many friends even when she moved away after school. She easily reestablished those friendships when moving back to St. Louis 25 years later. The stories of the special features of a Sacred Heart education, she shared with her sons and many of them I recalled when my own daughter had the privilege of receiving a Sacred Heart education. I believe that it secretly delighted my mother to have that connection with my daughter.

After high school, she, courageously, moved to Washington to attend Trinity College where she studied chemistry, an unusual field for a woman in 1936. Again, she made lifelong friends from around the world with whom she remained in contact through her years in Washington and St. Louis. After graduation, she moved back to St. Louis and worked in the medical labs at Barnes Hospital. Somewhere in there she met my father and they eventually got married during World War II in St. Louis. As it turned out, they were third cousins on the Rozier side. This additional connection would lead them on a lifelong pursuit of genealogical connections in the Rozier family culminating in the publishing of a book, *Beyond the Gabori*, in 1986. Her courage to be willing to move away from a comfortable, but somewhat stifling, small town in Missouri, probably provided my brother and me with the example to pursue our lives away from our hometowns.

She was a great cook and also very creative in artistic pursuits. For a number of years, she was a Den Mother for our Cub Scout Pack. She could handle a basement full of energetic and sometimes undisciplined 8 to 10 year old boys. They always had something to build or make. One former Cub Scout mentioned to my brother just recently, that my mother could make wonderful things out of junk. We always had a supply of tin cans, old string, candles and turkey feathers. Much of this talent was recognized by others as she regularly taught workshops to other den mothers in the Washington area.

Having only sons and coming from all sisters did not seem to be much of a challenge on the outside. She could handle forts,

miniature golf courses, bloody knees, falling out of trees or burning tents with apparent ease. In many ways she was the gentle enforcer, never saying "Wait until your dad comes home." She handled it herself. The bigger, the offense, the calmer she was. One particular thing stands out in my memory. The water-bomb fight from the upstairs bathroom window to the backyard. When she came home there were wet bags all over the backyard and in the trees. She punished us by handing out rakes to begin the clean up. I am not sure whether my dad even knew that it happened. It was probably a topic of discussion at the dinner table after we were excused, however.

The only time that I remember her expressing her anger with others was in a dispute with our erratic next door neighbor over their dog. She was out in the yard when the neighbor sent the dog out to chase us. Mom punted the dog and then got in a shouting match with the lady. We terrorized the dog later on a sleep out in the backyard with a pile of burning newspapers thrown into its yard.

Hats were her passion for many years after cub scouts. She was always making new hats for church and in fact made the hats for our wedding to match the dresses. I bet that her three granddaughters remember the hat room in St. Louis. The hat craze went out with the times but I am not sure her passion ever did.

My mother had a series of medical issues that burdened her in later life. She suffered a heart attack at 52; and while she re-

covered to lead a normal life for some time after that it would reoccur and eventually would take her life. She also suffered breast cancer and the serious illness of her youngest son. Through all that she was always cheerful and positive and would only open up inner fears after they had abated. She was always very aware of her medical condition and would give gentle instructions to the ER staff when being wheeled in for treatment. It was apparent that she knew something was occurring on the night that she died because she had packets of genealogical information put aside in neat pile for each of her grandchildren when we got to the room the next day.

As the older generation of Rozier's passed on, she assumed the mantle of leadership with her cousin Bill Harrison. Together they closed the books on Rozier, Inc., a family holding company, and dispersed all the funds to the family. This was done while Bill was dying. She was always able to work and communicate with the various Rozier clans, even when they would not talk to between themselves. She took over for her father as leader of the family. Mother was a truly, liberated woman in a time when that was not in vogue. She was competent at whatever she did, but yet also did everything together with my father in a partnership.

Their Legacy

It is obvious to me that their legacy is in their grandchildren and how they are living their lives. Each of the grandchildren have shown the characteristics of gentleness and courage

whether it is in the profession that they have chosen, the passion that they have put into their avocation or the manner in which they have dealt with adversity that has been crushing at times. I hope that this piece gives them the insight to see the profound effect that their grandparents have had on their lives. It is my sincere wish that this will be passed on to my grandchildren, grandnieces and grandnephews. They are the future for our family.

Staying Young

As I approach my 73rd birthday, I remark to anyone who asks that I feel as young now as I did when I was in my 20's. I obviously have more experience than I did then but that does not really influence my answer. I have been trying to reflect as to why I have maintained this feeling.

I think the main thing is that I have maintained an attitude of continued learning. I am always reading to find out new things. One of the characteristics of a child is that they are wide eyed when viewing the world. I have tried to maintain that type of innocent love for learning whether it is in school or just in life in general. Ronald Rolheiser states in *Against an Infinite Horizon*, that a healthy adult longs for the heart of a child. He describes this as the pursuit of innocence. That description seemed to resonate with how I see my feeling of being young.

This does not mean that I act childish or run around since I have enough aches and pains to know that this is not possible as much anymore. But I do maintain a young attitude by being receptive to newness and adventure. I learned this from my parents who were continually interested in new things. The past was the past. Each new day was an adventure to them. I remember that my parents wanted a personal computer when they first came out. While it was sometimes frus-

trating to them to learn how it works, they pushed on anyway. They were my mentors in how to live as a mature adult yet be filled with the heart of a child.

Matthew 18:3-5

Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one child such as this in my name receives me.

Matthew 11:25

At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike.

I do remember that when I reached my 30th birthday, I felt old. Not because I was old but because I realized that my parents were getting old. However I just needed to spend a short time with them to realize that they did not think that way. After that I never thought of them or myself as old again.

Luke 18:16-17

Jesus, however, called the children to himself and said, "Let the children come to me and do not prevent them; for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Amen, I say to you, whoever does not accept the kingdom of God like a child will not enter it."

I hope that I will continue to follow their example so that I can be an example to my children and grandchildren. With a young attitude and the innocence of children, I can continue to serve God and my neighbors as He has instructed.

The Gift of Life

When I was traveling to work I heard a story on National Public Radio about a pediatrician talking to his daughter about a young child who had liver failure. When she was dying, after waiting for a liver transplant, the young girl's parents decided that when she died, they would donate her organs to other children waiting for transplants. The doctor was so moved by the gesture of the "Gift of Life" that these parents made in their moment of tragedy. This story moved me to think about the term "Gift of Life" and how I see that. The term has many different layers of understanding for me.

Obviously the first thing that comes to mind as a father and grandfather, is that I was part of the gift of life to my children and subsequently to my grandchildren. I was one part of the miracle of birth and through my children also in some way a part in the birth of my grandchildren. I could say that I am a repository of genes passed from my parents and ancestors to my children. As a man, that is a very powerful drive in the very basic sense. But not only was I part of their biological life, I was part of the gift of life to them in many other ways.

Life is not only just the biological, but it is also the experience I have with the rest of God's creation from the natural world, to learning, to creativity and to all aspects of what it means to

be human. A gift is something given and not something earned. I am able to give my children and grandchildren help, direction, love, safety and stability. And hopefully they understand that this is a gift which is not to be hoarded but nurtured and then passed on to their children. While I was fortunate to be born into a fairly affluent family and could do much for my own children, that affluence is not important in giving the gift of life. Children need love and support. That is not dependent on affluence.

A second understanding could be medical personnel giving the gift of life by healing the sick. That is really what the pediatrician was talking about in the NPR report. Both Jay and Anna can do that in their hospital settings or Patti can do that in her rehabilitation setting. In many ways this can be very non-personal, but the most effective doctors and nurses give life as much with their empathy as with their medical skills. Truly beloved doctors are those that are human in their approach and not just clinical.

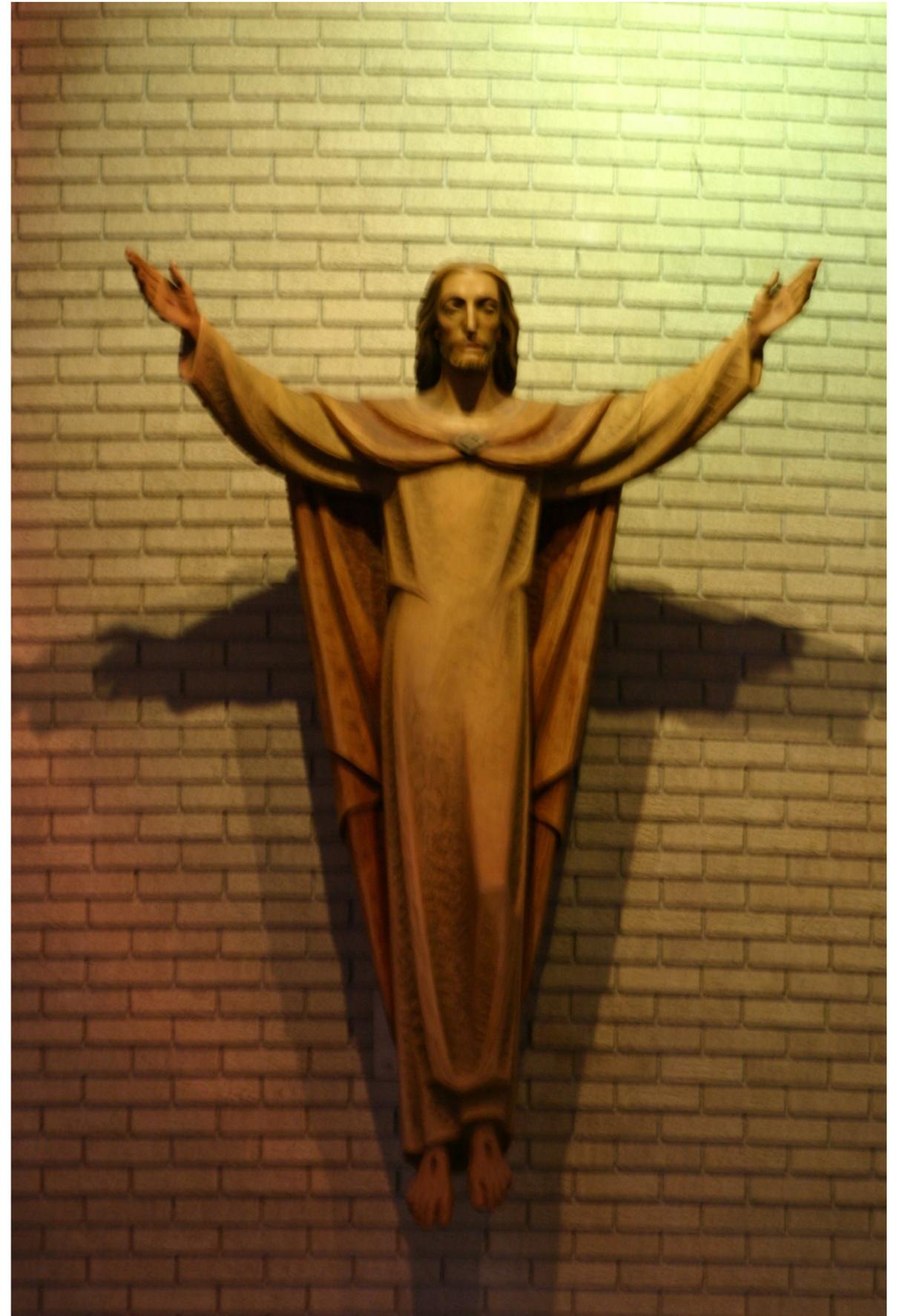
The Gift of Life can also be in a spiritual sense. Jesus challenges me to give life to others by living the beatitudes, and by loving my neighbors. But not only did He challenge me, He also demonstrated this to me by His many examples. I can give life by listening, by serving, and by sharing not only with those in my family and those I love, but with all people. I can give life through work at church, in the neighborhood or at my place of work. This is where it may get really challenging. However the reward is huge. Jesus says that if I follow Him, I will get the Gift of Eternal Life. He does this through His

death and resurrection which is freely given to each of us. This is really a third understanding of the Gift of Life.

In following Jesus' example, I also give life to myself which is a wonderful by-product of giving life to others. This is what keeps me going each day. One example is my writing which gives life to my wife and children because I can share with them some of myself and my thinking but it also gives me life. Jesus talks about living waters giving life. This includes water for sustenance, water for baptism, water for cleaning. Moses saved the Jews by going through the waters out of Egypt. In the Genesis story of creation, we were formed out of the waters of chaos.

Giving the Gift of Life is the essence of what I as a father, grandfather, man and human being should be about. If I give life, it will be given back to me many-fold.

Spirituality



Arms Enfolding Me

There have been some times, recently, that I have felt so totally alone. I feel fearful and weak; and cannot even think of going back to sleep. I understand the meaning of the word desert as used in the context of the Old Testament. I am not sure why I get that way. It usually happens in the middle of the night. I wake up in a primal sweat. Perhaps it is the time when the dragons of fear come out of my inner dungeon. Is it my worry about retirement, my concern for Pattiann and the children, or just a general feeling of uncertainty about some of the things that are happening in the world? Is this a time when I am being tested as was Jesus?

Matthew 4: 1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was hungry.

The tempter approached and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread." He said in reply, "It is written: 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes forth from the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city, and made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you and 'with their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

Then the devil took him up to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their magnificence, and he said to him, "All these I shall give to you, if you will prostrate yourself and worship me." At this, Jesus said to him, "Get away, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord, your God, shall you worship and him alone shall you serve.'"

Then the devil left him and, behold, angels came and ministered to him.

Or is this just a quiet time when I am overcome by doubts and worries as was my father at times? He would show this at times but only briefly. He immediately could focus his energy on seeing that I was okay and this seemed to snap him out of his "desert". I recognize the same thing in myself.

The problem with the middle of the night is that there is no one else to draw my attention away. My only recourse is to ask Jesus to enfold me in his arms and hold me tight. That takes away some of the fears and anxieties. It allows me to fall back to sleep easily. It gives me a feeling of warmth like sit-

ting in the sun on a beautiful day, letting it sweep over me with a sense of being at peace. As I look for a scripture passage to describe this I have come across Psalm 63.

Psalm 63: 2-9

O God, you are my God-- for you I long! For you my body yearns; for you my soul thirsts, Like a land parched, lifeless, and without water.

So I look to you in the sanctuary to see your power and glory.

For your love is better than life; my lips offer you worship!

I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my hands, calling on your name.

My soul shall savor the rich banquet of praise, with joyous lips my mouth shall honor you!

When I think of you upon my bed, through the night watches I will recall That you indeed are my help, and in the shadow of your wings I shout for joy.

My soul clings fast to you; your right hand upholds me.

I felt that I needed to write this because it is such a powerful emotion at this time. It may be that with my effort to pray

more each day that I am in touch with these emotions more readily. Maybe God is telling me and showing me that I need to put even more trust in Jesus to guide me through my life. I will continue to ponder and pray for guidance to better understand myself and to improve my relationship with Jesus.

Feed My Lambs

John 21:15-19

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep.

Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

This is one of those famous passages from the New Testament that I remember from my childhood. However as a child or

even later, I focused on the statement "Feed my lambs. Feed my sheep." Now I realize that what is more moving is how Peter answered the questioning. He seems to get aggravated with Jesus. It is almost as if he is saying stop pestering me, I have answered your question. For me that is how I answer God's call many times. It is typical of how I would put my life and pride before the call while thinking all the time that I am answering the call. Peter's example is so comforting, so familiar. It shows how human he is and this gives me a chance to look at myself in the mirror. This is how I behave. This is how I answer the call from Pattiann many times. It is almost without thinking. It is that automatic, "Yes, dear. Whatever you say, dear."

Peter even says, "Lord, you know everything." And that is exactly why Jesus keeps asking. He knows that Peter is distracted or at least is unaware of the depth of the answer that he is giving Jesus. Jesus then follows it up with the little story about having someone else dress you and lead you where you do not want to go. The real challenge in my life is to let Jesus lead me where I do not want to go or to lead me when I do not see the path clearly. As I discern my ministry role in the parish, I must be aware that I am being led even if it is not where I want to go. This feeling of responding to the call even when the path is unclear is mentioned by many of the saints, like John Neumann. I need to keep praying that I can learn from their example.

The most critical words of the entire passage however are the last two, “Follow me.” That is what I must emulate. That is what I must do. That is what I am called to do by baptism.

Forgiveness

As I try to reflect on my spiritual development, the concept of forgiveness is one of my greatest difficulties. The gospel for today was the famous one where Jesus was indicating how many times you should forgive your brother.

Matthew 18: 21-35

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times.

That is why the kingdom of heaven may be likened to a king who decided to settle accounts with his servants. When he began the accounting, a debtor was brought before him who owed him a huge amount. Since he had no way of paying it back, his master ordered him to be sold, along with his wife, his children, and all his property, in payment of the debt.

At that, the servant fell down, did him homage, and said, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back in full.' Moved with compassion the master of that servant let him go and forgave him the loan. When that servant had left, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a much smaller amount. He seized him and started to choke him, demanding, 'Pay

back what you owe.' Falling to his knees, his fellow servant begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' But he refused. Instead, he had him put in prison until he paid back the debt.

Now when his fellow servants saw what had happened, they were deeply disturbed, and went to their master and reported the whole affair. His master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?' Then in anger his master handed him over to the torturers until he should pay back the whole debt.

So will my heavenly Father do to you, unless each of you forgives his brother from his heart."

The concept of forgiving someone is usually relatively easy for me to follow. I think this is because I do not have my feelings hurt very easily. And if, in fact, someone makes me mad, I usually can get over it quickly. I do not hold a grudge. I am easy going. I cannot say the same thing about having to ask someone else for forgiveness.

I have been this way ever since I can remember. Having to apologize and asking to be forgiven, makes me feel weak in the knees, sick to my stomach, and incapacitated. Consequently, I seek excuses. Either, I did not do it; I had no other choice; or I was right in the first place. Is it my pride? Am I

afraid to face myself? Or am I afraid to open myself up to others because I will be seen as flawed? I wonder if they will think less of me? This is a major roadblock to a deeper sense of my own spirituality because I am blocking an avenue to better self knowledge. I am not naming the monster in my closet who rears its head and causes me to move farther from Jesus.

Seeking forgiveness from a stranger or mere acquaintance, while difficult, I can handle. What is more difficult is when the one is my wife, Pattiann. She knows me better than anyone else except for Jesus but I perhaps just do not trust enough in the goodness of her heart and the depth of her love for me. I think it is just the concept of being totally vulnerable that is so difficult. Is it my introverted personality or is this just another excuse?

This is why I also find the sacrament of reconciliation so difficult as well. Jesus knows me totally to my very depths, but I do not think I trust in Him totally. The concept of total love being showered on me by Pattiann or Jesus is so difficult. I am like Moses who trusted in the Lord but not enough to only strike the rock once.

God and Relationship

As I wrote in my last reflection for the Old Testament course:

“To me God is revealed in this world in relationship; relationship that I have with my family, the Called and Gifted class, the choir at St. Joseph and my CRHP brothers; and relationship that I should strive for with everyone that I meet.”

I would like to explore more deeply what this means to me. I see God as a loving Father who is always happy to see me, is eager for me to sit on His lap, and wants me to do the right thing. He reveals Himself to us in the scriptures.

A father shows himself to his children by loving them and their mother. He shows himself in relationship. As a father myself, I know what this means to me. However it is so much more fulfilling when the love is acknowledged through the effort to communicate back to me. This is how we must do with God in our prayer life. Two of the factors in a mature spirituality, as noted by Robert Rohlheiser, are a sense of community and communal prayer; and a sense of morality and personal prayer. The first of these is related to what I noted in my opening paragraph. What I find rewarding is the strength that I draw from my brothers and sisters in faith. This is usually manifest in the celebration of the Eucharist both at small gatherings and at larger gatherings.

The second notion of Rohlheiser is more difficult for me. While I have a strong sense of morality, I find that developing a deep, personal prayer life is very challenging. In the world today, it is difficult to find time to be quiet. We are always being bombarded by some “noise” or other. I do not always take time to listen. My recent explorations with methods of prayer have led me to look for God’s voice to me in what others say. This can be Pattiann, classmates from Called and Gifted and my brothers in Christ from Christ Renews His Parish. I am just now realizing that this may be His voice speaking. It is just necessary to put myself in their presence and be open to His voice within me.

Thus both community prayer and individual prayer for me can come through my relationship with other members of the Body of Christ. I will need to be open and praiseworthy with the community and listen very carefully so that when I spend some quiet time with God, reading scripture and praying, I am open to what I have heard from Him through others. It has taken a while for me to realize this. I think that I was spending time in quiet prayer and expecting to hear from God as the voice coming down from on high as in the movie *The Ten Commandments*. While someday that may happen, most likely I will hear it in a quiet way in my heart. I just need to be open to that voice.

Prayers of petition have always been easier for me. If things are particularly tough, I have a novena to the Child Jesus that I use to ask for a special gift from God. This seems to be particularly powerful in my life. Almost inevitably when I have

finished this novena a sweet sense of peace flows over me and I can stop worrying. This is usually a time in my life when I see the presence of God acting directly. It is a time of miraculous discovery of the power of the Almighty.

At the present, I am trying to read a number of books on personal prayer to find what will work for me. As I go through this journey, I expect that I will be able to refine what really touches me. This is the one area that I will be working on in my personal life.

God's Grace Rained Down

There are times when it seems that the weight of the world is crushing me. I physically feel the tension and pain across my shoulders. I am not sure where I am going and if I can even see the path. At those times, I find that if I pray to Jesus and ask him to allow me to see the grace that he is providing and the wisdom to accept that grace; that I can begin to climb out of my sense of hopelessness. I can begin to see the road again. John, the Baptist, described the grace that Jesus provides.

John 1:15-17

John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

God will provide the grace that I need because He is so filled with compassion for me, his child. There are many scripture references to His mercy and care for us. The gospel for September 13 is just one, the story of the widow's son.

Luke 7:11-17

Soon afterward he journeyed to a city called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd accompanied him. As he drew near to the gate of the city, a man who had died was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. A large crowd from the city was with her. When the Lord saw her, he was moved with pity for her and said to her, "Do not weep." He stepped forward and touched the coffin; at this the bearers halted, and he said, "Young man, I tell you, arise!" The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Fear seized them all, and they glorified God, exclaiming, "A great prophet has arisen in our midst," and "God has visited his people." This report about him spread through the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding region.

St. Paul, in several of his letters, also describes how grace is presented to us in the following passages.

Ephesians 4:7-8

But grace was given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says: "He ascended on high and took prisoners captive; he gave gifts to men."

2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." I will rather boast most

gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me.

Phillipians 4:19

My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

The hardest part personally, however, is having the openness to accept the grace that is being offered. That is why I pray to be accepting of what God makes available. His grace can come in the form of a moment of acceptance, the energy to pick myself up off the floor, or an opportunity to forgive. I just need to pick it up and take it into my heart. How many times have I failed to do that and thus continue walking in the dark rather than in the light.

For me the way to be more open to His grace is to maintain a daily prayer life. That allows me to be more conscious of God's unconditional love. By reading the scriptures, contemplating those readings, listening to sacred music and simply being quiet in God's presence, I can be available to the Holy Spirit and His abundant grace. One of the songs that provides me with that inspiration at times is "Lead Kindly Light" by Steven Warner.

Steven C. Warner based on a poem by John Cardinal Newman

Lead, kindly light, amid the gloom of evening.

Lord, lead me on! Lord, lead me on!

On through the night, on to your radiance!

Lead, kindly light. Lead, kindly light.

The night is dark and I am far from home.

Direct my feet: I do not ask to see the distant scene;

One step enough for me.

So lead me onward, Lord, and hear my plea.

Not always thus, I seldom looked for you;

I loved to choose and seek my path alone.

In spite of fear, my pride controlled my will.

Remember not my past, but lead me still.

So long your power has blest me on my way,

And still it leads, pas hill and storm and night!

And with the morn, those angel faces smile,

Which I have loved long since, and lost awile.

This expresses the feelings that I have as I look for the path that leads me to Jesus even when things are tough in life. It is grace which provides the “kindly light” which illuminates my way. I only need to open my eyes and heart to Jesus.

Human and Divine

I have written about the humanity of Jesus and how I see that in my life but I realize that I am probably more comfortable in thinking about the divine. It is mysterious but it is part of the contemplative style that is most familiar to me. Something about the human nature of Jesus, while comforting to know, is also intimidating. The divinity of Jesus is how I was taught in grammar school by the Sisters of St. Francis.

Jesus' divinity is mysterious but safe. His humanity is messy and scary; but also extremely life giving. When I reflect on His humanity, I feel like my chest is opening to allow His love into my heart. It is an overwhelming feeling of warmth and love. But it comes with the divine, the perfect.

When I have done the Myers-Briggs test, I score as INTP. My style is to think very deeply about things, work incessantly until I have an answer and do this by myself. That is much more compatible with the divine nature of Jesus. I get pleasure and life from the contemplation and deep thinking but, when a hug comes, it is sometimes overwhelming. Thus thinking about the sensual, personal side of His humanity makes me nervous and anxious. But while it might make me nervous, I also get an intense feeling of love and warmth when I get into trying to understand His humanity. Warmth comes over me

from inside. It is similar to the feeling that I had during my angiogram. It is being warmed from inside out, from my feet to my head.

I am continuing to work on this so that I can be more comfortable in the human and even deeper in the understanding of the divine Jesus. But I also realize that I have to retreat back into the divine when I become overwhelmed by the human. I think that this is some of the reason that I have such distraction at time during my prayer time but am completely comfortable in reading and writing.

Image of God

One of the ideas that I picked up on our weekend, at St. Mary's of the Lake, with Fr. Mike Fuller was the concept of the *imago Dei*, the Image of God, as being at the center of our soul. *Gaudium et Spes* says that "the *imago Dei* consists in man's fundamental orientation to God, which is the basis of human dignity and of the inalienable rights of the human person." (International Theological Commission, *Communion and Stewardship*, Chapter 1, Section 23).

The Catechism says "that man has been created "in the image and likeness" of the Creator." (Catechism, Article 1, 1701) Fr. Fuller described the *imago Dei* as being at the very core of our soul. The likeness of God is the shining through of the *imago Dei* from our soul. The Catechism explains it as "The divine image is present in every man. It shines forth in the communion of persons, in the likeness of the unity of the divine persons among themselves." (Catechism, Article 1, 1702)

Fr. Fuller gave the image of sin as a fogging or clouding our soul so that the likeness of God is shielded. The Catechism indicates that "mortal sin ...results in the loss of charity and the privation of sanctifying grace, that is, of the state of grace." And "venial sin weakens charity; it manifests a disordered affection for created goods; it impedes the soul's progress in the

exercise of the virtues and the practice of the moral good". I like the definition of a fog on our soul not allowing our likeness of God to shine through.

As we pray, ask for forgiveness and move closer to God, the fog is lifted and our image of God is able to be more apparent to others and we are able to see others as in God's image.

I have noticed in my own life that I have a much greater sensitivity to a feeling of being distanced from God at times. I almost want to cry out to Him, where are you? This seems to have coincided with my beginning the Lay Formation program. I have tried to get better in touch with my spirituality and to spend more time in private prayer each day. I question if this sensitivity is caused by my clearing some of the fog of sin and making me more like a very sensitive smoke detector. When a little smoke or fog is present, I feel very abandoned. I know that God is there. He has been very good to me in so many ways. He has always looked over me but I feel distanced from Him. I go through a dark time. It is almost like the feeling of a scab being removed from a wound. When that happens the wound is more sensitive. It hurts. The scab dulls the pain or at least masks it.

In some of my readings, I know that St. Francis experienced extreme periods of darkness in which he isolated himself by retreating to a cave to pray intensely. I also read that Mother Therese also went through what she described as dark times. In each of these cases, they had to rely totally on God and give

themselves up to Him. That required a lot of faith. I am not sure that I have that faith.

I will continue to persevere in my prayer, asking Jesus for guidance and grace to overcome these dark, abandoned times. Perhaps I need to undergo a conversion and die to my old life to emerge into a new and more intimate relationship with Him.

In the Box

Mark 6:1-6

He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith. He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.

As I was reading the commentary on the Gospel of Mark for the fifteenth week in ordinary time, written by John Shea, I was struck by his interpretation that the Jews from Nazareth were putting Jesus in a box. They were questioning how He had all that wisdom since he was just a carpenter. Shea related this to the many times when we are put in boxes or put others in a box, indicating that someone is not capable of a

particular task because of a prejudicial view of them based on the past or a false impression. I know how frustrating this is when I am put in that box by others and I just want to scream to let me out.

But I was also thinking about how many times I put myself in a similar box. I say that I am not able to do something; I am too busy; or I have other priorities. This may be due to a lack of self esteem but more likely, it is the consequence of my sinfulness. If I truly believe that God is all loving and all forgiving, then I have no excuse for boxing myself. My box may be the box of selfishness, the box of laziness, or the box of apathy. Boxes may look comfortable, warm and inviting; but they are boxes just the same. They prevent me from reaching my full potential in being a disciple of Jesus. As Mark said about Jesus, "He was amazed at their lack of faith". He must also be amazed at my lack of faith at times when I am boxed.

As a father and grandfather, I also must encourage my children and grandchildren to break down the sides of their boxes. That is one of the tasks that Richard Rohr indicates is unique to a father's love. I must also be careful that I do not break down the sides for them myself. They will never then be able to learn how to do it for themselves. But the direction and encouragement gives them the ability to burst forth in God's love and to allow them to grow as sons or daughters of God. Just as God's unconditional love for me gives me the encouragement to get out of my box, so my unconditional love for my children allows them the same.

The Inner Room

In reading a reflection by John Shea on the Year B gospel for the second week of Easter, I was struck by his interpretation of how Jesus appeared to the apostles in the inner room.

John 20:19-31

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the doors were locked, where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. (Jesus) said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the holy Spirit. Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained." Thomas, called Didymus, one of the Twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples said to him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands and put my finger into the nailmarks and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them. Jesus came, although the doors were locked, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your

finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe." Thomas answered and said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you come to believe because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and have believed." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of (his) disciples that are not written in this book. But these are written that you may (come to) believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through this belief you may have life in his name.

John Shea indicates that the Jesus that appears to the disciples is a post-Easter presence which "strongly suggests that the disciples have a spiritual realization of the presence of Jesus. He does not appear as an outer form as he previously did, but he manifests himself as a presence emerging from within and allaying their inner panic. His presence is known by the fact that he brings peace in the midst of fear." (The Spiritual Wisdom of the Gospels for Christian Preachers and Teachers, Eating with the Bridegroom, Year B, John Shea, page 106)

I found this description thrilling because it allowed me to contemplate some of the things that I have been feeling about some of my close associations. As an example, on our Christ Renews His Parish weekend, I did not want the weekend to ever end even though we were thoroughly exhausted because of the emotions shared. I do not think that I was the only one that had this feeling because others said the same thing. Was this not the spirit of Jesus emerging from us, enfolding us,

warming us? Is this not why I get the same sensation even when we just meet for breakfast and talk? I am hoping that this same feeling will encompass me as a member of Team 5. But I am also afraid of not achieving this since I will actually be absent from the weekend to attend another retreat. That is really what I am regretting.

Another example is the closeness that I have experienced with the members of the Called and Gifted class, especially those who attend class at USML in Mundelein. As we near the end of our time together, several have commented on wanting to keep it going. To me the strength of this feeling of love and togetherness was intensified during our class on sacraments with our sacramental celebrations, and with our first theological reflection. I was so moved and excited that I could hardly sleep after being together. It was a feeling of peace, intensity, excitement, and being in the presence of the divine.

One description of this might be that Jesus' presence percolates out of each of us, floats around and goes back into each. He surrounds us, permeates the group and brings us a sense of peace and well being. It is an encounter with the Incarnate Christ. It is an encounter with the Body of Christ. It is the Holy Spirit wisping like smoke above us or filling the room like the fragrance of a sweet perfume. This is what I want to continue as we meet in the future. I think we see Jesus' presence in each other and collectively in the group.

A final example is the special feelings that I had with the original members of the Parish Pastoral Council. We had worked

together for about three years before members started rotating off the council. As the new members took their place, the feelings subsided not because they were not as spiritual or special but they did not share the same formation that the original members did. I think I have commented on this at times saying how special the original group was to me. They still are, even when I see them outside of the council.

In the gospel passage as I read further, is the story of Thomas who was not present in the inner room when Jesus first appeared. When he returns, he does not believe them because he did not have the same sense of community that came about from this divine wisp of perfume that they shared. John Shea implies that Thomas felt he needed to probe the wounds because he was not there to feel Jesus' presence while the others were. He needed a physical proof of Jesus' visit. Is it possible that the second time Jesus appeared in the room that Thomas felt that presence emanating; realized that he had doubted; and in his doubt denied Jesus just as Peter did before the crucifixion? In realizing his mistake, he uttered the famous words, "My Lord and My God" asking for forgiveness at the same time that he is immersed in His presence.

Thomas' example is why new members of the PPC or men from other CRHP groups do not have the same sense of togetherness that infects the original group. In some sense they are doubting Thomases not in a negative way but simply because they have not shared the same experience.

I will continue to meditate on this and try to develop a clearer explanation of the intense feelings that I have developed in these close relationships.

Into the Desert

I am intrigued by the image of going into the desert for solitude and to be in contact with God. And this seems to have been the manner in which the Desert Fathers sought to enhance their spirituality. However my experience with the desert is somewhat different than that.

Having driven through the deserts in Arizona and California, I find them a place of starkness and emptiness. Most of the flora and fauna seem to be just hanging on to survival. This is a more realistic picture of how I feel when my soul goes “into the desert”. I am totally alone, feeling unloved by everyone that is dearest to me and unloved by God. I wrote about this earlier in “Arms Enfolding Me” but I now realize that this time in the desert may be an opportunity to grow in my faith.

The desert does go through a spring, when some rain comes down and it bursts forth with new life. Is that what I should be looking for in my time in the desert? If so, then I can make great strides in finding God in my life and realizing his unconditional love for me even when I am feeling so abandoned. This time is not a quiet time but in fact may be quite raucous. There are temptations coming from all sides asking me to abandon my love, and to seek pleasures that are to the detriment of others and of myself. The temptations are asking me

to abandon those who love me as it seems they have abandoned me. They may ask me to say something that may hurt them or to ignore them. Usually, however, I am able to hear a quiet voice that gets through the noise and brings me back home. It is the quiet whisper in my ear saying “I love you”. It can be in an email or a phone message. It can be a hug from a granddaughter who only loves unconditionally. That provides the water that is needed in my desert to bring forth the flowers and lead to spring.

In contemplating this, I recall the passage from Luke describing Jesus’ temptation in the desert.

Luke 4:1-12

Filled with the holy Spirit, Jesus returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the desert for forty days, to be tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and when they were over he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" Then he took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a single instant. The devil said to him, "I shall give to you all this power and their glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I may give it to whom-ever I wish. All this will be yours, if you worship me." Jesus said to him in reply, "It is written: 'You shall worship the Lord, your God, and him alone shall you serve.'" Then he led him to Jerusalem, made him stand on the parapet of the temple, and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw your-

self down from here, for it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you, to guard you,' and: 'With their hands they will support you, lest you dash your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him in reply, "It also says, 'You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test.'"

Even Jesus was tempted while in the desert. The difference is that Jesus and the Desert Fathers went into the desert to find God and be with God. I am able to find God when I am dumped into the desert. It is not my choice to go there but it is an opportunity that I need to take advantage of. I just wish that it was not so lonely there and took such a long time to reach the spring.



Dying in the Lord

Wisdom 3:1-9

But the souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them.

They seemed, in the view of the foolish, to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace.

For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality; Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself.

As gold in the furnace, he proved them, and as sacrificial offerings he took them to himself.

In the time of their visitation they shall shine, and shall dart about as sparks through stubble;

They shall judge nations and rule over peoples, and the LORD shall be their King forever.

Those who trust in him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with him in love: Because grace and mercy are with his holy ones, and his care is with the elect.

The concept of dying in the Lord has been very confusing to me. I recall having a discussion of this last summer when we were hosting the group discussing spirituality over 50. I think that I stated that I did not know what this meant. But my mind has continued to work on this concept and now I will try to put some of my thoughts on paper.

The most literal meaning is understanding end of life issues in which I believe that when you physically die, that you are taken to heaven to be glorified if you are in the state of grace. What this is like and how this happens no one knows. Having observed this with my parents and now my mother-in-law, I can only tell what I see from my side. But I have enough faith to believe that my existence will continue in heaven if I am worthy or hell if I am not. I will go from life to eternal life through death. I think that this is what is referred to in the passage from Wisdom shown above. This is really an apocalyptic message to give us hope in this world when things are not going so well for us.

It is also very comforting to realize that when my own loved one dies, they continue to live on in me. As an example, with my father and mother, I now realize how profoundly I am and continue to be influenced by them. They actually permeate me not just in my DNA but in my memory, attitudes and in my very soul. There is not a day goes by that I do not behave as they would because they are in me. Usually this is transparent to me but does show up when I am able to look at myself from

outside. It can be the mirror on the wall or the mirror of someone else.

I suppose that it is my parents' unconditional love that continues to permeate my life and that is a profound thought to contemplate because of the influence that I have on my own children and grandchildren.

But "dying in the Lord" really means to me that when we die we are in the Lord or in the state of grace. Let me distinguish that from "dying to the Lord" by which I understand that we give ourselves over to Jesus and follow in his footsteps as disciple.

"Dying to the Lord" is perhaps the more difficult to understand.

Matthew 19:20-22

The young man said to him, "All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to (the) poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

When I had my by-pass surgery six years ago, in some respects I died in that they opened the vessels of my heart to do

the repair. I would have died had the surgeons not been so skilled and had they not kept me alive using their medical techniques. But the profound change was that I had died to the Lord, in that I had given myself over to Jesus and trusted in Him. Out of that I got a glimpse of unconditional love shown by my family as well as a large number of friends who supported me and wished me well. That was a profound encounter with God that has continued to resonate in my life. I have reflected on that in the past.

As with the young man in the passage from Matthew, the difficult decision is when I have to give up something that makes me comfortable to pursue something that the Lord asks of me but is uncomfortable. It is the fear of the "road less traveled by" as written by Robert Frost that keeps me at times from dying to the Lord of giving up my comfort to pursue the Lord's request.

Luke 9:59-62

And to another he said, "Follow me." But he replied, "(Lord,) let me go first and bury my father." But he answered him, "Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." And another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but first let me say farewell to my family at home." (To him) Jesus said, "No one who sets a hand to the plow and looks to what was left behind is fit for the kingdom of God."

Jesus in this radical message in Luke really challenges me to drop everything and follow Him but I am not always ready to do that. I am consumed by my need to have things. I am letting other gods lead me. I am acting like I am in control and God is not. That is the biggest challenge that I face each day. It is to give myself over to the path that Jesus showed me, the path less traveled in my life. It is Dying to the Lord.

Encountering God

During my first encounter with Theological Reflection, I was very fortunate to be part of my Called and Gifted class as they reflected on a story presented by my wife, Pattiann. She related a time when she felt very connected with a student of hers while serving the precious blood to her at communion on Sunday. This was an encounter with God for her and the student. What this story raised in me was an awareness of how I encounter God.

While I see God in relationship with others, the most intense encounters with Him are when I am contemplating Him based on stories, music or study. After the evening of Theological Reflection mentioned above, I was thinking about the experience on the drive to work, listening to spiritual music, when it became so clear to me that I was talking to God through my experiences. I could see as if I was at the top of a mountain on a very clear day. There were so many directions to look and I wanted to see it all at the same time. It was overwhelming and I just could not get all my thoughts together so I could remember them. Everything was aligned and made complete sense.

I have had these experiences before but I do not think it ever hit me that this was an encounter with God that was occurring

in my contemplation and that is how it happens with me. Even now trying to write this down does not do it justice. It was so much more intense than I can explain here in mere words. It is a depth of thinking that is awe-inspiring and I had an intense feeling that I needed to share it with others. That is so difficult since it is so personal. Perhaps this is the best that I can do.

One other moment like this occurred after Dr. Pauline Viviano explained the interpretation of miracles as shown in the Old Testament. Again I had a very clear understanding moment after thinking on her presentation. I was able to write a reflection based on her class and my insight that I was able to share with the men's group at St. Joseph parish. It was not nearly as vivid when I explained it as it was when I had the moment of insight.

I am just at a loss for words to describe my experience as I would be in trying to explain a beautiful sunset to a blind person. The joy that I experience just cannot be adequately described. I just need to revel in the moment and thank God that I have had a glimpse of what He has to offer me.

Eucharist

For some time, I have been contemplating the mystery of the Eucharist and how I understand its celebration in my life. I actually made my First Communion during second grade in pre-Vatican II times. We were taught in a rather rigid way how to make our First Communion by the nuns in grade school. Since all the prayers were in Latin, it was simply follow the rules and know that the Eucharist is a mystery.

I really did not give it a lot of thought for the next 50 years of my life. There were changes in the rite but I just never thought about it much. I always went to communion at mass and in fact have been almost a daily communicant for the last 10 years. But recently, I have been thinking more about how I view the Eucharist and what it means in my life.

This was brought to the front of my consciousness, when I was fortunate to be part of a Eucharistic celebration in our class on Sacramental Theology. The entire class was invited into the liturgical space which was a circle of tables with seats and candles for each person. After an opening song, we shared a scriptural passage from St. John's gospel about the disciples on the road to Emmaus. This was followed by a series of reflections from Henri Nouwen on this scriptural passage.

The group was then invited to be part of the setting of the central table, with a table cloth, flowers, bible, candles, crucifix followed by a loaf of bread and cups of wine. These were brought forth by the group and not just presented by the liturgy leaders. There was a sense that we were offering these things to each other.

The central part of the celebration had the most impact on me. Beginning with the leaders, the bread was broken and passed to each other with the words, "Would you share this bread with me?" This was answered by "Yes, I will." After taking a piece of bread, this was then repeated to the next person at the table. This was followed by the cup of wine saying, "Would you share this cup with me?" And, "Yes, I will share it with you." The most powerful thing was hearing this go around the group. We were all inviting and accepting the sharing. That is what Eucharist is about. Being invited into communion with the Body of Christ and accepting that invitation. It is a feeling of intimacy with the group. Even though we were using ordinary bread and wine, it had a sacramental feel. How much more powerful is it when it is the sacred Body and Blood of Jesus that we are sharing?

What I contrast this to, is the experience that I have at mass, in which it is so automatic and said with no feeling. I even do this when I am an extraordinary minister. Now I almost feel that I should say "The Body of Christ, will you share it with us?" While I cannot say that, I will at least know that I should be inviting in my body language and voice tone. I will also be

more accepting, when I am receiving the Eucharist, in my body language and voice tone.

It is difficult to follow Me

Matthew 10:34-39

"Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man 'against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's enemies will be those of his household.' "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

Luke 12:49-53

"I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing! There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her

daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

As I listened to the gospel read last week, I was particularly struck by the fervor of Jesus' statements in the passage of Matthew, which are echoed in the verses of Luke. He is really challenging the status quo. He is challenging how we should do things. He is playing what we call in contemporary society the "Devil's Advocate" which should better be called the "Lord's Advocate". He is causing me to rethink what I always thought was the way to do things. But in some ways, He is just repeating what Jeremiah is saying.

Jeremiah 1:5-10

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I dedicated you, a prophet to the nations I appointed you. "Ah, Lord GOD!" I said, "I know not how to speak; I am too young." But the LORD answered me, Say not, "I am too young." To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak. Have no fear before them, because I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD. Then the LORD extended his hand and touched my mouth, saying, See, I place my words in your mouth! This day I set you over nations and over kingdoms, To root up and to tear down, to destroy and to demolish, to build and to plant.

Jesus is the new prophet. He is challenging me to be the same, to ask the same questions of myself and those around me. "Don't follow what others are saying, follow what I say."

Is this not like St. Francis and his father? Is this not like the prodigal son? Both are stories of sons and fathers at odds. In the first, it is truly a battle of wills. Francis is living according to Jesus' directions and not doing what his father would prefer. Francis is so convinced and committed that he really is living out what Jesus is saying in the gospel passages. In some ways he is being a prophet for Jesus and his father does not seem to understand that or at the very least does not approve. How difficult that must be for Francis and his father? But Francis is really following what Jesus is saying in the passage from Matthew. His father is just being so human. You hear many similar stories of father and son alienation.

The story of the prodigal son is a parable and thus made to instruct us in a specific issue. The father here is just as radical as St. Francis. He is radical in his compassion and forgiveness. That also is what Jesus asks us to do. He is acting in a manner which is alien to most fathers. He does not lose his patience with either son.

It is so difficult for me to follow these examples out of a sense of pure love, compassion and forgiveness. I know that is what I am asked to do but it is difficult just the same. Only with constant prayer and practice can I move my life to follow Jesus when it is so difficult.

Musical Spirituality

Music is one of the pillars of my spirituality and a definite connection to God for me. It really provides the mood that I need to pray and to listen to what He is asking of me. I remember the very early years when I liked to listen to “Peter and the Wolf”. Then my parents bought me a set of records which contained many classical pieces. I remember being fascinated by the intertwining of the music. The complexity challenged me, perhaps because I am scientific by nature, to think abstractly. It allows me to think deeply about a subject and that is why I find it spiritual.

Classical music is not the only music that I find so spiritually life-giving. I have been singing in the choir at St. Joseph for a number of years. I was encouraged by my daughter to join but I was really just coming back. I had been in the choir at St. Bernadette during my high school and college years. It was a more traditional choir and thus at St. Joseph, I joined the traditional choir. I find that music much more stimulating because of the complexity as I mentioned before. I love to hear the complicated harmonies and the interspersing of classical and more contemporary music. It gives me a sense of warmth, of being loved by God, of being held in Jesus’ arms.

But it is much more than just the notes and the complexity. It is also the words. Those songs whose words are important give me an emotional jolt. Two examples are “I Hope You Dance” by Lee Ann Womack. When I hear this song, I think of my granddaughters and what I am hoping for them in the future. I want them to understand how important it is to be an independent woman and have choices to make when they grow older. One of those choices is to grow closer to God and to follow in the footsteps of their Nana. The second example is “How Beautiful” by Twila Paris. Again the words speak to me of the life of Jesus and how much He gave for us. I could go on with many dozens other songs that are meaningful to me and bring forth a sense of peace and being in the presence of God.

Music is like gossamer waves that flow over me, calm me and bring me to God. It puts me in the mood to encounter Him and thus inspires me to write. It can be loud or soft, complex or simple, with or without lyrics. Each will touch me deeply in its own way and give me the encounter that I am looking for. I will continue to look and listen for new musical inspirations and to make them a part of my daily prayer and reflections.

My Journey Image

During our closing retreat for the Called and Gifted class of 2006, I was asked to spend some time in quiet reflection on an image of my journey in the class for these past two years. I formed an image and then in dialog with the image refined it and in fact reformed the image. As I look back, I remember writing a brief reflection on my experience with Christ Renews His Parish and the beginning of Called and Gifted entitled “The Fire Within”. As with any new fire, it blazes brightly but eventually it dies down and becomes a bed of very hot, glowing coals which in many ways are hotter than the initial fire but not as spectacular and bright.

As a research chemist, I have been trained to look at data, analyze it, and synthesize new thoughts and ideas that lead to more experiments. In many cases, real moments of insights occur which are sometimes called “Ah Hah” moments. It is often looking at the same old data that everyone has seen but in seeing it in a new way. Those are really exciting times. In life, this same thing can happen and I might call it an “Encounter with God”. Based on this analogy, my image is of a hike on a mountain path.

Hiking in the mountains always begins at low altitudes, early in the morning. Many times it is foggy and cloudy. As I go, it

is up and down but always damp. The path is slippery and hard. There are boulders to climb over and trees to go around. Occasionally, I can break through the fog and get an insight on the terrain around me. The path is clear in the distance and I know where I am at and where I am going. But usually to get to the next peak, I have to go back into the fog on that soggy path with all the boulders and trees. On very special occasions, I make it to the top of a major peak; break through the fog and clouds and into the sunlight. It is incredibly bright and the warmth of the sun fills you with an intense sense of peace. I am able to see in every direction and there is almost too much to take in. Invariably, however, I must continue on the trail and that requires going back into the fog and clouds. There are always more peaks and the eternal hope that I will get back to that ultimate experience of the bright sunlit ecstasy.

In the time that I spent imaging and dialoging with the mountain path, I drew a picture of this mountain range and I could name the peaks that I encountered on the way. Those were special times in classes or formation days in which I had a particular insight or encounter. In most cases I wrote a personal reflection about that “peak” and in some instances shared them with my wife, my classmates or other friends. Each was a special time and I was bursting to tell someone about it.

The first peak that I encountered was during our Church history class with the discussion of ecclesiology. It made so much sense, that I wrote a note to the other members of the parish council, with some thoughts that I had on how under-

standing ecclesiology impacted some questions that had come before us on the council. I was at a peak, saw the path and needed to show the directions. I even read the book by Avery Dulles on the models of the church to get a better understanding. Then I plunged back into the clouds.

The second peak was during our class on Old Testament. Dr Pauline Viviano, at the end of one class, went into a description of miracles as understood by the people of that biblical time. She indicated that miracles were defined by the Jews as any encounter with God. It did not have to be something that was extraordinary or supernatural. However, she related it to our encounters with the miraculous today. It is ordinary things that occur in life where we see God acting. I again had reached a summit. I wrote a reflection paper "Seeking God in our Ordinary Lives and the Miraculous" which I shared with our men's group at St. Joseph. It really gave me a sense of how I see God active in my life each and every day. Dr. Viviano's story, I will never forget. I am eternally thankful to her for that summit.

The third summit was truly remarkable. It actually occurred driving to work in the car on the day after the first theological reflection. The reflection was on a story by my wife about an encounter that she had with a student while serving her the Eucharistic cup at mass on Sunday. I saw in my wife something that I had never seen in our almost 40 years together. She was describing a very special encounter with the divine that touched me like nothing else has ever touched me. It was not only her story but the insights that others offered as well.

But as remarkable as this was, it was nothing compared to what happened the next morning on that wondrous ride to work. That was a time when I burst through all the clouds into the bright sunshine. It was so intense that I tried to capture it on paper but just could not do it justice. The best way to describe the time was as I imagine the Transfiguration was like to the disciples. I remember that I said to myself; "This is how I encounter God". It was bright. It was warmth. It was the complex sounds of a full orchestra playing a symphony with all the intricacies of the harmony and melody coming together. I could see forever. My understanding of God and the encounter from the theological reflection made perfect sense. It was totally expansive. I have tried on several occasions to describe it but each attempt is really inadequate. I wanted it to go on forever but I then had to go back down into the clouds and fog. I want to get there again but I do not know the way.

My fourth peak was in Christology class. It was the questionnaire about "Who is Jesus". It gave me an insight into the human nature of Jesus that I think was lacking in my background. I guess I was much more in tune with His divine nature and this was a real eye opener. Again I wrote a reflection on this which I am about to share with the men's group at St. Joseph. I am not sure how they will take it but the affirmations that are the subject of the last peak on my diagram gives me the confidence to try.

During our closing retreat, I reached the last peak on my picture. During one of the discussions, Pam Platt thanked me for

an email I sent to her expressing my gratitude for some remark or idea that she gave me earlier in our two year journey. I did not even remember what it was about but it obviously touched her. Right after that as we were at lunch, Bill Nicholson came to me out of the blue and thanked me for some comment that I had made in class last week that really moved him. I still have not gotten over those two remarks, both so affirming, loving, and unexpected. God had touched others through me. I had submitted again. I could see my way again.

I will continue to walk along my slippery mountain trail. I will go in and out of the clouds, seeking summits, finding my way. I hope that I will find another of those bright, sunny crests that give me the joy of an encounter with God. In some ways, that was a picture of how heaven might be.

My Journey to Emmaus

In the story of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they traveled on the road with the stranger, feeling His presence, but not recognizing Him until He broke bread with them. Then He was gone and they recognized that their hearts were burning. How often have I had Jesus in my life and I did not recognize Him?

I also am haunted by the description of miracles that I heard in my Old Testament course with Called & Gifted. I have written about this before, several times. How often has this happened in my life and I did not recognize it? Now in hindsight, I would like to reflect on the times past and how they make my heart burn for Him.

There have been a number of times when I felt challenged by health issues for myself or my family that I called on God for His intervention. Sometimes I was not really conscious of the call and sometimes I was intentional in my call. One of the first that I recognize now is when my brother, Rozier, fell off the rope swing. He was about 9 or so and when he came home he looked terrible. His face was all swollen. I remember being very scared and praying that he would be okay. I felt that he probably had a broken jaw at the minimum but now I know that my prayers were answered as he was really

no worse for the wear. He was one tough cookie. But now I know that God must have been looking after him on that afternoon. God was in my life and I did not really recognize it at the time.

The next instance that I really remember was when our niece, Jennifer, was diagnosed with spinal meningitis. Pattiann and I had visited her in the hospital and she appeared near death. We stayed up all night praying the novena to the Child Jesus for her recovery and that our own daughter, Colleen, would not contract it. I am not sure exactly when, but she began to recover shortly after we completed the novena. That is the time that I realized the power of prayer and that novena. I have used it many times since when someone needed prayers.

Several years ago our niece, Pam, was expecting her first child and was put on bed rest three months prior to her due date because of some problem with the placenta. Jane and Rozier asked that I pray for Pam, that she and the baby would be okay. Again I used the novena and after a period of time, the placenta reattached and she was able to go home until the baby was born. I am convinced that God was present for Pam and Lincoln.

Last February, Jay called and said that his wife, Anna, who was pregnant, had her water break. It was just 28 weeks in her pregnancy. Again, Pattiann and I said the novena that Anna and the baby would be fine. She was able to hold off labor for enough time to receive steroid treatments to help with his development. Baby Louis was born four days later but,

while premature, did remarkably well and seems to be a healthy boy. God answered our intercessory prayers again and was present to my family.

Even in the tragic loss of Amanda, God was present in our lives, giving us His love to cope with what was going on. I remember sitting on the bench outside Children's Hospital, waiting for the transport ambulance to arrive and just asking God for guidance and strength. He continues to be in my life as I think back on that day.

There are other times that I remember asking God for help with health issues, my heart operation and the scare we had with Pattiann's MRI that might have been cancer but was not. In each instance as I prayed for His intervention, He was there to me giving me peace and guidance. As I have told many people that novena "works". Jesus walks with me and is present particularly when I ask Him to be.

I have asked God for guidance and safety through job changes, lay offs and travel. As I look back, I recognize that He was there for my family even if I did not see it at the time. Every time I have prayed, I know I have been answered,

There was one time when I realized God was speaking to me through my son, Kevin. Last January as we were waiting in Florida for the arrival of the family for our cruise, I was worried because of the weather in the Midwest that I thought would cause a delay in travel. As usual, I was not trusting very well. The night before they were all to arrive, Kevin called to check in and as I was expressing my worry he said, "Don't

worry, dad. They will all make it okay." That was God speaking to me through Kevin. I felt very much at ease after talking to him that evening.

God is present in my CRHP experience each time I am with the men. That has been true for each team that I have joined. As one guy said, "Jesus walks through the room." He guides me on what to say and he guides me in the stories that are awakened in me. Most of those I have written down in story or poetry.

He is also present to me in the Called and Gifted experience through learning and the fellowship of my brothers and sisters. This was particularly true during our theological reflection time together. As I have written about before, I had a remarkable experience the next morning after our first session in which I know God was speaking to me and guiding me as to how to talk to Him. God was also present in the eyes and tears of others at our sending forth exercise. I saw Him in them and in their expression of love and gratitude for me. He was present to me in the quiet time in the chapel at the seminary when I was reflecting on my journey image. I know He was with me that afternoon.

As I look back and reflect on these experiences, I only wish I could recognize Him each day instead of after the fact in reflection. I wish I could be more apostle-like and less like the disciples on the road to Emmaus who saw Him when He was gone.

Prayer

As I struggle with improving my private prayer life, what I have been trying recently is to develop a quiet time each day to begin my prayer. Usually that is during my commute in the morning and in the evening. I have learned to turn off the radio and just try to talk to God quietly. Sometimes that is very effective and sometimes not. If I find my mind wandering or being somewhat blank, then I can usually spice things up with some religious or inspirational music. I find music most stimulating to my inner self.

At noon each day, I also try to spend 15 minutes in more structured prayer. It begins with 5 minutes of scripture reading, 5 minutes of reflection on that scripture and 5 minutes of private prayer. While this was somewhat awkward at first, it is now more comfortable for me. This also is done in silence. At this time this seems to be working well. Rote prayer does not work as well for me. The rosary, for instance, becomes too monotonous and I can get through it without thinking much. I am much more comfortable with spontaneous prayer.

The other thing that I have been doing to stimulate my prayer life is to read books on the subject. Having someone tell you how to pray is a little like having someone telling you how to swim. You never really can do it until you jump in, swallow some water and struggle. Eventually it gets easier. But what I

have found is how to set the right mood, get some ideas that may work, and follow others struggles. I know that I am not alone in my effort to make it better. Almost all of the books do stress the need for solitude and the need to be personal but that is about the extent of commonality. I will continue to work at this, try different things, and listen for the voice of God speaking to me.

Now after several weeks of committing to personal prayer by spending time at noon, quietly reading the bible and reflecting on the reading, it is not getting any easier. However, today I read two passages from Luke that particularly spoke to me.

Luke 5: 4-8

After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch." Simon said in reply, "Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets." When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

Luke 5: 27-32

After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him.

Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners."

Many times I feel like Peter who said “depart from me... for I am a sinful man”. I guess that I do not always feel worthy of God’s love and just want to be left alone. But then I read the second quote and realize that Jesus came exactly for me. That gives me the encouragement to continue. I am still distracted at times but now I can mention that in my prayer and that seems to get me back on track. I find the plan of scripture, reflection and prayer comfortable and it has given me some insights into the message of the gospels. Maybe God talks to me by bringing a particular passage to my consciousness. I just need to be quiet enough to hear it.

I hope that by continuing, I get more comfortable with this. I can then do a better job of telling Jesus about myself and listening for His words to me.

Restless Mind and Soul

I have been particularly restless in recent days. I am not sure what causes this but it keeps me restless during the day and especially at night. I toss and turn and wake up tired and on edge. I imagine that this is due to me thinking too much about all that I need to do in the near future or worrying about what has gone on in the past. It is the worries of life that keep me churning. I am living too much in the past or the future and not just enjoying the present. I think about the uncertainty of life, how my children and grandchildren will be in the future, will they all be cradled in Jesus' arms when I am gone. If I trusted more in the Lord, I could perhaps be more at ease. He always will give them what they need and thus I do not need to worry but I continue.

I feel restless in my need to be with God and unsure at this time of His love for me. I probably see it as insufficient for my needs but this is really the wrong way to look at it. He loves me unconditionally and will always give me everything that I need. I must continue to ask Him to help me to see the path that I must travel. His guidance is all that I need.

When my mind is restless, then my soul is also restless. I need to continue to seek His will in my life so that I can have a calm mind and soul.

Dear Lord,

Help me to see Your love in my life that I may follow Your path. Let me truly understand that life is not about me but about how I can serve You and my neighbors. So often I am walking in the fog unable to find my way. Give me your Spirit to burn away that fog so that I can follow your Son, Jesus. And if that fog persists, give me the trust that you are directing my footsteps. This I ask through Jesus, Your Son, my brother, who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

This is a prayer that I need to pray and use to ask for the guidance of the Holy Spirit in my journey of life toward a deeper faith. If my trust is like this then I will be able to calm my restless mind and soul.

The Tattered Novena

It was not tattered at first.

When I was first introduced to the Novena by my wife it was because our niece, Jennifer, was very ill with meningitis. We stayed up all night praying the novena so that she would recover and that no one else would contract that illness from her. I am not sure of the correct timeline but it seemed that she started to become better immediately after we finished.

O Jesus, who hast said, ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you, through the intercession of Mary, Thy Most Holy Mother, I knock, I seek, I ask that my prayer be granted.

I do not remember the next time that I used this novena but I know that it is always very powerful and always seems to be answered. I was told that I should be very specific for what I was asking. While I have written that set prayers are many times boring to me, this is the exception to that. The novena when completed gives me a great sense of warmth and comfort. It relieves any anxiety that I may have as I worry about what ever situation that I might be praying for.

O Jesus, who hast said, all that you ask of the Father in My Name. He will grant you through the intercession of Mary,

Thy Most Holy Mother, I humbly and urgently ask Thy Father in Thy Name that my prayer be granted.

I prayed this novena when I knew that I had a heart problem and would have to undergo by-pass surgery. While the surgery was necessary, it went well and I recovered completely in a rather short period of time. This happened even though I had to go in for a second surgery shortly after the original operation to control the bleeding. I was totally at ease with the situation even though my family was concerned.

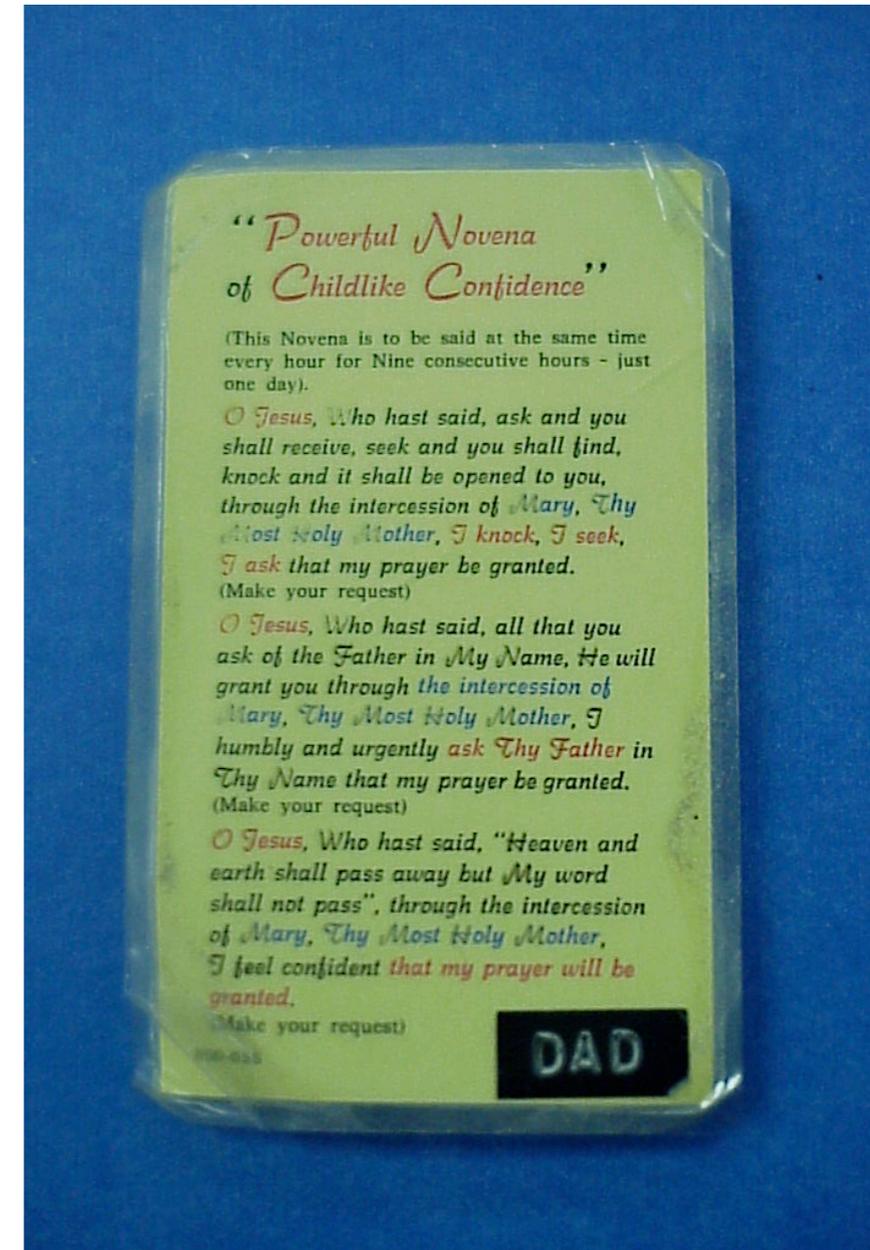
Using this has gotten me through the anxiety of lost jobs, friends serving in danger in the military, and numerous concerns about the health and safety of my family. It always seems to be answered but the most important thing is that it gives me a sense of peace as I know that I have committed my worries and concerns into God's hands. I am at peace.

O Jesus, who hast said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away but My word shall not pass", through the intercession of Mary, Thy Most Holy Mother, I feel confident that my prayer will be granted.

This novena is the source of miracles that I see in my life. A most remarkable occurrence happened last year when Pattann and I went to Florida at the end of the summer. She had earlier completed her normal mammogram and the doctor indicated that she wanted a further CAT scan because she had seen something on her lung and pancreas. Needless to say we were both very nervous about the tests because we had just gone through the diagnosis of pancreatic cancer with Norm

Nichol and he was dying at the time. The follow up test was done just after we flew back from Florida. I prayed the novena for her health and that nothing was wrong. It took a few days before the doctor called to say that whatever she saw was normal. To me that was a miracle because of the novena that I had said.

One might ask why it is tattered since it seems to be so powerful in my life. It is tattered because I carry it so often in my pocket and pray it so frequently. It is actually a small card, about the size of a holy card and Pattiann had it laminated. I am able to say it at work during the day if necessary. It goes with me a lot. It is tattered because the lamination is now beginning to peel back and fray. But it is anything but tattered in its effect. By saying the novena I am able to put all my worries in God's hands and this is the most remarkable aspect of its effect.



The Body of Christ

I have been reflecting on the essence of what “The Body of Christ” means in my life. It is a concept that I have in my head but I am not sure I have a feeling of what it means to my heart. Some of the earliest scripture references to the concept of the Body of Christ seem to come from the Pauline letters to the Corinthians and the Ephesians.

1Corinthians 12: 22-31

Indeed, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, and those parts of the body that we consider less honorable we surround with greater honor, and our less presentable parts are treated with greater propriety, whereas our more presentable parts do not need this. But God has so constructed the body as to give greater honor to a part that is without it, so that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another.

If (one) part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.

Now you are Christ's body, and individually parts of it. Some people God has designated in the church to be, first, apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then,

gifts of healing, assistance, administration, and varieties of tongues.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work mighty deeds? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? Strive eagerly for the greatest spiritual gifts. But I shall show you a still more excellent way.

Ephesians 1:22-23

And he put all things beneath his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of the one who fills all things in every way.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Rather, living the truth in love, we should grow in every way into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, with the proper functioning of each part, brings about the body's growth and builds itself up in love.

One can also find references to the definitions of the Body of Christ in the Catechism which seem to be drawn from these scripture passages. All of these show the beginning of the understanding of what this concept means. However I am searching for what it means to me.

The Church is communion with Jesus

From the beginning, Jesus associated his disciples with his own life, revealed the mystery of the Kingdom to them, and gave them a share in his mission, joy, and sufferings. Jesus spoke of a still more intimate communion between him and those who would follow him: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . I am the vine, you are the branches." And he proclaimed a mysterious and real communion between his own body and ours: "He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him."

When his visible presence was taken from them, Jesus did not leave his disciples orphans. He promised to remain with them until the end of time; he sent them his Spirit. As a result communion with Jesus has become, in a way, more intense: "By communicating his Spirit, Christ mystically constitutes as his body those brothers of his who are called together from every nation."

The comparison of the Church with the body casts light on the intimate bond between Christ and his Church. Not only is she gathered around him; she is united in him, in his body. Three aspects of the Church as the Body of Christ are to be more specifically noted: the unity of all her members with each other as a result of their union with Christ; Christ as head of the Body; and the Church as bride of Christ.

"One Body"

Believers who respond to God's word and become members of Christ's Body, become intimately united with him: "In that body the life of Christ is communicated to those who believe, and who, through the sacraments, are united in a hidden and real way to Christ in his Passion and glorification." This is especially true of Baptism, which unites us to Christ's death and Resurrection, and the Eucharist, by which "really sharing in the body of the Lord, . . . we are taken up into communion with him and with one another."

The body's unity does not do away with the diversity of its members: "In the building up of Christ's Body there is engaged a diversity of members and functions. There is only one Spirit who, according to his own richness and the needs of the ministries, gives his different gifts for the welfare of the Church." The unity of the Mystical Body produces and stimulates charity among the faithful: "From this it follows that if one member suffers anything, all the members suffer with him, and if one member is honored, all the members together rejoice." Finally, the unity of the Mystical Body triumphs over all human divisions: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Perhaps the best parallel that I can draw is to the body of the Sharp family. We are all together in our thinking and love for one another. We are most of the time separated by time and

space but not in our thoughts. We care about one another and would give whatever is necessary to see that the others of our family are supported and comforted. Some of our fondest times are at meals when we can all be together, carrying out several conversations at once, laughing, and teasing. Each member brings their special gift to the table of the family and revels in the collective delight of being together.

Galatians 6:10

So then, while we have the opportunity, let us do good to all, but especially to those who belong to the family of the faith.

Another example of this feeling happened just a few weeks ago, when Pattiann and I were at a Notre Dame football game. We had been in the stadium all afternoon watching, cheering and discussing the ebb and flow of the game with those around us. We had a common interest and experience that afternoon. After the game we went to mass in the chapel of one of the residence halls. It was very crowded but the priest was welcoming us and bringing us all in to the chapel. Everyone then was in a welcoming mood; moving over in the seats to make more room; and sitting on the floor to make room for the older people to have seats.

The priest told us to stay seated during the mass because of the crowd and so that we would be comfortable. The readers rose from the crowd to proclaim the first two readings. The communion ministers likewise rose from the crowd. I had a sense of a common prayer that was being offered from this group to God. When the celebration was over, we all dis-

persed and went our separate ways refreshed for our journey home. How did this happen? We were from all over the country, from different parishes, from different life experiences. What was the magic of this celebration that touched my heart? Was this more similar to the type of celebration that the early Christians experienced when they gathered to remember Jesus and share the Eucharist? It filled my heart with a sense of family and celebration just as do the gatherings of the Sharp clan. I felt that I was part of the Body of Christ.

Luke 24: 29-31

So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

The contrast to this is the feeling that I get when worshiping with the faith community with whom I am most familiar, St. Joseph. The daily and Sunday liturgies do not give me the same heart feeling that I had at Notre Dame or with the body of the Sharp family. Is the worship too structured or too formal? Is the crowd too dispersed or too large? Do we all come from and go out into such a different experience? Am I just feeling lonely within the large crowd that is present? Each of these may be a part of the answer.

Our worship on Sunday is more structured and more formal. This may be for a good reason but I am not sure if it always

needs to be such. This is not exactly the same case on weekdays however. In both cases, people seem to spread out to fill the void. I suppose it is just entropy or like gas molecules filling a volume. Being far apart definitely limits the feeling of togetherness. This could be changed but it will take some work. A smaller worship space for weekday liturgies would definitely help. Hospitality and welcoming are major goals for our parish, and while St. Joseph has made great strides it could always be improved.

The one aspect that I find most encouraging however is the impact of the Christ Renews His Parish retreats on the atmosphere at the parish. I get that “heart sense” of the Body of Christ from being with the men and women who have gone through the CRHP experience. Is it in the essence of working and sharing together that we have become the Body of Christ that I am contemplating? If that expands to the larger community of St. Joseph, then CRHP can be the leaven that will cause the entire parish to “rise”.

I will continue to contemplate how I see the “Body of Christ” manifest in our community of worship at St. Joseph and to look to the scripture for references as to how I might further understand that concept. Perhaps then I can provide some answers rather than just a series of questions.

The Fire Within

The past year has been remarkable for me. While I have always thought that I was a “good Catholic” by going to mass regularly, serving others and supporting my parish in whatever way that they asked, I was only slightly focused toward Jesus. I guess that my faith was more like some smoldering embers left over from the original Big Bang of my baptism and confirmation. Embers will remain glowing in a fire if properly protected. However when fresh oxygen is mixed in along with some new fuel, these embers can produce a new resurgence of flame. This is what has happened in my life recently.

In May 2004, I was fortunate to have had the experience of my Christ Renews His Parish men’s retreat. A group of 15 or so remarkable men were able to share their life experiences and spirituality with a fresh team of which I was a part. In some ways, I think that the Holy Spirit guided me to that particular weekend. I had really wanted to attend the first weekend but could not because of Jay and Anna’s wedding. As it turned out the first team had a rather disappointing original weekend presented by a somewhat unprepared archdiocesan team. However they more than made up for their weekend by doing a great job on our retreat. I am not sure that the experience would have been as profound if I had been on that first team.

The CRHP experience just had such a stunning effect on me that weekend that I mentioned to Kevin Murphy on Sunday morning how stories were bouncing around inside my head based on what I heard. I now realize however that they were not in my head as much as in my heart. When I got home, I had to put the first story, “The story of a gentle man and a courageous woman”, on paper. While it was very fulfilling to get the story on paper, it was only the beginning. I decided that it was time to plan to retire to pursue my new passion, and Pattiann and I also decided to apply for the Called and Gifted Lay Ministry Formation program at the University of St. Mary of the Lake.

I decided to stay involved with the men of Team 2 and over the next 6 months they became my brothers in Christ. Throughout the process of faith sharing and discernment, I heard their stories of love, struggle and spirituality that were affirming to me as I realized I had the same struggles. The Holy Spirit moved in me as I discerned to present the Witness on Christian Awareness. I probably would have preferred a different witness but as it turns out this was perfect. Don Rigali, Jack Brennan, Matt Hollis, Tom Weber, Michael Knight, Mike Ryan, Bob Blanke, Peter Glover, Kevin Murphy, Ken Keipura and Chris Causey shared with me their visions of fatherhood, church, and the kingdom of God. Even though they spanned almost 4 decades in age, they became as close to me personally as my own brother.

Sirach 44: 1-15

Now will I praise those godly men, our ancestors, each in his own time: The abounding glory of the Most High's portion, his own part, since the days of old. Subduers of the land in kingly fashion, men of renown for their might,

Or counselors in their prudence, or seers of all things in prophecy; Resolute princes of the folk, and governors with their staves; Authors skilled in composition, and forgers of epigrams with their spikes;

Composers of melodious psalms, or discoursers on lyric themes; Stalwart men, solidly established and at peace in their own estates--

All these were glorious in their time, each illustrious in his day. Some of them have left behind a name and men recount their praiseworthy deeds;

But of others there is no memory, for when they ceased, they ceased. And they are as though they had not lived, they and their children after them.

Yet these also were godly men whose virtues have not been forgotten; Their wealth remains in their families, their heritage with their descendants; Through God's covenant with them their family endures, their posterity, for their sake.

And for all time their progeny will endure, their glory will never be blotted out; Their bodies are peacefully laid away, but their name lives on and on.

At gatherings their wisdom is retold, and the assembly proclaims their praise.

What Sirach is saying is that while some holy men are renowned for their deeds and revered for all time, many other men are remembered only by their own family for a short time but are equally holy; and their heritage of holiness remains in their families. Let me praise the men of Team 2 whose holiness I have seen and I trust will be remembered by their families long after we are all gone.

The CRHP weekend that we gave in November meant even more to me than the one we received in May. In the context of the teamwork, the Holy Spirit inspired me to shed my self-centeredness, my introversion and to look for ways to proclaim His message of love and service to others. The embers were now blazing in my heart. This has continued as we work to bring to fruition some of the ideas that we put forth together. We continue to meet for breakfast on Saturday and have expanded it to encompass all men of the parish. I am personally interested in establishing a men's day of reflection on fatherhood. Plans are bouncing around within me for this.

In the fall, Pattiann and I began our classes for the Lay Ministry formation. The purpose of the first year was for each of us to learn to know ourselves and to provide us with a depth of knowledge about the Catholic faith that will assist us in our future ministry. The unexpected part of this for me was the sense of teamness that has developed with the other participants in the program through the classes and the days of for-

mation. I am learning about how each of them is remarkable in their faith and the desire that they have to continue this journey. I am in awe of their ability to pray, question and move in the way of knowledge that our professors challenge us to do.

What it has done for me is to allow me to formulate prayer for my ministries and it has challenged me to deepen my own personal prayer life. While I am still struggling with this, I am exploring what will work best for me. Two things seem to help. The first is some quiet time, in which I can read scripture and then reflect on that scripture. The second is that a realization that even in my times of unworthiness, God still wants to hear from me and to talk to me. I find that set prayers are not as important to me as more spontaneous prayers. I have continued to write “my stories” as this helps me to organize my thoughts and in many ways is a form of prayer. I have written about my parents, brothers, the women in my life, my friends and my extended family. I am also exploring more deeply what scripture and prayer means to me. Some of these I have shared with my own family and I have an overwhelming feeling that I would like to share this with my friends in CRHP and Called and Gifted. That is a scary but in some ways exciting prospect. What better way to tell them who I am?

The fire within has risen to an incredible level. In some ways it seeks to consume me. I wonder how the apostles dealt with this. I am not that brave yet. I am looking forward to the next year of ministry training and I suspect that my stories will continue to expand.

The Sacraments

In an effort to better understand the impact of the Sacraments in my life, I do not think that it is sufficient to simply relate the form of the sacrament with how my life was changed through receiving them. While I have the most experience with Eucharist and Reconciliation, some I do not remember. Others I remember only vaguely. I can reflect on what I remember but each of the sacraments influences my life even today years after receiving the formal sacrament itself.

During the study of Christology, one of the topics presented included how all of the sacraments are active in our life through the life of Jesus. They are interactions between us and Jesus that are intended to make a difference. It was presented as “What does each sacrament say.” Based on that presentation, I was able to contemplate how that is in my life.

Baptism – saying “Welcome”

Mark 1:9-11

It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice

came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

Obviously, since I was baptized as an infant in Washington, DC, I do not remember the impact that it had on me. I remember some of the stories that my mother and father shared about how my godparents could not attend because of the war. I even remember that two others who live nearby stood in for them. I do remember the impact of the baptism of my children, my godchildren and my grandchildren but none as much as Luke, my youngest grandson. I knew that I could now shout, “We have a new Catholic in the house!”

We are charged by our baptism to a life of discipleship. We are designated priest, prophet, and king. Since this is the sacrament of welcoming, every time I open myself to another, I welcome them. I am living my baptism. It can be as simple as giving a hug or handshake or taking time to listen to them. I am showing them welcome. The most recognizable symbol of baptism is the water. Water in the Old Testament was a symbol of chaos, evil, lack of God. However water is also necessary for life as it quenches thirst; it washes us; it cools us. So it is, as we come out of the water of chaos; have our thirst for God quenched; and our sins washed away.

Baptism is the foundation for my faith journey. Just as Peter is the rock on which the church is built, baptism is the rock on which my experience of church is built. All the other sacraments come from this and are extensions of what baptism calls me to do. As priest, I have a role to see that ritual hap-

pens. So as I participate in the liturgical life of the Church, I am living my baptism. It can be at mass, at a meeting where prayer is said or the word is broken open, or saying the rosary. As a prophet, I have been called to proclaim the Word by my actions, my words, and my life. Standing up for what is right and moral is living my baptism. As a king, I must serve. My baptism demands it. A good king sees that everyone is taken care of properly, fairly and lovingly. That is what is required by my baptism.

Confirmation – saying “Yes”

Luke 22:41-42

After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done."

This is one of the sacraments that I remember, not so much for the day that it happened but I remember that I had an awakening to being influenced by St. Francis of Assisi whose name I took as my confirmation name. I have written about this in earlier reflections but it is just as alive today as it was on that day in third grade. I remember it as the day on which I got enthusiastic about life.

What is really happening now is that I have to say yes to God continually. He is always asking me to do things, to follow Him, and to most importantly pray to Him. I do not always listen and sometimes I flatly ignore Him in my sinful ways but I have to continue to pick myself up and look for the yes. I

have a free will and confirmation is my free will choice to follow my baptism and what it is asking of me.

When and how do I hear the questions asked? Mostly they are asked through others as their needs are made apparent. Sometimes the others are friends and family, sometimes the others are strangers, and sometimes the others are people that I do not particularly like. The struggle is to say yes to God for each of these others and to do what is needed even when I am tired or want to say no.

The most conspicuous symbol is the tongues of fire that descended on the apostles at Pentecost. I recognize the feeling of being “fired” up, or having a fire within that causes me to be so enthusiastic about an issue. I have written about a change that occurred after the CRHP weekend and the starting of the Called and Gifted journey. But God asks us to say yes even when that fire is not burning as brightly. That is the time when I must dig deeply into my reserves of energy and just trust the Lord. Confirmation is the sacrament of coming into adulthood within the Church. It gives me the grace to live my baptism when the world might tell me the contrary.

Eucharist – saying “Thank you”

Luke 24:30-31

And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

Of all the sacraments, Eucharist is the one that most profoundly affects me as a Catholic. It is the sacrament that is at the center of our liturgical celebrations and I most often partake. The Eucharist calls us into community with Jesus and each other as the Body of Christ. Jesus is present in the world through the Eucharist and we in sharing the Eucharist affirm ourselves as members of the Body of Christ.

The word “eucharist” means gratitude according to the dictionary. While this may not really make sense on the first look, it is the sacrament in which I share in an intimate way myself with Jesus. By doing this I am showing Him my gratitude for all that He has done for me. An expression of gratitude is an expression of love. In a family, I say thank you and in doing so I am showing respect and affection for the person. Jesus has asked me to love God with all my heart and by receiving the Eucharist, I am showing that love.

I am also a member of the family of Jesus, the Body of Christ. I share a meal with this family when I share in the Eucharist. This is the time when we can all sit down and share conversation and love with each other. But there are other times when I take the family for granted, where I am going through the motions. I am not recognizing Jesus in our midst. Is this similar to how the disciples on the road to Emmaus failed to see Jesus until He opened their eyes in the breaking of the bread? Is this the time when I am not always loving and thankful for what I have? That does happen in my life.

Since Eucharist is an example of our love and community with the Body of Christ, I live the Eucharist when I express that love. There are opportunities on a continuous basis to do this if I only take those opportunities. This is how I can live this sacrament throughout the day. There are other times when I am the recipient of love and it is just as important to allow myself to receive as to give. Because by being receptive I am affirming the love that is given by others in the community.

Jesus has given us a very special gift in the Eucharist. It is a gift in which we can partake everyday by receiving the sacrament and in which we can partake by everyday in how we live our lives as a member of the human race and the Body of Christ.

Reconciliation – saying “I’m sorry”

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times."

Mark 2:5

When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven."

The scriptures are filled with stories of forgiveness, both stories of how God forgave the Jews and stories of Jesus forgiving sins. In my life this is probably the most common struggle

as I find things for which I must be forgiven and in forgiving others myself. But this is so much a part of being human, being in a family and being in relationship. Thus as I just go through life, I am living the sacrament of reconciliation each and every day.

One of the prayers said at mass each day is a prayer of reconciliation. "I confess to Almighty God and to you my brothers and sisters, that I have sinned through my thoughts and through my words, in what I have done and in what I have failed to do..." I am trying to reconcile myself to God and to the Body of Christ. That is what I must do if I am to live what baptism asks of me as a king. I need to say I am sorry for any intentional or unintentional wrongs that I have done.

Living as a human being means living in relationship and being sensitive to how I interact with my brothers and sisters. Being reconciled with those around us is being reconciled with Jesus as well since we are all members of the Body of Christ and thus have the presence of Jesus in each of us. This is the consequence of the Incarnation.

Loving is reconciling, as the prodigal son was reconciled with his father and the second son was also reconciled with the father and the father with him. These opportunities abound in life and thus I have many chances to live this sacrament each day as a consequence of being fully human.

Holy Orders/Matrimony – saying "I will and I do"

1Corinthians 7:10-11

To the married, however, I give this instruction (not I, but the Lord): a wife should not separate from her husband --and if she does separate she must either remain single or become reconciled to her husband--and a husband should not divorce his wife.

John 1:41-43

He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter). The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me."

These sacraments are usually discussed together because they are associated with one's vocation in life. I have been blessed to have received the sacrament of matrimony when I married Pattiann almost 38 years ago. As a young groom, I was smitten with her and while I understood the deep implications of the covenant that we entered, I have learned by experience how love binds us together throughout good and bad times. Saying "I do" means that I will help find her way home to Jesus and that she will do the same for me. As I look at it, the difference is in our techniques. I am more comfortable to lead by example and she is better at challenging me to push further to stretch my comfort zone. I live the sacrament every day not just with her but with my children, my grandchildren and others in the community of God.

Based on my baptism, I also live the sacrament of Holy Orders, in that I am a priest, a prophet and a king. In saying “I will”, I am saying that I am a disciple of Jesus just as a priest is a disciple. I just have different techniques for my discipleship. As a lay minister in the church, I take on certain pastoral duties to the Body of Christ.

Sacrament of the Sick – saying “Be healed”

Luke 5:18-24

And some men brought on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed; they were trying to bring him in and set (him) in his presence. But not finding a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the tiles into the middle in front of Jesus. When he saw their faith, he said, "As for you, your sins are forgiven." Then the scribes and Pharisees began to ask themselves, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them in reply, "What are you thinking in your hearts? Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home."

This is the sacrament that I least understood until I received it before my by-pass surgery. I had always thought of it as the sacrament of the dying or seriously ill but I now realize that it is a sacrament for anyone who needs healing. My feeling after

the sacrament was one of utter peace and tranquility. As one might imagine, I was really nervous preparing for my surgery and I did not even think about receiving the sacrament until Fr. John asked if I wanted to receive the sacrament of healing. This was so moving that I feel it affected me much in the same way as Confirmation did. I will never forget that time.

Living this sacrament provides many opportunities to heal others and in doing so to heal myself. Every time I go to the shelter, I can listen and serve the guests and thus provide some little bit of healing for them. Being with a family at a funeral, listening to a story that needs to be told, talking to children about life, all provide moments of healing and forgiving. As shown in the passage from Luke, Jesus healed and forgave at the same time. While I, many times, feel inadequate in my ability to help people heal, it usually hits me later that I have made a difference.

Much like Reconciliation, living this sacrament is just a normal part of life that I must be open to recognize. In many cases it is related to the issues of Catholic Social Justice teaching, in which I can heal others by working to improve their conditions.

My Catholic Church is a sacramental church. That is one of its unique characteristics. But the sacraments are not just received but also must be lived. I only hope that I can continue to find ways to live them as noted above and to continue to find new ways to live them as I deepen my faith.

Transformation

Mark 9: 2-10

After six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no fuller on earth could bleach them. Then Elijah appeared to them along with Moses, and they were conversing with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Rabbi, it is good that we are here! Let us make three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He hardly knew what to say, they were so terrified. Then a cloud came, casting a shadow over them; then from the cloud came a voice, "This is my beloved Son. Listen to him."

Suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone but Jesus alone with them. As they were coming down from the mountain, he charged them not to relate what they had seen to anyone, except when the Son of Man had risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what rising from the dead meant.

As I was hearing this reading from the gospel of the second week of Lent, I was thinking about the discussion from our Christology class about the fact that Jesus was at the same time totally divine and totally human. I remember being

trained by the Sisters of St. Francis at St. Bernadette's school. They really concentrated on the divine nature of Jesus and while they might have mentioned His human nature they did not really stress it. In thinking about Jesus as totally human, the questionnaire from class raised my awareness of this. This is also noted in the Catechism as, "Taking up St. John's expression, "The Word became flesh," the Church calls "Incarnation" the fact that the Son of God assumed a human nature in order to accomplish our salvation in it." (Article 3, Section II, 461) And further it was mentioned that, "He became truly man while remaining truly God. Jesus Christ is true God and true man." (Article 3, Section III, 464) It is apparent from our discussion that Jesus suffered like me (Mark 14:34-35, Luke 22:44); he was tempted like me (Mark 1:12-13); he had his likes and dislikes like me; and he had a sexuality like me.

He was not a "super baby", just an infant who was loved, taught by his parents, and grew up as a young man. It is so comforting to know that I go through the same things that he went through, just many years later. While I can never be as he is, I do know that I have at least a chance to approach that with the help of the Holy Spirit. I can better understand Jesus and can feel the love and companionship that He offers to me as a fully human person.

The interesting thing in the passage from Mark is to think that the disciples knew Jesus as a man, who sweated, got dirty and lived as they did. During his transfiguration, they were awestruck and I am sure did not understand what was happening. They were amazed at his divinity shown on Mount Tabor.

This same story is told in Matthew (Matthew 17: 1-8) and in Luke (Luke 9:28-36). In neither story, however, do the authors mention that the disciples were dumbstruck as did Mark. As I hear this story centuries later, I am awestruck as well but more in contemplating his humanity. This has led to a transformation in how I see Jesus in my life and in the lives of those around me. He is attainable, approachable, more lovable and more present to me in his humanity. It is easier to understand how Jesus is present in all of us from the most familiar and lovable to the most humble or unhuggable.

Contemplation of His humanity makes the actions of St. Francis, St. Maximilian Kolbe and Mother Therese so much more understandable as they offered their lives to the service of others. They saw Jesus as human and divine in those they served whether it was a leper, the poor of Calcutta or a victim in the concentration camps of Hitler. I am not yet at that stage as I visit with the men at the shelter. I am still looking for those that I like instead of seeing Jesus in each of them.

I must continue to study and read about Jesus and to attempt to understand the mystery of the Incarnation that gave us a savior who is not only divine but also so human. This is brought out in the documents from the Second Vatican Council. "Jesus Christ, therefore, the Word made flesh, was sent as 'a man to men.'" (Dei Verbum, Chapter I, 4) And, "For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly

been made one of us, like us in all things except sin." (Gaudium et Spes, Part I, Chapter I, 22) And finally, it is written "For God's Word, by whom all things were made, was Himself made flesh so that as perfect man He might save all men and sum up all things in Himself." (Gaudium et Spes, Part I, Chapter IV, 45)

I am also working on enriching my spirituality through a more human relationship with Jesus. Ronald Rolheiser indicates in his book, *The Holy Longing*, that there are four pillars to a balanced spirituality, private prayer and private morality, social justice, mellowness of spirit, and community worship. He points out that balanced is what is important. But Rolheiser also says that Christ is the basis for spirituality and goes deeply into what the Incarnation really means when he says, "We usually do not have much trouble conceiving of Jesus in this way, although, even there, we often hesitate to think of Jesus' body as mortal, sexual, and subject to illness, smell and other humbling bodily processes." (p. 78) If one thinks about the four pillars, it is easy to see where Jesus emulates each of them in His humanness. His example of personal prayer is shown in:

Luke 22:41-44

After withdrawing about a stone's throw from them and kneeling, he prayed, saying, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but yours be done." (And to strengthen him an angel from heaven appeared to

him. He was in such agony and he prayed so fervently that his sweat became like drops of blood falling on the ground.)

Jesus teaches about social justice issues in many passages. Perhaps the most famous is his Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1-12). But the easiest to understand and the basis of all social justice issues is when He says:

Luke 10:27

He said in reply, "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself."

Mark 12:31

The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Mellowness of heart and spirit, which is really having the right attitude or taking time to laugh, is shown in description of the wedding feast at Cana (John 2:1-12) and in:

Matthew 6:16-18

When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance, so that they may appear to others to be fasting. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you may not appear to be fasting, except to your

Father who is hidden. And your Father who sees what is hidden will repay you.

Jesus realized the importance of community. He was feeding the five thousand (Matthew 14: 15-21), preaching to the crowds, and teaching them to pray (Luke 11:1-4). The culmination of the community teaching was at the last supper.

Mark 14:22-26

While they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, and they all drank from it. He said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which will be shed for many. Amen, I say to you, I shall not drink again the fruit of the vine until the day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." Then, after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

So Jesus in his humanity showed us examples of a balanced spirituality. Based on the model of Rolheiser and the available scripture references to Jesus' humanness, I must continue to seek who Jesus is so that I have a balanced Christology in which I can feel comforted. And I must continue to pray that I undergo the completion of the transformation that is going on in me based on my experience in the Lay Ministry Formation program begun last year. It has opened my eyes to the possibilities that are available to me to proclaim the gospel good news to the world in my word and actions. Jesus as God and man gives me that comfort that I am looking for in my life.

Scripture



Abide in Me

John 15:1-9

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and everyone that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit. You are already pruned because of the word that I spoke to you. Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. Anyone who does not remain in me will be thrown out like a branch and wither; people will gather them and throw them into a fire and they will be burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. As the Father loves me, so I also love you. Remain in my love.

To me this scripture passage is a love story. In some ways the imagery is very maternal. It is a mother holding a baby to her breast, or a baby in the womb before being born. "Remain in me as I remain in you". But, it is also a grandfather wrapping a coat around a crying child to comfort them or a dad hugging

a teenage daughter on the breakup of a boyfriend relationship. Is the author trying to describe the unconditional love that God has for each of us? God cares for us and we are connected to Him through Jesus, the vine.

The reference to bearing fruit also seems to be significant. How often do you see references to someone in love, blossoming or sprouting? Blossoming is the first step in forming fruit. That also is a reference to love in this scripture passage. If you do not love, then you are dying. Dead branches are cut off and burned or thrown away.

As a couple develops a deeper love for one another, they undergo a pruning to lop off the part of them which is selfish and unloving. To get to that level, requires work, suffering, sacrifice and when that is achieved the love is deeper and more beautiful. We need to do the same to love God and to deepen that love. Love of God requires a changing of attitudes, a dying, or some pain in order to follow Him and His message.

Even if I look at this as the description of the Body of Christ as is the more usual explanation of this passage, I think of love. If you think of your own body, in some ways part of you will sacrifice itself for the good of the whole. In a trauma situation, parts of your system will shut down to protect other, more vital parts. That is really a sign of love to give of yourself for the good of others. Or if I think of the Body of Christ as the grouping of people who are connected through our faith and the Eucharist, we have a common goal of following Jesus and proclaiming His message. In order to achieve that goal I

sometimes have to give of my time, give up my pride or put my personal interest on the shelf for the good of the whole. That also is a sign of love which is related to this scripture passage.

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5, 1-12

When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them, saying:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the land.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the clean of heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you (falsely) because of me.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven. Thus they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

The Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus gives us his new commandments has always been one of my favorite passages from scripture. These are “new commandments” that tell us what we should do, not what we should not do. They are the commandments of love. What is difficult is determining what they mean in my life.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit” is probably the most difficult for me to understand. The footnotes in the bible, indicate that those who are “poor in spirit” are always trusting in God and his goodness. The words seem contradictory however. I think the best way to explain this may be that even if you are poor in any fashion but have an undying belief in the goodness of God, then you will not really be poor but will inherit the Kingdom. You will be rich in God’s eyes. This is the most difficult for me since I just do not think that I have enough faith to be truly trusting in God. My best example for this was my mother. She never seemed to complain about anything and even though I know that she was disappointed at times she had an undying faith that it would all turn out for the best. When the Berlin wall fell in 1989, I remember mom saying that she had been praying for the fall of communism for many years and her prayers were finally answered. She never complained just prayed. That is my model for faith. My challenge

is that I can have that same type of faith and let go of my doubts.

“Blessed are they who mourn”. I am in awe of people who can comfort the mourning. It is so difficult for me to know what to say but I am beginning to realize that your presence alone is sometimes enough to provide what a mourner needs. An example is the sense of comfort that Fr. John gave us at Amanda’s burial and the impact that the presence of all of our family friends had on us on that day. My challenge is to be able to overcome my introverted personality and provide that comfort to someone who is hurting.

“Blessed are the meek”. I am fond of this beatitude because I am an introvert, but it also pertains to those who work behind the scenes for God’s kingdom and bring it to all. The antithesis is the brash, overbearing athlete or CEO who expects the world to stop for them. My father is my hero as one who was meek. I have written about him extensively. I remember his always telling me that you should be kind to people who serve in restaurants or stores. They have a very tough job, he always said. I never saw him rude or unfair to anyone. My challenge is to be able to follow in his footsteps and always be kind and helpful to everyone.

“Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for righteousness”. Mother Theresa and St. Francis are the models that I hold up for myself in trying to understand this beatitude. While they are the most visible models, there are so many more people who work for social justice in Jesus’ name. An example is a

young man, whose name is unimportant. He gave up a year of his life after graduating from the University of Notre Dame to live at the Mary and Joseph House shelter on the westside of Chicago and serve the homeless men and women who had nowhere else to turn. He eventually moved on to a job in New York but he left an indelible mark on me for his service to God’s people. I believe that there is a lot of good in this world which needs to be tapped. The challenge for me is to be courageous enough to stand up for what is right and to put my Christianity into action.

“Blessed are the merciful”. Occasionally, reports are shown in the media of a family that forgives a criminal for a murder of a family member. These reports are presented because of the spectacular nature of the forgiveness. However it is more prevalent to be asked to be merciful to those who cut you off in a car or treat you rudely in a store. Showing them God’s mercy and forgiveness is so difficult at times. It is so human to want to strike back when you feel slighted. I know that this goes through my mind even though I never follow through. My challenge is to always keep my mind clear so that unkind thoughts never even enter.

“Blessed are the clean of heart”. This is my biggest challenge and I suspect it is true for so many others as well. In this media world, we are constantly bombarded with sexual images and innuendos. These are so difficult to avoid and reject. Our society says that anything is okay if it makes you feel good. Others are on earth for our use. But I think that it also means to me to have a heart which is free of desires for goods, power,

and prestige. These also are very prevalent in our society. What I feel is, the real challenge is to be very sincere and honest. Hypocrisy is so very common in our society as many of our icons are found to have feet of clay. In many ways, I feel that this is even worse because hypocrisy implies that one is lying to protect oneself because of a need for power or prestige which may be lost. Desires are always part of humanity as a by-product of our sinfulness. My challenge is to face sinfulness directly, name it and work to tame it. This is always so difficult.

“Blessed are the peacemakers”. The Nobel Peace prize is one reward for peacemakers but if this is the only reward then this beatitude is beyond the reach of most of us. Almost all of us have the opportunity to be peacemakers in our own families, our work place, our community and our church. It is the little “wars” that I think this beatitude speaks to. To me the challenge is to be a peacemaker when I am one of the combatants in the argument. It is being able to ask forgiveness and to forgive when I am passionately defending my position. Being a peacemaker may require a complete change of heart. I only pray that I have the courage to pursue that path when it is presented to me.

“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness”. This is like the medal for bravery. Most of us never will be asked to be a martyr for our faith. But most of us will have opportunities to stand up for what is right and to be ridiculed by our “friends” for our stand. It is our stand against gossip, against pornography, against prejudice, against dishonesty or

against any type of intolerance that will alienate us from the mainstream of society. It takes courage to follow the gospel path. This is particularly difficult when we are looking for acceptance from our peers. My challenge is to have the courage to make that stand even when I would rather just ignore the situation. I need to say that this is wrong and I will not condone that type of behavior. For someone like me, who is always trying to please everyone, this is especially difficult.

As I continue to be challenged to live the beatitudes, I only hope that I can dig more deeply into my own soul to have the courage to act out these ideals in my life so I can serve as a beacon of Christianity for others.



Do You Love Me?

John 21:1-19

After this, Jesus revealed himself again to his disciples at the Sea of Tiberias. He revealed himself in this way. Together were Simon Peter, Thomas called Didymus, Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, Zebedee's sons, and two others of his disciples. Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We also will come with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

When it was already dawn, Jesus was standing on the shore; but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, "Children, have you caught anything to eat?" They answered him, "No." So he said to them, "Cast the net over the right side of the boat and you will find something." So they cast it, and were not able to pull it in because of the number of fish. So the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord."

When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he tucked in his garment, for he was lightly clad, and jumped into the sea. The other disciples came in the boat, for they were not far from shore, only about a hundred yards, dragging the net with the fish. When they climbed out on shore, they saw a charcoal fire with fish on it and bread. Jesus said to them,

"Bring some of the fish you just caught." So Simon Peter went over and dragged the net ashore full of one hundred fifty-three large fish. Even though there were so many, the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come, have breakfast." And none of the disciples dared to ask him, "Who are you?" because they realized it was the Lord. Jesus came over and took the bread and gave it to them, and in like manner the fish. This was now the third time Jesus was revealed to his disciples after being raised from the dead.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." He then said to him a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." He said to him, "Tend my sheep." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, "Do you love me?" and he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." (Jesus) said to him, "Feed my sheep. Amen, amen, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to dress yourself and go where you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." He said this signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when he had said this, he said to him, "Follow me."

As I was contemplating this passage from the gospel of John, I was struck particularly by the last part of this in which Jesus

asks Peter “Do you love me?” I think He asks me the same thing continuously. Not with an attitude of worry or concern but with a very, kind, father-like attitude. Knowing the answer already but reminding me to think about it.

Sometimes I feel embarrassed because I have denied Him like Peter through my sinfulness, my pride, my self-centeredness. He keeps asking me, “Do you love me?” He is calling me back to Him. His love and forgiveness is infinite and I keep coming back to try again. He does not need my love but I need His forgiveness. I wish I could show Him my love so He does not have to keep asking me, but I am just human. He understands but I am not sure that I have got it yet.

I have been married for almost 39 years and it took me many years to truly understand and accept the love of Pattiann. I am now confident in that love. Since God’s love is even greater, I know that it will take much longer to be confident and accepting of that. Then if I truly act always as if I love Him, I then am following His request to “Follow me.”

This is a remarkable story in which Peter is healed by being asked to look outward. He was not reprimanded or scolded only loved and pointed to the future. I hope that I can also be healed in the same way. Jesus mirrors His Father in this infinite love. May I have that love reflected in the way that I show love to my family and my community

Emmaus

The story of the two disciples' encounter with the risen Jesus on the road to Emmaus is one of the more recognizable passages in Luke's gospel. While there are obvious references to the Eucharist in this passage, I also see a much more extensive reference to the entire mass. The mass is our communal prayer celebrating our salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We gather together from our homes, walking into church as sinners beaten down by life in need of refreshment.

Now that very day two of them were going to a village seven miles from Jerusalem called Emmaus, and they were conversing about all the things that had occurred.

We are greeted at the door by members of the Body of Christ who represent Jesus Himself.

And it happened that while they were conversing and debating, Jesus himself drew near and walked with them, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing as you walk along?" They stopped, looking downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, said to him in reply, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know of the things that have taken place there in these days?" And he replied to them, "What sort of things?"

We explore the mystery of salvation through the liturgical prayers, the Gloria, and the telling of the great story in the Nicene Creed.

They said to him, "The things that happened to Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, how our chief priests and rulers both handed him over to a sentence of death and crucified him. But we were hoping that he would be the one to redeem Israel; and besides all this, it is now the third day since this took place. Some women from our group, however, have astounded us: they were at the tomb early in the morning and did not find his body; they came back and reported that they had indeed seen a vision of angels who announced that he was alive. Then some of those with us went to the tomb and found things just as the women had described, but him they did not see."

The Liturgy of the Word spreads the good news to us through passages from the Jewish scriptures and the New Testament. These are usually reinforced through a thoughtful sermon.

And he said to them, "Oh, how foolish you are! How slow of heart to believe all that the prophets spoke! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer 8 these things and enter into his glory?" Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them what referred to him in all the scriptures.

Jesus then reveals himself and shares himself with us in the Liturgy of the Eucharist as he did to the disciples on the road to Emmaus.

As they approached the village to which they were going, he gave the impression that he was going on farther. But they urged him, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening and the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them. And it happened that, while he was with them at table, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them. With that their eyes were opened and they recognized him, but he vanished from their sight.

As the liturgy closes we are invigorated and urged to "Go in peace to love and serve the Lord".

Then they said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning (within us) while he spoke to us on the way and opened the scriptures to us?" So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem where they found gathered together the eleven and those with them who were saying, "The Lord has truly been raised and has appeared to Simon!" Then the two recounted what had taken place on the way and how he was made known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Another way to look at this story is about the journey. For me there are two journeys. The first is my own personal journey to work on my spirituality. This started in earnest after the CRHP weekend and the beginning of the Called and Gifted experience. My journey to Emmaus is a contemplative journey. I have tried to understand what Jesus is asking of me person-

ally. To help with this discernment, I have read several books by Henri Nouwen and the remarkable book, "The Holy Longing" by Ronald Rolheiser. Each brings me to a place where I can contemplate the longing that I feel for spiritual growth. This longing ebbs and flows, flames up and dies down but is deepening as I walk toward Emmaus.

There are times when I feel I am searching as are the two disciples and there are times where "my heart is longing" as their hearts were also. I have tried to use writing as a means to express this journey and the feelings that overwhelm me at times. I am continuing to pray and discern what I am being asked to do and the path to take.

The other journey is that which I am taking with Pattiann. She is a remarkable woman and I am really challenged by her faith and abiding love. We have enjoyed our classes together but we each see a different challenge in the gospel message. I am amazed at the passion and intensity that she brings to our journey toward God. I hope that I bring as much to her journey as she brings to mine. As we continue after retirement, I know that I have a companion that I can count on to be with me, to lead me toward our heavenly father and the reward that is waiting for us.

He Prays for Us

John 17: 20-26

"I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, so that they may all be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, that they also may be in us, that the world may believe that you sent me. And I have given them the glory you gave me, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may be brought to perfection as one, that the world may know that you sent me, and that you loved them even as you loved me. Father, they are your gift to me. I wish that where I am they also may be with me, that they may see my glory that you gave me, because you loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, the world also does not know you, but I know you, and they know that you sent me. I made known to them your name and I will make it known, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them."

When I read this passage which was to be proclaimed on the seventh Sunday of Easter, I was really struck by the fact that Jesus is praying for us and for me in particular. On first reading I thought He was talking about the apostles but I now realize that He is really talking about all disciples even those that

the apostles can only imagine. He is praying for the Body of Christ. He is imparting His divine nature on each of us so that we can share in it.

Jesus, as the second person of the trinity, is praying for us knowing that we need the prayers. He is sharing Himself with us and praying that we join Him in heaven. It is so humbling to know this. I cannot have a more wonderful advocate in my life.

This reminds me of the time after my heart operation when I received all the cards expressing the prayers of so many for me and the love that they showed to me. I felt totally warm and very comforted. It was so unexpected just as it was unexpected when I read this passage. It touched me to the core.

John's Gospel

As I was working on an assignment for the gospel of John, I was reading it aloud to my wife, Pattiann. I was struck by the power of some of the short sayings about Jesus and from Jesus, which seemed to be very emotionally packed for me. What I found as I went through the entire gospel is that a list of these quotes forms a remarkable story.

"Come and you will see." (John 1:39)

"Come and see." (John 1:46)

"Do whatever he tells you." (John 2:5)

"Give me a drink." (John 4:7)

"Believe me, woman." (John 4:21)

"Do you want to be well?" (John 5:6)

"It is I, do not be afraid." (John 6:20)

"I am the bread of life." (John 6:34 and 48)

"Let anyone who thirsts come to me and drink." (John 7:37)

"Neither do I condemn you." (John 8:11)

"I AM." (John 8:58)

"I am the good shepherd." (John 10:11)

"The Father and I are one." (John 10:30)

"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified." (John 12:23)

"Do you realize what I have done for you?" (John 13:12)

"I AM." (John 13:19)

"I am the way, the truth and the life." (John 14:6)

"I am the vine, you are the branches." (John 15:5)

"Do you believe now?" (John 16:31)

"I AM." (John 18:5,6 and 8)

"My kingdom does not belong to this world." (John 18:36)

"It is finished." (John 19:30)

"Peace be with you." (John 20:19)

"Receive the Holy Spirit." (John 20:22)

"Feed my lambs." (John 21:15)

"Tend my sheep." (John 21:16)

"Feed my sheep." (John 21:17)

"Follow me." (John 21:19)

If I read these, allow them to roll through my mind, and contemplate their meaning, I find the essence of the story of Jesus and what he is asking each of us to do to proclaim the Kingdom of God through words and actions. He asks us to come and see what he has to offer to us.

On and In the Water

Matthew 14:22-33

Then he made the disciples get into the boat and precede him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. After doing so, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When it was evening he was there alone. Meanwhile the boat, already a few miles offshore, was being tossed about by the waves, for the wind was against it. During the fourth watch of the night, he came toward them, walking on the sea. When the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. "It is a ghost," they said, and they cried out in fear. At once (Jesus) spoke to them, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid." Peter said to him in reply, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." Peter got out of the boat and began to walk on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw how (strong) the wind was he became frightened; and, beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" After they got into the boat, the wind died down. Those who were in the boat did him homage, saying, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

Having spent some time sailing on small lakes, on Lake Michigan and in the ocean, I can really relate to the feelings of the apostles in this story. When I am out on the water and a storm rushes upon me, the boat is tossed like a cork in a roiling tub of water. It is a feeling of loss of control, of being pitched back and forth, of having the deck twist and turn. I have very little firm ground on which to stand. This is much different from being on land in a fierce storm. At least the ground is stable. According to the story, Jesus was not with them but even if He had been, I imagine that they would have been nervous. When Jesus got into the boat the wind calmed and they were no longer afraid.

But besides the story of the storm, there were other parts of the passage that are just as important. Jesus sent his disciples off ahead of Him so that he could pray. But He did his praying alone and presumably in silence. Silence is important in my life especially in my time of prayer. It must have been important to Jesus' prayer time as well. In His prayer did Jesus hear the cries of His disciples? That is the time during which I hear cries from those who are in need. Is this God telling me that I need to take action as Jesus did? That is a story within the bigger story that speaks to me and how I must listen for the call.

Peter's response is, well, so Peter. He is always enthusiastic and jumps into life with both feet. I guess that I can relate to that. Then when reality hits, I wonder why did I do that? Peter seems to show the same type of action. He jumps into the water, on Jesus' invitation but quickly founders and then

needs help. “Lord, save me.” I am always jumping in with both feet and then asking why. I might not really see the path clearly and then have to ask Jesus for help. The burst of energy is wonderful but I have to also see the deeper or long term effect of my action on myself and others. But Jesus was there to stretch out His hand to Peter. He will be there for me as well. That is trust in the Lord. He can calm the winds that buffet me. I just need to listen and trust.

I can also relate to Jesus in that I need to be the one stretching out my hand to others. I am called as a disciple to follow the example of Jesus and he is showing me a direction here. As I move on to my life after work there should be more time to reach out. There are always ample opportunities. I need to continue my prayer life so I can respond as Jesus would. By following Jesus’ example, I am really saying, “Truly, you are the son of God.”

Pentecost

Acts 2:1-12

When the time for Pentecost was fulfilled, they were all in one place together. And suddenly there came from the sky a noise like a strong driving wind, and it filled the entire house in which they were. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire, which parted and came to rest on each one of them. And they were all filled with the holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim. Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven staying in Jerusalem. At this sound, they gathered in a large crowd, but they were confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. They were astounded, and in amazement they asked, "Are not all these people who are speaking Galileans?"

Then how does each of us hear them in his own native language? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya near Cyrene, as well as travelers from Rome, both Jews and converts to Judaism, Cretans and Arabs, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God." They were all astounded and bewildered, and said to one another, "What does this mean?"

"What does this mean?" The crowd heard something in the speaking of the apostles. I think that it is possible to understand this in several contexts. They could have been questioning that they all spoke different languages and each heard the same words just in their own language, Arabic, Greek, Latin, etc. They did not understand how this could have happened. Or they could have been questioning what the words meant for them without really questioning the fact that they actually spoke different languages.

The first interpretation is the standard way that I have been taught about this text, but I believe that the second idea is more intriguing. The apostles were proclaiming the Good News of Jesus and the people were so taken by the news itself that they were astonished and bewildered. The story of Jesus and salvation is too big and deep to really understand it at first hearing. Were the people getting a glimpse of Jesus' humanity and divinity, in what the apostles said, as did Peter, James and John in observing the transfiguration? At the transfiguration the apostles were amazed as well at the glory of Jesus shown to them. I think that they also thought, "What does this mean?"

During the discussion of the Living Mass book a number of people were sharing how the homilies affected them. Some thought they were not too effective and others had just the opposite reaction. Were the people not just hearing what was said each in his own language? At Pentecost, the apostles were given the grace of prophets so that they could spread the Good News. In the same way, I am also given the grace of

prophets by my baptism. It is important that I make use of that grace to do as the apostles did and speak to people in their own language. This is an awesome responsibility and intimidating for an introverted person. I need to take heart in how the apostles responded. I need to use the grace that came to them in the loud wind and tongues of flame.

Wedding Feast at Cana

John 2:1-11

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." (And) Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him.

This is another of the miracles or signs as John calls them that I remember from my childhood. What I would like to reflect

on is what this means to me or how I see it. Obviously it is a story about Jesus' humanity. He was at the party along with his mother. They were guests and probably having fun. In fact I can almost imagine that he was with friends and when his mother mentioned that they had run out of wine, he sounded perturbed. Why was she bothering him when he was having such a great time? As a son myself, I can see his point. But he also was obedient and respected her wishes because after protesting, he did what she asked. This reminds me of the parable mentioned in Matthew 21: 28-32 about the father asking the son to work in the vineyard. The son says no but does it anyway. In other words it is not your words that are important but your actions. What a human act that is.

The other interesting thing is that Jesus' mother knew that he would do what she asked because she immediately gave some orders to the servers. She knew Jesus so well that even though he questioned her, she knew how he would act. That is a mother that knows her son intimately as a human. She knew that he would follow the fourth commandment to honor her wish. I also get a sense that she knew that she had to push him to get the best out of him. That also is a very human act for a mother pushing a fully human son. My mother has done the same many times to me.

In some ways Jesus acts as a father in this story. He is behaving almost as if it was his own daughter's wedding, or if a child had asked him for help to solve a problem. He is fixing a problem behind the scenes without making a fuss. He just wants

things to be perfect for his children. That is a very human response to a very human problem.

Another indication of the humanity of the story is the fact that this is depicted in art in a very human way. The story really transcends cultures and centuries. You can see the difference yet the similarities between the art from the Cameroons, Ian Pollock, Corinne Vonaesch, or Gerard David.



Vie de Jesus Mafe (North Camaroon, Africa)

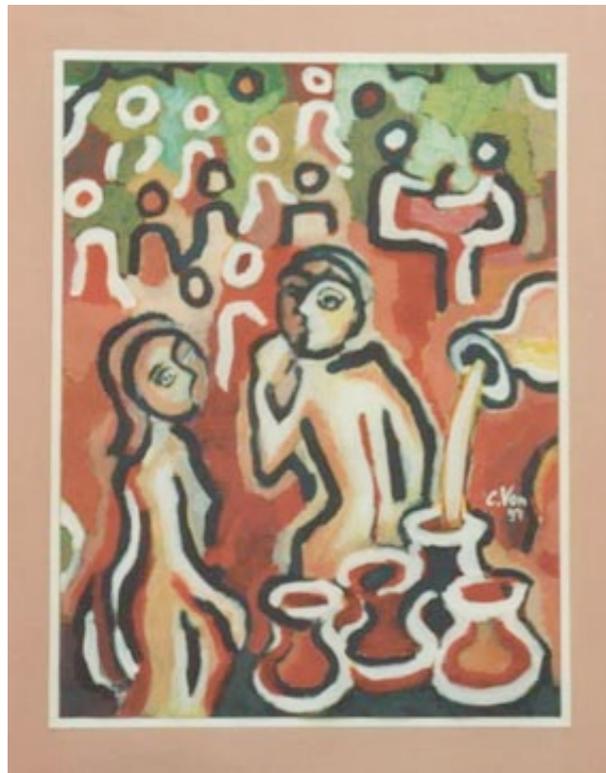


Ian Pollo

I also see this story as a revelation of Jesus' divinity. The very fact that Jesus worked the miracle is a sign of his divinity but also the biblical verse indicates that this was the beginning of his signs and it revealed his glory. Perhaps the most interesting thing is that I see his divinity revealed through his humanity. As I indicated before, Jesus worked in the background of the story in much the same way as we see the divine in life. It is ever pervasive, always faithful and infinitely loving. That is how he appears in this story. He gives us a glimpse of God's presence and love in our everyday life. In Jesus the human and divine are intimately linked.

Another interesting part of this story is that the jars of water which were transformed were used for Jewish ceremonial washings. In transforming these, is Jesus making a statement against the Jews who were so tied up with the letter of the law that they missed the message that he is bringing to mankind and the Jewish people in particular? There are a number of other stories in the gospels, in which Jesus is taking the Pharisees to task for hypocrisy in following the rules. This may just be a subtle reference by the gospel writer to that same theme.

As I have tried to point out, I find this an incredibly deep and reflective story that will continue to attract my interest as I ponder it more fully.



Corinne Vonaesch



abogallery.com - Internet's biggest art collection

Gerard David

Addendum



SECTION 1

Resume

Work experience

1998-2006

Bisco, Inc.

Schaumburg, IL

Director of Research. Led the research group in researching and developing dental composites and bonding agents.

1996 - Present

College of Lake County

Grayslake, IL

Adjunct Professor. Taught one semester and two semester Organic Chemistry Courses in the evening division while employed at Dexter. This included laboratory sections.

1981- 1998

The Dexter Corporation

Waukegan, IL

Director of Scientific Affairs. Responsible for leading polymer development laboratory and extrusion laboratory. Also responsible for technical informa-

tion transfer between Dexter facilities worldwide. Leading the effort at Molecular Modeling of polymer properties within the division. Lead person in the implementation of ISO 9001 at the Waukegan facility. Certified ISO 9000 Lead Auditor. Served on the Intellectual Property Committee and several other teams in electronic communication. Certified Lotus Notes Designer. Taught internal courses in Design of Experiments and Polymer Chemistry.

Director of Technology Transfer and Quality Assurance. Responsible for Quality Assurance within the Packaging Products Division. Implemented a mainframe based quality data system within all domestic plants. Implemented a division technology transfer procedure to streamline the transfer of formulation information from the laboratories to the manufacturing sites. Trained as an ISO 9000 auditor.

Director of Polymer and Analytical Chemistry. Responsible for leading the polymer development and analytical chemistry development within the Packaging Products Division. These functions also served the R&D efforts of several other divisions within the Dexter Corporation. Responsible for the budget and operations of these laboratories. (13 personnel and \$1.2 million budget).

Manager of Polymer Chemistry. Responsible for leading the development of new polymers for the use of the Packaging Products Division. Led the upgrading of the polymer personnel including the hiring of new Ph.D chemists and the implementation of a computer controlled polymer laboratory. Direct involvement in the transfer of new polymer formulas from the laboratory through the pilot plant to manufacturing sites worldwide.

1980- 1981

Betz Laboratories

Trevose, PA

Group Leader in Polymer and Organic Synthesis. Directed laboratories involved in the synthesis of new monomers and polymers for use in the water treatment industry. Responsible for the budget and planning of the research effort. (8 personnel)

1974- 1980

Lilly Industrial Coatings, Inc.
Indianapolis, IN

Director of Resin Research and Development. Developed polymers for coating systems. Supervised the laboratory including 2 chemists and a technician. Responsible for the training of all new R&D employees. Directed the design and construction of a pilot reactor within the Indianapolis manufacturing site.

1972- 1974

Marian College
Indianapolis, IN

Assistant Professor of Chemistry. Taught courses in general chemistry, physical chemistry, analytical chemistry and organic chemistry. Served on the Academic Affairs and Faculty Affairs committees.

Education

1969 - 1972

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN

Postdoctoral Research Associate. Research in the photochemistry and radiation chemistry of small organic molecules.

1966 - 1969

California Institute of Technology
Pasadena, CA

Ph.D in Organic Chemistry. Dr. George S. Hammond, Supervisor. Thesis: The Photochemistry of N-Methyl-2-Pyridone. Received NIH Fellowship.

1962 - 1966

University of Notre Dame
Notre Dame, IN

BS in Chemistry. Graduated cum laude. Participated in NSF Undergraduate Research.

Interests and activities

Active in the Indiana Section of the American Chemical Society, serving in several positions including Chairman of the Section (1978). Serving presently as an alternate representative to the IRI for Dexter. Serving on the Industry Advisory Committee for the Polymer and Coatings Department at North Dakota State University. Active in St. Joseph parish. Hobbies include sailing and skiing.

Publications, Patents

Publications

1. “Environmental Effects on the Excited States of o-Hydroxy Aromatic Carbonyl Compounds”, A. A. Lamola and L. J. Sharp, *J. Phys. Chem.*, 70, 2634, (1966).
2. “The Photoreactions of N-Methyl-2-Pyridone”, L. J. Sharp and G. S. Hammond, *Mol. Photochem.*, 2(3), 225, (1970).
3. “Photo- and Radiation-Induced Cis-Trans Isomerizations in Liquid Pyridine”, R. R. Hentz, H. G. Altmiller and L. J. Sharp, *Int. J. Rad. Physics and Chem.*, 3, 201, (1971).
4. “Pulse Radiolysis of Liquids at High Pressures. IV Hydrogen Atom Reactions in Aqueous 0.1M HClO₄ Solutions”, Farhatziz, I. Mihalcea, L. J. Sharp, and R. R. Hentz, *J. Chem. Physics*, 59, 2309, (1973).
5. “Volumetric Shrinkage of Composites Using Video Imaging”, L J Sharp, I B Choi, T E Lee, A Sy, B I Suh, *J of Dentistry*, 31, 2, 97-103, (2003)
6. “Cure Kinetics of Composites Using Video Imaging”, L J Sharp, B I Suh, A Sy, R Yin, *American Journal of Dentistry*, 18, 141-144, (2005)
7. “Incompatibility of Oxalate Desensitizers with Acidic, Fluoride-Containing Total-Etch Adhesives”, C. K. Y. Yiu, N. M. King, B. I Suh, L. J. Sharp, R. M. Carvalho, D. H. Pashley and F. R. Tay, *Journal of Dental Research*, 84 (8), 730-735, (2005)

Patents

1. “Waterborne Coating Compositions Having Ultra Low Formaldehyde Concentration”, L. J. Sharp and H. Dimaano, US Patent 5,795,933 (8/18/98)
2. “Extrusion Coating Compositions and Method”, C. Schmid, R. Jung, H. Widmer, S. Postle, L. Sharp, M. Lu and A. Jimenez, US Patent 5,942,285 (8/24/99)
3. “Polyester Compositions and Use thereof in Extrusion Coating”, C.Schmid, R. Jung, H. Widmer, M. Lu, A. Jimenez, L. Sharp, S Postle, US Patent 6,153,264 (11/28/2000)
4. “Self-etching Primer and Adhesive Bonding Resin Compositions, Systems, and Methods”, US Patent Application No. 10/075,751, Wang, Y J, Hamer, M, Strukowska, A, Suh B I, and Sharp, L J.
5. “Low Shrinkage Dental Composite”, US Patent 6,709,271 B2 Yin, R, Suh, B I, Sharp, L, and Tiba, A.
6. “Opacity and color change polymerizable dental materials”, US Patent Application No., Yin R, Suh, B I, Mai, O, Hayes, K, and Sharp, L J.

Papers Read at Professional Meetings

1. “Photo- and Radiation-Induced Cis-Trans Isomerizations in Liquid Pyridine”, R. R. Hentz, H. G. Altmiller and L. J. Sharp, presented at the ACS Meeting in Los Angeles, spring 1971.
2. “Formulation of Ultra Low VOC Water-Borne Inside Spray Coatings for Beer and Beverage Cans”, G. G. Parekh, L. J. Sharp and K. R. Thompson, presented at Waterborne, High Solids and Powder Symposium, University of Southern Mississippi, 1995.
3. “Optimum Silane Loading of Composite Fillers to Achieve Stress Reduction upon Polymerization”, R. Yin, L. Sharp, B. I. Suh, M. Loeb, Presentation at IADR/AADR meeting Washington, D.C., (2000).
4. Bond Strength of Single Bond Adhesives to Dual-Cured Cements on Dentin”, M. Y. Schiltz, P. L. Brown, L. J. Sharp, B. I Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL, (2001)

5. "Effect of Polishing Procedures on the Gloss of Dental Composites.", W. G. deRijk, P. L. Brown, L. J. Sharp, F. Cincione, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL (2001)
6. "Characterization of the Rheology of Dental Composites", L. Sharp, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL (2001)
7. "Properties Evaluation of Composites Containing Fluorinated Monomethacrylate Diluent", A. Tiba, L. Sharp, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL (2001).
8. "Nanofiller – A Solid Diluting Agent in Dental Composite", R. Yin, L. Sharp, W. G. deRijk, B. I Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL (2001).
9. "The Interfacial Morphology Study of Self-Etching Adhesive System", Y. Wang, L. Sharp, M. Heiss, Presentation at the AADR meeting Chicago, IL (2001).
10. "Comparison of the State of the Art, Dental Curing Lights –2001", L. Sharp, R Nagel, Symposium on Controversies in Polymerization of Light-Activated Polymer Matrix Composites, Presentation at the IADR meeting Chiba, Japan (2001)
11. "Biaxial Flexural Strength of L/C Composites as EOP Criteria", W deRijk, K Zabel, L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
12. "Development and Physical Properties of a New Low Shrinkage Composite", R Yin, M Heiss, L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
13. "Comparison of two different dentin shear bond strength testing techniques using nine dental adhesives", P Brown, M Schiltz, L Sharp, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
14. "Comparison of Self-Etching Systems and Phosphoric Acid on Cut Enamel", M Schiltz, P Brown, L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
15. "Determination of the Rate of Curing of Composites by AcuVol", L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
16. "Shear Bond Strength (SBS) of five self-etching adhesive systems on dentin and enamel", A Strukowska, Y Wang, L Sharp, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
17. "The Morphology Study of Several Self-Etching Adhesive Systems", Y Wang, L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
18. "Functional polyorganosiloxane-based low-stress composite", R Yin, L Sharp, B I Suh, Presentation at the IADR/AADR meeting San Diego, (2002)
19. "Correlation of the Rate of Curing of Composites with Barcol Hardness", L. Sharp, B. I. Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting San Antonio, (2003)
20. "Effect of Accelerated Aging on Esthetic Cements", M. Schiltz-Taing, P. Brown, L. Sharp, B. D. Lichtenwalner, B. I Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting San Antonio, (2003)
21. "Dentin Shear Bond Strength of Dual-Curable Adhesives when Bonding Posts or Core Buildups", P. Brown, M. Schiltz-Taing, L. Sharp, B. I. Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting San Antonio, (2003)
22. "Comparison of bond strength of one-bottle adhesives with a self-priming etchant or phosphoric acid to dentin", A. Strukowska, K. Zabel, L. Sharp, B. I. Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting San Antonio, (2003)
23. "Is O₂ inhibited layer necessary for bonding of composite resin?", B. I. Suh, L. Feng, K. Hayes, L. Sharp, Presentation at the IADR meeting Gotteborg, (2003)
24. "Light Intensity Output and Divergence from Dental Curing Light Probes", L. J. Sharp, R. Nagel, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)
25. "Effect of Water Exposure and of Adhesive Hydrophilicity on Microtensile Strength", M. Y. Schiltz-Taing, P. L. Brown, L. J. Sharp, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)
26. "Ground Enamel Shear Bond Strength of Adhesives after Bleaching", Y. Wang, L. J. Sharp, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)

27. "Studies of performance/properties of sealants", K. A. Zabel, L. Feng, L. J. Sharp, K. Hayes, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)
28. "Composites Volumetric Shrinkage Under Different Light Intensities and Irradiation Times", D. Prisco, L. J. Sharp, R. De Santis, S. Rengo, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)
29. "Microtensile Strength of Adhesives Utilizing Indirect and Direct Composites", P. L. Brown, M. Schiltz-Taing, L. J. Sharp and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Honolulu, (2004)
30. "Relative Intensity of LED Curing Lights by Wavelength", R. Nagel, L. J. Sharp, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Baltimore, (2005)
31. "Total Etch Compared Against Self-Etching Adhesives to Dental Materials", M. Y. Schiltz-Taing, F. Cincione, L. J. Sharp, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Baltimore, (2005)
32. "Comparison of Curing of Resin Cements", L. J. Sharp, R. Yin, W. H. Kang, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Baltimore, (2005)
33. "Incompatibility of Oxalate Desensitizers with Acidic, Fluoride-Containing Total-Etch Adhesives", C. K. Y. Yiu, N. M. King, B. I. Suh, L. J. Sharp, R. M. Carvalho, D. H. Pashley and F. R. Tay, Presentation at the IADR meeting Baltimore, (2005)
34. "Volumetric Shrinkage of Resin Cements", L. J. Sharp and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting Orlando, (2006)
35. "Effect of Water on the Properties of Self-Etching Resin Luting Cements", R. Yin, L. J. Sharp, D. Shin, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the AADR meeting Orlando, (2006)
36. "Effect of pH and Orientation on Bond Strength to Dentin", M. Schiltz-Taing, L. J. Sharp, D. Martin, M. Nunez and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting Brisbane, (2006)
37. "pH vs Time of an Experimental Portland Pulp Cap Material", D. Martin, R. Yin, L. J. Sharp, and B. I. Suh, Presentation at the IADR meeting New Orleans, (2007)