

INDWELLING

CREATIVE WRITING SERVING PASTORS

Volume 1 (Fall 2020)

St Mary's Seminary & University

School of Theology

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From the Editor

The journal you have before you represents the desire of St Mary's seminarians to examine their spiritual, intellectual, human, and pastoral experiences in the context of formation for the office of the priesthood – and to share those experiences with the community who support and follow them on this sometimes arduous, sometimes difficult, but always fulfilling path. For all of us, human formation never ends; we all share in the pilgrim experience of the faithful seeking a true path home.

The title of the journal – *Indwelling* – speaks to the Spirit animating and guiding these journeys. Rather than arrange the entries by discrete formational categories, we have chosen instead to juxtapose entries so that they may elucidate the interwoven nature of the four dimensions of formation. It is our hope that this will illuminate the cross-woven, and cross-worn, fabric of our devotional lives.

German theologian Johann Georg Hamann valued the written word because “writing, as an extension of speaking, participates in the conceptual structures which help to create the sacred thoughts residing in the hidden tabernacle of our person. The words are living words of God.”¹ As present and future ministers of the Word, our students are continually finding ways to use language to open those “hidden tabernacles” to the light of our daily lives. Thank you for inviting these efforts into your lives.

¹ Terence J. German, *Hamann on Language and Religion* (London: Oxford University Press, 1981), 142.

Indwelling: Our Mission

None can sense more deeply than you artists, ingenious creators of beauty that you are, something of the pathos with which God at the dawn of creation looked upon the work of his hands. A glimmer of that feeling has shone so often in your eyes when – like artists of every age – captivated by the hidden power of sounds and words, colors and shapes, you have admired the work of your inspiration, sensing in it some echo of the mystery of creation with which God, the sole creator of all things, has wished in some way to associate you.

With these words, John Paul II opens his “Letter to Artists” (1999). The Letter qualifies for us the necessary relationship between art and the Church: a relationship dependent upon the equilateral relationship between the beautiful, the good, and the true. The artist, as the Pope elaborates, is most in tune with the sacred music of Creation as it is heard through the world in which we live, pray, rejoice, and suffer. As all of us are “authors of our own acts,” and are called to shape the narratives of our lives in response to God’s invitation to us to know him, we are all, in a sense, artists.

Indwelling is concerned chiefly with language in the life of the pastor. Words are iconic in the sense that, as John Paul II writes, “Christ . . . [became] in the Incarnation the icon of the unseen God” (12). Language effects a similar incarnation: this is the symbolic resonance of the Word made Flesh. But, the Incarnation is far more than a symbol: it is a two-way communication, in truth and in love. *Indwelling* shares the creative work of the students of St. Mary’s Seminary & University to facilitate this conversation with the Creator.

In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council wrote of artists, “They seek to probe the true nature of man, his problems and experiences, as he strives to know and perfect himself and the world, to discover his place in history and the universe, to portray his miseries and his joys, his needs and strengths, with a view to a better future” (18). *Indwelling* is attentive to the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer who seeks to deepen this communion within the four dimensions of priestly formation set out in *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992): human, spiritual, pastoral, intellectual. Not one of these dimensions stands above the others; all are sympathetically engaged in the work of catechesis and evangelization. It is no coincidence that John Paul II made public his Letter to Artists on Easter Sunday. It is the mission of *Indwelling* to demonstrate how our students are participating in this work of word becoming, *always becoming*, enfleshed and dwelling among us.

THE EDITORS

INDWELLING

AN INTRODUCTION

By Robert F. Leavitt, PSS
France-Merrick University Professor
St. Mary's Seminary & University

It pleases me to contribute this introduction to *Indwelling*. Future priests at the nation's first seminary are putting their faith to the test of literary creativity. It is a demanding test.

Creativity, of course, can take many forms. The paintings on the cave walls at Lascaux are stunning creations. There are no inscriptions there, no narratives, no poems in those caves. We can only guess what such prehistoric people meant. Aristotle's famous definition of human beings as "rational animals" is literally translated better as "animals who speak." His *Rhetoric* and *Poetics* explain the principles of public speaking as persuasion, tragedy, and poetry. Every Eucharist we celebrate confirms the philosopher's judgment about the creative power of language. Liturgical prayer depends on the sacramental powers of proclamation, invocation, consecration, and blessing. The *Epiclesis* prayer invokes the power of the Holy Spirit upon the offerings. I invoke here the Spirit's blessing on the efforts of the seminarians who choose to write for *Indwelling*.

Vatican Council II opened in 1959 by invoking the gift of the Holy Spirit upon its work – a work of faithful words. It concluded by approving two decrees on priesthood – On the Life and Ministry of Priests (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*), and On the Training of Priests (*Optatam Totius*). These reformed the whole process of forming priests for the Church. One major task was to prepare seminarians for the priestly "ministry of the word." The council borrowed this phrase for priesthood from the Acts of the Apostles. What it means is that the theological foundation for the sacramental and pastoral ministry of the priest is the Word of God and the use he makes of it. The New Evangelization demands priestly work in all the arts of the word. By establishing a vehicle like *Indwelling*, our seminarians are demonstrating real priestly leadership.

Literate writing, more than any art, shapes thinking. The challenges of writing well build corresponding virtues. Editing first drafts which begin as clumsy prose is an education in self-criticism and humility. Composing poems which are honest is a struggle against sentimentality. Tackling difficult issues in essays, reviews, short fiction is an act of courage. These creations are not position-papers nor are they propaganda but acts of respect for the truth that alone makes free. I applaud the seminarians who

have undertaken the challenges of creative writing at St. Mary's Seminary as a preparation for their future ministry in the Church. I applaud them even more for graciously assuming the risks of editorial and reader criticism.

All seminarians, whether gifted as writers and poets or not, would be well-advised to read the essay by Karl Rahner on "the priest as poet." He did not mean priests creating verses and rhymes. He meant priests creating images in words, images which would inspire and convert the human imagination to faith in God. Thanks to Hans Urs von Balthasar, theological aesthetics has made beauty once again as important in faith as truth is. The Church encourages "the way of beauty" (*via pulchritudinis*) as part of the New Evangelization. In that regard, a seminarian-led journal of creative writing is a work of imaginative evangelization. A human faith means we can believe best only what we can imagine ourselves believing.

The history of Christian art and iconography shows how sublime the faith is. Think of the pastels of the Good Shepherd on the walls of the catacombs -- the Gospel of John 10 in pigments. Consider the great mediaeval cathedrals -- feats of faith, engineering, and imagination. Gaze on the *Pieta* of Michelangelo -- the gentle Descent from the Cross in marble. Three times a day, the seminary community passes the marble sculpture of the *Sedes Sapientiae*. Within, it hears Gregorian chant, J.S. Bach, Folk and Gospel hymns -- the invisible which moves the soul -- an audible incarnation of angels. The chapel itself is architectural statement -- *Magnificat Anima Mea Dominum*.

Nevertheless, the Prologue of the Gospel of John insists: "In the beginning is the Word." Seminarians! The word will be your work; the word must be your kingdom.

Because of its extraordinary tradition of visual, dramatic, and musical art in Catholicism, we tend to identify beauty with its sacramental forms. The origin of the Christian imaginary, however, is in the word, in the non-representational art of inspired language. Sacred Scripture first, then the Tradition of liturgical prayer and praise, and then biblical commentary and theology and creed. The Bible opens with God speaking creation into being over incoherent Chaos. Scripture continues with the passages of Moses receiving his mission from God's lips on Sinai and young Jeremiah given his vocation by God's voice. The scribes and sages of the Bible, the oracles of the prophets and poems of the psalmists, were the first poetics of justice and hope of the Western world. The whale which swallowed Jonah (!) is itself a message: Do not try to run from God! God will find you! Christian poetry from the Syriac and Greek Fathers to the *Divina Commedia* of Dante to John Milton, Gerard Manley Hopkins, and T.S. Eliot is part of the Christian tradition of the word.

It is fitting, then, that seminarians would have a go at it, too. The poetry of the Mass and the Divine Office is complemented by secular poetry. Few may remember, but St.

Mary's Seminary & University in 2001 awarded an honorary doctorate in theology to a United States poet laureate, Richard Wilbur.

The texts published in *Indwelling* are entirely the work of our seminarians. What they have learned in chapel and class from their professors and spiritual directors has shaped their desire to write. St. Paul wrote to his community at Corinth that they were to him, like a letter written on his heart (2 Cor. 3). Written, he said, "not in ink but by the Spirit of the living God." Ink, however, is a not a bad place to start to learn how to say, in a contemporary idiom, what the great Apostle to the Gentiles said and meant. The seminarians themselves are a letter written on the heart of St. Mary's rector and faculty. It is they that I applaud most of all for inspiring an enterprise like *Indwelling*.

I invite you to read and enjoy the various pieces written here out of a spiritual desire. Reading them myself, I feel a sense of pride that our seminarians are striving, in a difficult time and under trying circumstances, to make themselves worthy of one day being called – priestly ministers of the word.

The Forest

Peter Myers

The sun rises above the tree tops
It sparkles off the snow with a glitter and a glow
It emerges over the trees, spreading its golden beams
To brighten the day with this scene like a dream
The scene is so beautiful, it's a sight to behold
And the deer are walking quietly in the forest below

God is near in this scene so beautiful and clear
He created the world and all who are here
He is in all the beauty that surrounds us
And he is also within us, but does not overwhelm us
He offers us a chance to love him so dear
And we feel him so close, in this forest bright and clear

Grace

Brooks Jensen

God grant me the grace to run the race.
As the world tries to hold me back,
may I keep pace with the love that You desire from me.
For loving the Lord is the greatest romance,
pursuing Him the greatest chase.

If I become parched as I run, grant me that water which bears a taste of that place where
I will look upon Thy sacred face.
In the chaos of the world may my heart remain still,
Put to death in me and kill, every twisted desire
That acts as a hindrance to Thy Holy Will

God may I love only what You desire,
That even in times of pitchforks and fire,
when things are looking most dire,
You would give me the grace to maintain faith,
Living only for the words that You saith

When walking this world of bones,
That prophets and kings once called home,
Whereunder oppression my flesh does groan,
And in distress my soul gives out a moan,
Keep me firm, until I live for love alone.

I want to be the man You choose to use,
That even if Your will leaves me bloody and bruised,
I would refuse to step aside and take a seat,
Until I am allowed to die clinging to Christ's feet
And dwell with God above where saints meet.

A Contemporary Psalm

C. Matthew Hawkins

A crack in the window pane stringing light across the surface
A trace of accidental beauty
Slitting the fingertip, drawing blood.

Our heads are like bricks in the street.
Our lives, the jagged edges of broken bottles.

We cry out, "Where is God in all of this?"
A face deformed with power
Sneers mockingly, "He can't hear you."

"He can't hear you," echoes through the darkness,
And fills the dead of night.
We sob as our lives bleed into streets
And you, God, are nowhere to be found.

You are fixed high above the altar
Suspended between heaven and earth
Twisting in pain and in agony
No solutions to be found on the cheap.

"He can't hear you --"
But maybe he can feel you.

The priest holds bread and wine in his hands,
Transformed into the sacrament of life
We, the assembled, gathered in prayer,
We too are transformed and become sacraments.

"He can't hear you,"
the terror of darkness and being alone.

Indwelling

Bread is cracked open and ripped apart
Our hearts, too, are torn open
Broken and poured out like blood on the sidewalk
In the pouring out of ourselves, we become whole.

“Maybe he can feel you,”
No longer alone.

Disheveled men on the corner
Pour libations into the street
Remembering souls that were snatched in an instant
Leaving behind a mural on the wall for a memory

In silence, we encounter your mystery
In silence, we confront and embrace our pain
In silence, you clear the muddy waters of our minds
In silence, you whisper your truth.

We are heard and we are felt, especially when we feel alone.

Reflection

This psalm may fall under the category of a “psalm of lament,” in the sense that it speaks to communal suffering and sorrow and it challenges God “hear” the people’s cries and enter into their suffering and pain. In this sense, it has similar characteristics to Psalms 21, 87, and 142. For example, Psalm 21:3 reads: “O my God, I shall cry by day, and thou wilt not hear: and by night, and it shall be reputed as folly in me.” This psalm has a similar passage: “We cry out, ‘where is God in all of this?’ ... echoes through the darkness, and fills the dead of night. We sob as our lives bleed into streets, and you, God, are nowhere to be found.” Psalm 21:8-9 reads: “All they that saw me have laughed me to scorn: they have spoken with the lips, and wagged the head. ‘He hoped in the Lord, let him deliver him ...’” This psalm reads: “A face deformed with power sneers mockingly, ‘He can’t hear you.’” A third example that parallels the 21st Psalm is where 21:15 reads: “I am poured out like water; and all my bones are scattered. My heart is become like wax melting in the midst of my bowels.” This psalm reads: “Bread is

cracked open and ripped apart our hearts, too, are torn open, broken and poured out like blood on the sidewalk. In the pouring out of ourselves..." Like other psalms of lamentation, however, this psalm ends in the hope for redemption and ultimately affirms the presence of God: "We are heard and we are felt."

As I was writing this psalm I began to realize what a remarkable thing the psalmists had done: in Europe and Southwest Asia (the "Middle East"), religious literature tends to offer a set of certainties. Its intention is to assert the presence and potency of God. Yet, many of the Psalms and much of Wisdom literature in the Hebrew Scriptures explore the realm of ambiguity and uncertainty. There is a sense that God is found in our liminality. The other day I was having lunch with a priest who said, "I'm not a big fan of the Wisdom literature." When I asked which sections of the Bible he liked the most they all turned out to be sections that were heavy on juridic, rather than pastoral language. He liked the law, but not so much the poets or the prophets. I recently had a conversation with a seminarian who said that he felt Pope Francis was damaging the Church because Francis was not clearly delineating what the Church teaches on human sexuality and about who is, or is not, eligible to receive some of the sacraments. The seminarian kept repeating, "It is his job to make things clear. Pope Francis is not doing his job." When he said this I was reminded of a priest I interviewed for a paper for a class on canon law last semester. The priest said, "Canon lawyers want to draw bright lines and to make everything crystal clear; pastors, on the other hand, want the lines to be blurred so they can minister to their people." In writing this psalm I discovered that the best of Wisdom literature tends to blur the lines in contrast to the conventionality of those who are unsettled by ambiguity.

A Foothold in Time

Evan Ponton

Deliver us from time

From time, by means of time,

For us established within it.

Time is vanity

Time is necessity

Immense past in hidden future.

Word of God

Law of Incarnation

All history is real.

Rising into eternity

Our Foothold,

The Unknowing Abyss

Mark Dunmire

I walk through the thick fog.
Before me lies an obsidian abyss.
Peering into the water, there is no reflection
Only the darkness gazing back at me.

I jump into the abyss and it completely engulfs me,
The darkness is not fueled solely by fear, but also the unknown
I must defeat my own fears if I am to go deeper,
This is overwhelming, but I must not stop

As time drifts into the darkness, the light starts to manifest internally
It radiates with each victory, the oppression lightens
I can start to make out my surroundings
This new future has charged me for the better
I reach the bottom and approach the mirror
This person I see is not who I was,
But it is who I am now

Holy Hour

Brooks Jensen

Christ my portion, Christ my prize,
Depart now never from my eyes.

How often I come and my head doth bob,
Yet in my chest my heart still throbs.
For in these moments when I'm most weak,
You welcome my silence and Yourself do speak.

Alone together, sitting silent and still,
The fields of my heart You patiently till,
Growing in me a resigned obedience to Thy Holy Will.

You descend from Paradise in wheaten guise,
And in that chapel my heart to You outcries,
Yearning for the day my soul will heavenward rise.

A vision of glory revealed unto me,
Until Christ the King is all I hear and see.
A moment together, a slice of Heaven,
Spent adoring Christ in bread unleavened.

Christ my portion, Christ my prize,
Draw me ever to Thy side,
And depart now never from my eyes.

Instrument of Salvation

Rev. Mr. Evan Ponton

First Deacon Homily, May 12, 2019

St. Peter Claver Catholic Church, Sandtown, Baltimore

Just down the street from where we sit this morning, at the corner of Lafayette and Pennsylvania Ave, marking the site of the old Royal Theater, stands a statue honoring one of the greatest voices to ever live. Her birth name was Eleanora Fagan, but most of us know her as Billie Holiday. Billie grew up on the streets of Baltimore in a broken family. At an early age, she got involved in crime and prostitution. At age 11, Billie was moved to the reform school “Good Shepherd Home for Colored Girls” where she was baptized, but soon after moved back home with her mother. Billie’s mother opened a restaurant on Argyle Avenue. It was during this time that Billie ran errands for a local “house of ill-repute” in exchange for getting to hear Louis Armstrong sing. Billie began singing at local clubs before moving to Harlem where she got her big break. Now, Billie Holiday was no saint, at least in the way we are used to describing saints, but she knew how to use her voice as a powerful instrument.

In our Gospel, *“Jesus said: “My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand.”*

There’s a lot we could say about this gospel, but at least two things are true. We know that God has a voice, and God has hands. What does God do with a voice and hands? What I want to suggest this morning is, God makes *music*. And those who hear and listen and even sing along to the music shall never perish.

The passage from the Acts of the Apostles describes the journey of the disciples Paul and Barnabas and their struggle to share the gospel.

“On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said.”

In a way, Paul and Billie’s life had a lot in common. Both had to face hostile audiences and violent abuse, Paul at the hands of the religious establishment and Billie herself facing violence toward African-Americans and women her whole life. Both Paul and

Billie spent time in jail. But there is one more thing they share in common, the product of both their sufferings and their gifts. As Paul goes on to explain in Acts:

“For so the Lord has commanded us, I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.”

God makes the music, but we are his instruments. One of Billie’s biographers made this statement: “The pain of her life, the pain of the moment, is reflected in a less-than-perfect voice perfectly.” The beauty of jazz and blues is that it isn’t perfect. In fact, one of the truths about being Christian is that like jazz, much of life is about improvisation. They say Billie never sang a song the same way twice. When we arrive in this world, there isn’t a musical score that tells us exactly what to say, what to do, what to be. When the first Christians like Paul and Barnabas set out on their journey, there was no fail-proof script or blueprint telling them exactly how to share the gospel that everyone would appreciate or care to listen.

All they had were their hands, their voices, and a commandment from the Lord to be an instrument of salvation. Their story was not perfect, but in its own way, it is beautiful.

Being perfect is not the same thing as being beautiful. Being perfect can make us worried about playing every note exactly right, being afraid to make a mistake, and never really taking any creative risks. Instead, beauty is more about being in touch with the pain and struggle and imperfections of life. Beauty is about being in relationship with the real, saying what needs to be said, doing what needs to be done.

Billie took the pain and struggle of her community and set it to music. Those famous lyrics went like this:

Southern trees bear strange fruit

Blood on the leaves and blood at the root

Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze

Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees

In Billie’s own words, the song “Strange Fruit,” which was named by *TIME* magazine the greatest song of the twentieth century, is, “a song that speaks to all the disregarded

and downtrodden black people in the United States. A song that is a reminder of how love is the only thing that will conquer all the hatred in this world." When Billie sang those words, God turned her voice into an instrument of salvation.

While none of us may ever sing like Billie, or even have a musical bone in our body, God gave each of us a pair of hands and a voice to take our pain and struggle and make beautiful music with our lives. Every single one of us is hand-made by God to be an instrument of salvation, to be a light for others that reaches the ends of the world, or at least the end of the block or the workplace.

When we start using the instrument God gave us, an amazing thing happens. God takes each instrument and forms us into a band. The name of this band is "the Church." The Church is God's great band joining together to sing the song of salvation.

In our reading from the Book of Revelation, we get a vision of what this band looks like; we get a description of what this band sounds like. The writer, John, says:

"I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands."

Even this morning, we get a special chance to see this in action. It's a real honor and privilege for me to have a part in this Mass this morning, brought into communion around the body of Christ, joined together by different communities who are very special to me: this St. Peter Claver community, my family, friends, and brother seminarians, together in this time and place, united in Jesus, with God our Father, to be his instrument of salvation and make music with our lives.

Christian Joy in Friendship

Tom Lanza

¹ People leave the flock
The world changes
God remains the same

² We, the faithful, seek comfort in meaning:
Meaning we find in Scripture and our lived experiences
Meaning we find in joy and in sadness
Meaning we find in a God who loves and who saves

³ Our relationships with God and people provide shape to our lives
Our friendships reflect who we are, who we've become
Our virtue indicates how much further down the road we must travel
When we form communities, we share a sense of purpose

⁴ Communities filled with joy overflowing
Families having fun watching their children grow
Families interacting, sharing their lives until their children are grown
Families praying together and packing the church beyond capacity

⁵ The joy of friendship makes God smile
God loves those who love others
God rejoices with those who smile
God is like a best friend with those who know him

⁶ God sent Jesus Christ to be our savior and friend
Do we allow the God-man into our life?
What does it mean to be friends with God?
Is Christian friendship a reality embraced?

⁷ Love one another as I love you
I have told you this so that my joy may be in you

You are my friends if you do as I have done
I call you friends because I have told you everything my Father has told me

⁸ Rejoice, rejoice, rejoice!!!
Love with all your mind, body, and heart
Love until your emotions are sore
Love generates a planet filled with joy and friendship

⁹ People come back to the flock
The world changes
God remains the same

If Only

Mark Dunmire

If you only – if only you

If you only knew what I see in you, if you would never doubt.

If you only saw the Grace I pour down upon each thought.

If you only heard the words I say when others coerce and mislead.

If you only felt the way I feel when you glorify Me.

If only you search deeply your soul, then you would find my Spirit stronger.

If only you would hear my words, not those the evil one saunters.

If only you could believe in truth that I am always near.

If only you can see what I do, you represent My Truth.

The Artist's Canvas

Javier Fuentes

On the Artist's Canvas are blues,
alluring blues of the deep seas,
serene and soothing blues of the expansive sky.
On the Artist's Canvas are greens,
ancient and noble greens of the forests,
bright greens of spring's renewal and rebirth.
On the Artist's Canvas are yellows,
brilliant yellows reflecting the dazzling sun,
golden yellows of windswept grass.
On the Artist's Canvas are browns,
stable hues of brown earth,
perpetual browns of the sands of time.
On the Artist's Canvas are reds,
wildly blazing reds with fiery passions,
sanguine reds of life.
On the Artist's Canvas are lights and darks,
serene whites of winter's chill,
elegant grays silently playing their parts,
empty blacks emboldened by their strong allure.

These colors are the palette of my life.
But I am also part of this palette,
adding my own hues to the canvas.
Who could have made such beauty?
Can the Artist's Canvas exist without them?
Can the Artist's Canvas be complete without my hues?

Assembly Line 3

Brooks Jensen

Mr. Auto – customer

Ferath – shop manager

Auto: “Can you really do it that easily? Exactly to specifications?”

Ferath: “Yes and yes. Everything we make here is custom made-to-order, this shop specializes in such fabrications.”

A: “And if a mistake is made, even a minor one such as coloration?”

F: “No need to worry my friend! We offer a 100% satisfaction guarantee! We will either remake the product on-the-spot, or if you have lost faith in us, we will refund you in full. Of course, due to the complex nature of the device and the various modifications employed by our customers, surely you understand, we cannot offer any long-term warranty beyond repairs for mechanical defects traceable to the device’s initial fabrication. Even then we tend to find, absent critical malfunction, that our customers view such accidental design quirks as delightful eccentricities which function to add character to their devices.”

A: “I think I understand completely. Who should I see to schedule an appointment?”

F: “Well do you happen to have your design specs on hand?”

A: “In fact, I do. My business partner and I finalized them last night.”

F: “What luck! Due to a scheduling error assembly line 3 is open for the next several hours and, if you are free, we could head over there right now.”

A: “Did you say now, as in this very second?”

F: “Indeed, we could have you out of here by noon, device in hand.”

A: "Hmmm. My partner did want to be on hand to watch the process, but I think she would be delighted if I brought it home tonight as a surprise. What the hell, let's do it!"

F: "Wonderful, come right this way sir, we have just a few papers to sign and we can get underway."

A: "What comes first? A friend told me you can watch the whole process from start to finish. Is that correct?"

F: "Your friend spoke the truth. Due to the intricate, and often dangerous, machines involved we no longer allow customers to follow directly from the assembly line floor. But don't fret! With our state-of-the-art surveillance system, complete with real-time customizable zoom functions, you can get even closer to the action than your naked eye would previously allow. Oh, the wonders of technology!"

A: "I already can't wait! But, what's first?"

F: "First, we need to input your design specifications to this console here. I already had one of our on-site engineers upload most of it, so I just want to review it with you to ensure everything is correct and make sure you were aware of all the options available to you. Okay, let me see here, I should be able to pull it up on the screen for you... And voila!

"Let's start with the chassis. I see that you have opted for one of the lighter frame options. This is a popular model and allows you to keep the device within a reasonable weight range. It does of course limit your product's overall durability and strength, but most find that to be an acceptable compromise."

A: "We actually chose it based on a friend's recommendation after becoming acquainted with two of hers. She mentioned this model comes in a few different varieties?"

F: "It does. Since you have already chosen the M-based operating system, I'd recommend either model M-175A or M-175D as the most compatible chassis."

A: "Can you give me a rundown on the differences?"

F: "You can see a full-list of differences if you simply press the 'compare' option on your screen then drag both models into the newly opened window. If you want a basic explanation, model M-175A is better for more sedentary functions while model M-175D is oriented towards more active use."

A: "Hmmm. I think the sedentary model would be better."

F: "A fantastic choice! I have no doubt you and your partner will be satisfied with this model. I just want to remind you that proper usage and maintenance is as much a factor in securing your device's proper functioning as its initial design."

A: "We have already ordered several manuals on the subject and watched a few tutorial videos for initial preparation. Now that the body design is finalized, where do we go next?"

F: "I see you are a well-prepared man. We only have the device's outer covering and operating system left to review. I think it better to begin with the covering. Have you determined your coloration and texture preferences? I see you left them blank."

A: "We had a question regarding that. Is there... a difference? I mean in regards to overall efficiency; is it solely a question of aesthetics?"

F: "Your query is understandable, this question is a frequent one, nearly every one of our customers has similar concerns."

A: "It relieves me to hear that we weren't alone in our wondering."

F: "Allow me to soothe your anxieties with the facts. The choice is primarily one of aesthetic preferences, with two exceptions. Your choice of texture type can have a secondary effect on durability, especially in regard to chips, scratches, and dents. The primary factor in durability remains your choice of chassis, and, as I have mentioned, proper usage and maintenance can make all the difference. That's the first exception, the other relates to sun exposure and coloration. Absent adequate safeguards, lighter colorings crack and discolor at faster rates, while darker tones tend to withstand the sun

better. Prolonged enough exposure can lead to underlying structure damage for both, though I assume you know this already, but even if the worst happens there are plenty of repair shops to cover up any issues. Does that answer your question sir?"

A: "In excess, you are exceedingly thorough Mr. Ferath. I'll go with the texture halfway between smooth and brushy and give it a sandy tint."

F: "Another great choice. Do you mean bleached beach sand or desert sand?"

A: "Definitely desert sand, she should love that. Are we finished with the skin?"

F: "We are indeed. This only leaves us with customizing your operating system."

A: "Customized? I thought it was only a choice between M or F, are there really tiers from which to choose?"

F: "Are there tiers? Good sir there are not only tiers but individual tweaks and features to choose between! We can program everything from sensor acuteness to operational response times and long-term versus short-term memory capacity. You have a cornucopia of options available."

A: "Well, I'm really not sure what to say. I wasn't prepared for all these possibilities. I suppose the only thing we really discussed on this point is that we'd prefer if he were smarter than us but not too much so. We have heard from some of our friends that large disparities can cause a lot of friction."

F: "It's another common concern. A few of our customers have ordered the best available operating systems for their first device then request a much-toned down package for subsequent orders."

A: "Perhaps then you can offer a recommendation based on your experience? What have you seen work best for others?"

F: "I appreciate how much faith you continue to place in me Mr. Auto, it shows a particular humility on your part. There is one method I use that nearly always works. Have you and Mrs. Auto taken the new intellectual competency evaluations?"

A: "Of course, we always stay up-to-date with the most recent regulations."

F: "In that case, if you give me your ministry IDs, I can access your scores from here and model your device's operating system on the average between them. I can do the same for your temperament analysis results as well. If you are looking for a slight improvement, I find an increase of 5-15% tends to lead to the highest rate of satisfaction in customers such as yourself."

A: "Splendid, just splendid, our IDs are right here. Will there be any issues relating to our differences in gender, or does that not affect these things?"

F: "There are some that posit differences between the sexes in all spheres, physical, emotional, and intellectual. Others think they pertain to only one or perhaps two of these areas. I put very little stock in any of these debates. My job here is to use my expertise and the most cutting-edge data our industry leading engineers provide to deliver a product our customers will be happy to bring home. The method I'm suggesting here is tried and true, the kind of method worthy of your trust. There is no need to let the idle prattling of non-experts induce you to worry and concern."

A: "I am so glad that I had the privilege to work with you Mr. Ferath, I doubt anyone else could have addressed such difficult topics with such clarity."

F: "You honor me with your words. I have just finished uploading the data. I will be sending it over to our engineers who, after a final check, should give us the go-ahead to begin production. Could I interest you in some coffee while we wait?"

- - -
Ferath descended the stairs that lead from the control room to assembly line 3 with Mr. Auto in tow. They passed beyond the still bubbling chemical vats and steaming mechanical devices which were the telltale signs of recently completed activity. Mr. Auto gaped at each in turn, wondering what part each machine played in the process he had just witnessed. Ferath strove past them all, not even bothering to honor them with a disinterested glance. Eventually they progressed to the end of the line where a

transparent glass capsule awaited them. Mr. Auto began to point at the capsule excitedly.

A: "Is that it? Is that capsule where it is?"

F: "'It' is no longer an it Mr. Auto, but a 'he'. Go, your son awaits his father in his crib." Mr. Auto sprang forward to the capsule, pressing the large green "open" button on its top. He reached inside and pulled out a sandy-skinned baby boy with a few tufts of brown hair sprinkled on his head. The child, startled by the sudden action, began to cry while his father bobbed him up and down in an attempt to comfort him.

A: "Shh, shh my boy, daddy's here."

F: "What do you think Mr. Auto, is he exactly as you imagined him?"

A: "Exactly, he is better! What a beautiful little boy! You did everything perfectly, just as you promised, right down to the smallest detail." Mr. Auto turned the child over in his hands, delighting in every little detail of his son. When he got to his left arm though, he suddenly paused.

F: "Is there a problem sir?"

A: "No, I don't think so. It is just that he has several pocks near his elbow here, but surely these will heal, right?"

F: "Let me see. Hmmm. That is no good at all. I am sorry for the manufacturing defect Mr. Auto, but with a few adjustments we should be able to fix it."

A: "Thank you Mr. Ferath! What must we do?"

F: "Almost nothing, may I see the product?" Mr. Auto handed the child to him without hesitation. "And no need to thank me, customer satisfaction is guaranteed." Ferath, child in hand, took a half-dozen long strides towards a large transparent green device filled with liquid labeled Molecular Reclamation Vat and without another word opened the top and dropped the boy inside.

A: “What are you doing?” Mr. Auto screamed in horror as he watched the child dissolve where its flesh met the gurgling liquid inside. “You killed him! You killed my son!”

F: “Killed? I beg your pardon sir but there is no killing done here. We are a fabrication shop, not a butchery. I merely recycled the materials of a defective product, freeing up the components to be reconstituted in a useful manner. Don’t look at me like that, calm yourself down and use your reason to think about what I’m saying.

“A human is a collection of atoms arranged in a particular manner. Now what is the difference if we break down these parts to rearrange them in a manner that is more aesthetically pleasing? We have a nearly 100% efficiency in our organic recycling process so the components that went into that defective product you just saw will be reused in the better and more perfect device I am going to remake for you. Won’t your wife be happy? Imagine how disappointed she would have been to see that unsightly blemish on that thing’s arm and compare it to the joy she will feel when she sees her perfect and unblemished child. Think of how your own happiness drained away as you looked at it; remember how quickly I noticed? Yes, that’s right Mr. Auto, there is no reason such an intelligent and logical man as yourself should be angry or ashamed. Come, let’s return to the control room and make the necessary adjustments. Come, for your true son awaits.

Nothing and Nowhere

Evan Ponton

The beginning is nothing
The end is nowhere

The Hats Are in Their Boxes

Zack Crowley

The hats are in their boxes
My mother is dead
And so the people learn
Thinking, sly as foxes
At least they have read
But yea, our hearts did burn.

We have more books to burn
Carried them in boxes
Which ones have you read?
Speak not of the dead!
They once were sly as foxes
I sit and watch and learn

Why will they not learn?
I'll watch them as they burn
Hunt them down like foxes
I'll make for each their boxes
Laugh that they're dead
Or so I have read

All the birds have read
How quick they do learn
Tweet a tweet that's dead,
Tweet a tweet and burn.
The hats are in their boxes,
Too bad for all the foxes

Be as sly as foxes
And like doves, I think I read
But books are made for boxes
So birds tweet, we learn

O how my heart doth burn
For all the many dead!

And soon we'll all be dead
The does and the foxes
But only they will burn
For only I have read
And only I can learn
The hats are in their boxes.

Second-Hand Smoke

Evan Ponton

Flick zip-hiss

Quick lip-kiss

Lick tip-bliss

Bake lit-kick

Take hit-trick

Snake bit-sick

Choke kin-breath

Smoke sin-death

God's First Calling

Brooks Jensen

*Written after reading "A Priest is not His Own"
On the occasion of my first firm desire to apply to seminary*

To do what I want I'll have to go back to school for seven years,
What will they think if I throw away a career,
Only to make less than half that I do now in a year?

I sit in my room and hesitate,
While God asks how much longer He must wait,
For me to choose between Him and grasping my own fate.

Do I see with eyes open wide, or is it my own delusional pride?
This is not what I had in mind when You said Bride,
But I trust the Holy Spirit will be my guide.

Despite all my doubts I'm ready to grasp the vision,
Yet I know in the end it's not my decision,
So I'm here, oh God, to ask Your permission.

I dream of the positions I might reach.
God tells me of all the people I could teach.

Peter

Ben Dagher

Peter's eye sight is weakened as he's crucified upside-down below the hot, Roman sun. The heat beats on his face and the sunlight glows on his blood.

He desires to only be in the shadow of the Lord. This has always been his mission since he left Jerusalem – the shadow reminds him that he's near Jesus. Shadows and darkness used to scare him, but now they only remind him of his love for Jesus.

He can barely breathe, but his strength as a fisherman has returned from within his old bones. He's found the balance on this Roman cross – his years on a boat have helped him. He catches the grace and realizes even more that God has been forming him since his youth.

Peter begins to forget about the nails through his hands and feet, the excruciating pain, and even himself. As the blood flows from his heart, it's replaced by Christ's words which enter back into the organ which has spread the truth across an entire continent.

He hears a voice that he's familiar with and forgets about the world around him, "Do you love me?... Someone else will dress you...Come after me...Do not be afraid...Feed my sheep!"

Peter immediately gets spiritually attacked and begins to think about denying Jesus three times. Peter is much more aware of this internal threat than he is of the Roman guards that are mocking him. They hate Peter because they've never met a criminal so calm before a cross.

Peter decides to clench his fists and lifts his body up while refusing to fall into the dark thoughts. He silently prays, "Lord, help me give it a shepherd's care." The Roman guards then hear Peter shout "Yes!" three separate times. Quicker than the blood flowing down his chest do the memories of denying Jesus leave his heart and mind.

The Roman soldiers are amazed with this man and hate his joy. These murderers are the most trained soldiers in the world, yet they don't realize that Peter is enduring a much different war. Peter prays for them under his breath and he can relate to their weaknesses. In them, he sees a much younger, weaker Peter.

His brother, Andrew, comes to mind. Peter enjoys the memories of his brother – especially the day he first met Jesus. He prays for his brother and thanks God for the

memories coming back to him. Peter snaps out of his thoughts once a Roman guard kicks him in the mouth. He chokes on his blood. No longer looking to his thoughts, he looks up at his bloody body. The blood only fuels his prayer.

“Take this all of you and drink from it” Peter hears from Christ.

“You will never wash my feet” and the memory makes him smirk with a grin. The Roman guard sees his smile and draws his hand on his sword.

“I’ve given you a model – as you should also do” and the flashbacks keep coming for Peter. The Roman guards hear, “Yes, Lord!”

He is kicked in the face another time. Blood splashes onto the soil. Peter looks around – he sees Roman legs walking around him. He loses hope and begins to fear. He responds with a whisper to the Lord and says, “God, help me to stay sober and alert. Evil is prowling around me. Let me be solid in faith.”

Then, suddenly, a drop of blood falls from his feet and into his eyes. He looks up toward Heaven.

Peter’s mind takes him to the Sermon on the Mount and he hears, “Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.” Just then, the Roman sun moves west behind the foot of the cross. The temperature cools. He regains his strength. A shadow is now cast over Peter. He desires the shadow of the cross. Only once before has he felt so much joy in his life – in the presence of the Risen Christ.

“I’m supposed to be here, Lord,” Peter says toward Heaven.

Peter begins to cry for the first time this day.

The Roman guards laugh – they believe that they have finally broken the Christian leader’s spirit. One Roman, out of pride, runs over and kicks the Galilean in the head as hard as he can. Peter shakes the blow and never looks down toward earth. He focuses solely on the foot of the cross. The Roman guard looks back toward the criminal and is pissed.

Peter then whispers, “You told me that I’m the rock, you called me, you love me. Jesus, I love you.” Peter is spiritually attacked another time and his mind races to the Agony in the Garden. Peter hears a voice that he has learned to ignore but it still enters his mind, “You’ve failed him so many times Peter. You’ve always been a failure.”

Peter breathes slowly and responds, “Lord, not what I will, but what you will.”

Near Peter’s feet comes a sound that says, “Follow me.” He tastes his own blood and can only see through one eye. He responds, “Yes, Lord – you know that I love you.”

The sun continues its course west and the shadow disappears.

The hot, Roman sun beats down on the corpse of a Saint. The upside-down corpse has just flipped the authority of Rome on its own head.

Heaven rejoices. Christians are praying in Rome for Peter. The Roman guards are proud of their work in accomplishing the task of ending the Christian leader's movement. And last, and certainly least, the devil slithers away in frustration saying to itself "virgin woman, carpenter, and now a fisherman!"

The soil of Rome has never soaked in someone's blood so quickly – as if it has experienced a masculine drought for centuries. The soil has yearned for a Gladiator of God.

My Sherpa

James Lancelotta

My Sherpa is strong, yet gentle.
My Sherpa is rugged, yet refined.
My Sherpa is powerful, yet meek.
My Sherpa guides me as I ascend the Mountain.

When I rush ahead in my arrogance, She corrals me.
If I stop, She waits patiently for me to begin anew.
When I take the wrong path, She gently guides me back.
At a crevasse I believe I cannot cross, She lifts me.
She guides me around obstacles large and small.

My Sherpa asks for nothing in return,
Excepting only for me to emulate Her,
With the lips of my heart shouting, "Let Your Will be done! For I am Your Servant."
My Sherpa guides me to the top of the Mountain.
Filling my Soul with everlasting joy, coming face to face with her Son.

Cross Country

Evan Ponton

Run Race

Win Prize

Steeplechase

Her Eyes

On Track

Lose Time

Turn Back

Hill Climb

Short Skirt

Long Distance

Small Flirt

Big Finish

Hiccup

Wrong Turns

Runner Up

Love Burns

I've Known Days

Mark Dunmire

I've known days.

I've known days where I couldn't get out of bed, because there was no strength and no reason.

I've known days where the fear was so great, I would nearly run to my room because it was safe.

I've known days when I get so frustrated because no one understands what it's like.

I've known days where I can't even look at myself in the mirror.

I've known days where my mind can't focus on one blessed thought, but it tries to do it with 10 other things.

I've known days where I can't stop biting my nails, or tapping my knee, or doodling on a page.

I've known days where I wake up with a smile and I jump out of bed.

I've known days where one little phrase uttered by someone insignificant feels like a direct embrace from God.

I've known days where I've poured my soul out to help someone repair someone's broken one.

I've known days where everything I've experienced, all the hurt and confusion, is used to relate to others.

I've known days where everything feels right in the world and I must thank God for it all.

I've known days where my mind find's its clarity, and calmness prevails.

I've known days.

Psalm

Jonathan Kuhar

Introduction

This poem touches deeply upon my personal history. My grandfather owned a house on Block Island, a small island off the coast of Rhode Island, and along with the house he had a small recreational fishing boat. This boat couldn't be docked at the island for the winter, so he and my father – his son-in-law – in the fall of 1989 decided to take the boat from Block Island to Long Island to dock at my grandfather's brother's house. For whatever reason the two of them were not able to leave until after Thanksgiving, and when they got to the island they were told by experienced fisherman not to take the boat out, that it was too late in the season and that a storm was coming. One man even refused to sell my grandfather gas because he didn't want to be responsible for them being on the water. But my grandfather was a stubborn man, he purchased gas from someone else and the two set out. They did not make it far. The storm hit and the boat sank. They both drowned. At the time I was six years old, my older brother was ten, my older sister was eight, and my younger brother was three.

For this poem, I decided to write in the voice of my father, to imagine the kind of a prayer he could have prayed as he neared the moment of death. Of course, it is also informed by my own struggles to come to understand these events and my own wrestling with God's involvement or rather his apparent lack of involvement. Why couldn't God have done more? Why would he have allowed this to happen? What kind of a loving and omnipotent God would allow this tragedy to occur? Cognitively I can provide some answers to these questions. The Problem of Evil is one of the oldest questions in Christianity, and many answers have been given that I find intellectually satisfying. This, however, does not impact my affective turmoil. The reasoned answer of an adult does nothing for the six-year-old, and in many ways, I am still the six-year-old that lost his father that day.

This poem is written in the style of a psalm and contains several elements commonly found in the psalms, particularly those found in the psalms of lament and it is addressed directly to God as a prayer. It contains several common motifs found in the laments. Drowning and waters certainly are present throughout (e.g., "waters spill over the side", "the chaotic sea"), going down into the pit of death is alluded to in a number of places, for example, "swallowing my little boat", "die in the tomb", "sink into the sunless place." Isolation, another common motif in laments, is seen through the feelings

Indwelling

of abandonment and the darkness of death. Taunting is alluded to when the speaker claims that the sea refuses to sing God's praises, and more poignantly when the speaker feels God is making a mockery of the covenant.

Creation is another common theme in this psalm. First referenced in the first stanza with a qualified statement regarding God's creating of the oceans, and then more fully explored in the third stanza. "At the beginning you fashioned a dome" makes reference to Israelite cosmology where "at the beginning [God] fashioned a dome" and separated "the waters and [made] dry places". The poem acknowledges God as Creator and one who has mastery over his creation. Through this, the speaker urges God to remake and restore creation, since he clearly has the power to do this by using his "mighty arm" to "make this world whole again."

The poem ends with the reality of death, and with a final – albeit, perhaps, a begrudging – acceptance of the hope in the resurrection as the only hope which remains. The psalm acknowledges that the hope of the resurrection, although true and life giving, and a proper place to find our final hope, is insufficient to prevent suffering in this life. Indeed, God did not promise that this life would be without suffering and in many places in Scripture we are told of its necessity. But this truth, that suffering would not end until the next life, does not prevent us struggling with the affective reality of suffering. We know that Jesus experienced this as well. Although Jesus knew he would raise Lazarus from the dead, he still cried at the tomb. The proper response to suffering is to cry out against it. The speaker acknowledges this, while also alluding to the fact that the proper place to find our ultimate hope is the resurrection. While the statement is made that the promise of the resurrection is a 'faint, dim, and shrouded hope', there is never a rejection of hope, just difficulty in finding solace in something that feels distant and speculative when compared to the tangible reality of death and the resultant suffering of the family left behind.

At the final line, death is clearly a moment away. In this moment, while still suffering the emotional effects of this reality, there is finally an acknowledgement that hope in God and the promised resurrection is sufficient to prevent despair, and the speaker places himself in God's care. Although the family is not mentioned in the final line, they are not forgotten but rather they are implicitly also placed in God's hands.

Psalm

My God, the waters spill over the side,
Your mighty ocean swallowing my little boat,
Where are you, my God, my Lord, my Friend?
Why have you abandoned me to the water?
For if you made the sea then you are its Master,
But why does it lack your mercy? Why does it refuse to sing your praises?

I see no light which beckons, no harbor to calm the waters,
I only see darkness, the mayhem of the waves.
Why have you abandoned me and those I love?
You promised if we would be your people then you would be our God.
The Eternal Unchanging, the Omnipotent, the Omnibenevolent,
A covenant forever, never to be broken – a mockery you make of it!

Come down now from on high! Descend from your tower to save me! Hear my cry!
Is my *only* hope in the resurrection?
A faint hope! A dim hope! A shrouded hope when all I see through the dark is a widow
and fatherless children. Where does their hope lie?
Ah the resurrection! Its warmth unfelt in night on the chaotic sea.
The resurrection! Death lost its sting, yes, but hope - where is your light?
I see only the howling of orphans and a wife who sleeps alone.
All that is needed is a Word but you are silent! Like Lazarus I will die in the
tomb!

The world unmade, remake it! Your creation broken, restore it!
At the beginning you fashioned a dome,
Separated the waters and made the dry places,
But cracks have formed, water pours through!
Repair what your mighty arm constructed and make this world whole again!

As I sink into the sunless place, I - at the last - place my hope in you.

Suffering and Kenosis in the Christology of Jürgen Moltmann

Rev. Zack Crowley
STL Thesis Introduction

Where is God in the shadow of Auschwitz? This question was the driving force behind the theological career of Jürgen Moltmann. As a prisoner of war during and after World War II, and returning to an utterly destroyed Germany, Moltmann sought out how God could be present among so much hopelessness and suffering. He did eventually find his answer and devoted his theological career to dissecting and explicating the truth – as he saw it – of the Christian faith: namely, that Jesus Christ, God incarnate, became man. In Christ’s passion, death and resurrection Moltmann found all he needed to know that God was present to broken humanity, and he discovered a source of hope in the face of the unimaginable suffering to which human beings are subject. Christology is the center of Moltmann’s thought, as demonstrated in his first two major works: *Theology of Hope* and *The Crucified God*, but also in some of his later works, like *The Trinity and the Kingdom* and *The Way of Jesus Christ*. For Moltmann, the center of Christology is the cross, which is the lens through which all theological discussion must be viewed.¹ Moltmann understood that the person of Jesus Christ is not merely the God who takes away sin; He is the God-man who empties Himself in order to suffer for us and with us. As kenosis is central to Moltmann’s Christology, this thesis will explore Moltmann’s specific considerations of the concept.

Before one can understand Moltmann’s Christology, one must look to his Doctrine of God, Creation, Sin, and the human condition. Moltmann builds his theology up in this order, beginning with God and ending with human beings. Moltmann’s entire theology begins with the idea of the Trinity; for if God is complete within himself, if God’s *perichoresis* is perfect and God truly does lack nothing, then why should God create? The answer to this question is found in Moltmann’s conception of a *panentheistic* relationship between God and Creation. God creates so as to be wholly present to and dwell within the other. This novel concept then allows for the freedom of said Creation – specifically for human beings – to choose to mutually indwell within God or to move away from God and towards annihilation, the nothingness from which Creation came. Thus, one can see how Moltmann’s view of the human condition becomes so bleak. The

suffering that human beings bring upon themselves is nothing short of them refusing to dwell within the God who created them solely out of love and instead to seek to be gods themselves. This brings up a vital question for Moltmann and hints at its answer: why does evil and suffering exist?

The question of theodicy was the *only* question for Moltmann. A god who could not answer for the sufferings of this world or was so far removed from them that they were totally foreign to Him was not the God of the Christian faith. How is it that human beings bring so much suffering into the world? Moltmann's reading of the Bible gave him a view of God as compassionate and loving.² This view contrasts the cross of Jesus Christ and the reality of suffering in the world. But the suffering of the human condition shared by God was not conclusively argued according to Moltmann. Theodicy and the cross needed to lead to some point at which humans would be able to endure the sufferings of life in the world. It was not enough for God to empty himself, suffer with and for humanity, and then return to heaven. Moltmann looked for an answer to theodicy in the idea of hope. As Jesus was abandoned by His God and Father on the cross, emptied of His divinity, He cried out in hope. This moment is key for Moltmann's Christology: Christ called out in hope that His death would not be the end, and there was no answer from the Father. This mutual suffering between the Son and the Father during the crucifixion plays a vital role in Moltmann's Doctrine of God and in his understanding of kenosis. Yet, for the contemporary Christian, Jesus' hope finds its fulfillment in the resurrection. God took on flesh and entered into suffering out of His love for humanity; people enter into the promise of God – just as Jesus did – and live out that radical love in the face of unimaginable suffering. Hope in the future of Jesus Christ, in the eschaton, is the horizon on which the Christian's eyes are to gaze. The resurrection after the crucifixion is the beginning of this new age, which, for Moltmann, will be completed when God is 'all in all' in His new Creation. Kenosis leads to suffering; suffering leads to the cross; the cross leads to the resurrection; the resurrection leads to hope and the eschaton. Jürgen Moltmann's Christology can be summed up in that sequence of ideas; but key to understanding that sequence is to understand kenosis, how Moltmann understood it, and how it relates to suffering.

Jürgen Moltmann is not an adherent to the theological school of thought known as Kenotic Christology; but understanding the tenets of this school of thought can be helpful in understanding how Moltmann understood kenosis. This school of thought

developed from an exegesis of the famous Philippians Hymn (Phil 2:6-11), and sought to answer the question 'who is the subject being emptied and humbled?'³ Most proponents of this school of theology – and those who predate it, like Augustine and Luther – have developed a system in which the subject of this kenosis is the eternal Logos who empties Himself in order to take on flesh. Luther's Christology set the groundwork for Kenotic Christology in the controversy it created among his disciples, most notably Chemnitz. The issue arose out of the need to protect the real presence of the Eucharist, while remaining true to the divinity of Christ and His ascension to the righthand of the Father. Chemnitz would answer this question by engaging the *communicatio idiomatum*: the way in which Christ's divine nature communicates to His human nature within a single person. But Chemnitz overlooked the issue this would bring about, which would be addressed by Kenotic Christology in the 19th century: was Christ's divine nature totally suspended, and was He a rational agent who was totally self-determining?⁴ The answer for Moltmann is a resounding yes.

For Moltmann, Christ did necessarily empty Himself in order to take on flesh and thus suffering. It had to be *Christ* who did these acts. Moltmann saw this most apparently on the cross, where Jesus Christ died, abandoned by His God and Father. Kenotic Christology focuses on how the divine nature of Christ did not overwhelm His human nature on a metaphysical level. Theologians such as Gottfried Thomasius focused on this metaphysical question in their work, and saw kenosis as providing an answer.⁵ Moltmann was not concerned with metaphysics; but he is very much concerned with kenosis in the sense that God, who did not need to suffer, *chose* to suffer, not only on behalf of humanity, but as a human being. This is Moltmann's conception of kenosis: God became man in order to suffer. Kenosis is an act of God, freely done on behalf of humanity; but this kenosis necessarily involved suffering, so that the Logos may enter into the human condition. The human condition for Moltmann was, and is, abandonment, forsakenness, godlessness, and suffering. Moltmann's view of the human condition in the shadow of Auschwitz very much informs his Christology. Influenced heavily by Martin Luther, Moltmann agreed with Luther that *crux sola est nostra theologia*.⁶ The cross presents to humanity both what it means to be human and God's willingness in the person of Jesus Christ to participate in the human condition. Thus, it becomes clear that Moltmann's Christology, and therefore his entire theology, hinges on the idea that the Word of God emptied Himself in order to become a human being and that necessarily involved suffering.

Notes

¹ Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 293-294.

² John David Jaeger, "Jürgen Moltmann and the Problem of Evil," in *The Asbury Theological Journal* 53, no. 2 (Fall 1998), 6.

³ Bruce McCormack, "Kenoticism in Modern Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 444-445.

⁴ McCormack, 448.

⁵ McCormack, 50-451.

⁶ Brian Lugioyo, "Martin Luther's Eucharistic Christology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology*, ed. Francesca Murphy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 269.

The Playfulness of the Church: An Exploration in the Ecclesiology of Romano Guardini

Rev. Evan Ponton

Opening Statement of Oral STL Defense

Imagine holding your whole life in your hands like a ball. All your hopes and dreams. Your deepest convictions and beliefs. But also, your fears, failures, and disappointments. And God invites you to throw it to him. When you throw your whole life to God, God catches it. And then: God throws it back. Exitus-Reditus. Sacrificial offering and spiritual receptivity. Trusting your whole self to God is called faith. The firm conviction God will catch you is called hope. This mutually-exchanged gift of self between God and man is called love. Now you're finally playing.

Play is a robust symbol of the infinite love of God and the mystery of the Church. The action of playing catch with a ball embodies the essence of "symbol," from the Greek "*sym-ballein*," literally, to "throw together". On one level, this thesis is, simply, a theological exploration of my own experience of union with God while undertaking the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius in the Summer of 2017. My contemplation of playing a game of catch with my dad, deceased fifteen years prior, as a young boy awakened the grace of a heartfelt awareness of my identity as a beloved child of God the Father.

Academically, on the subject of a theology of play, the more I looked, the more I found. Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Karl and Hugo Rahner, von Balthasar, Merton, Moltmann, even the Little Flower, all have something to say about the theological value of human and divine playfulness. This thesis features the Italian-born, German theologian and renaissance man, Romano Guardini, who exercised a profound effect on pre- and post-conciliar Catholic thought, including the pontificates of Pope Benedict and Francis. Guardini is best known for his role in the Liturgical Movement and his Christological work *The Lord*, yet Guardini contributed in subtler ways to the renewal of our theology of the Church. Indeed, Guardini's thought refocused the Church's self-understanding of her nature and mission on the person of Jesus, foundationally encountered in the liturgy.

In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Guardini famously likened the liturgy to play. In the words of Guardini, the liturgy lays down "the serious rules of the sacred game the soul plays

before God.” My own exploration of Guardini’s ecclesiology aims at a better understanding and appreciation of the playful aspect of the liturgy and the church. Based on the axiom *lex orandi lex credendi lex vivendi*, I attempt to extend Guardini’s insight about the playfulness of the liturgy to what I call “the playfulness of the Church.”

Two other symbols loomed in mind during the writing of this thesis. First, the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and the McCarrick scandal. As I contemplated the playfulness of the child as a symbol of the mystery of the Church (cf. Mt 19:14), nothing signaled the abandonment of childlike faith and the Catholic sacramental imagination like the abuse of children by some clergy. The second symbol, less serious, but also tragic, was the burning of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, the mother church of France, the eldest daughter of Rome, and *summa* of Catholic art and culture. I received this news literally during my writing of Chapter Two on the mother-child relationship of the Church and believer. In the lead up to Holy Week, the church itself became the world’s Paschal candle, reminding us that God’s Church is foremost the body of Christ, the People of God, built of living stones. Play is a much-needed symbol of hope for today’s Church.

Rising from the ludic dimension of Christian life and prayer, Guardini’s work shows the church as the community of Christian existence called to full participation in the freedom, rest, imagination, and *communio* of God. An ecclesiology of play, grounded in the liturgy, underscores how the proper object of all human life is not winning or success, but divinizing love. To be a church of play means to acquire the serious imagination of a child of God, for in the kingdom of heaven, the child of God is the preeminent player. The soul’s play before God awakens childlike faith to freely throw oneself over with trust and obedience in self-surrender to mystery. The infinite wonder and joy in this *marvelous exchange* ensures that the children of God never grow tired of playing the sacred game that never ends but is already won.

Symballein

Evan Ponton

Hope
With You
Throw Catch
Just Play
Faith Love
Have Fun

Swing

Birth Death
Brother Sister
Down Up
Push Pull
Me You
Now

Book Review

THE UNIVERSAL CHRIST: HOW A FORGOTTEN REALITY CAN CHANGE EVERYTHING WE SEE, HOPE FOR, AND BELIEVE

By Richard Rohr (Convergent, 2019)

The Universal Christ: A Franciscan Priest's Electrifying Take on Christology

Rev. C. Matthew Hawkins

Many of us have had the experience of riding on a bus or a subway, a train or an airplane, and watching as the sunlight streamed through the window illuminating the wrinkled faces of our fellow passengers, the bright eyes of infants and toddlers, the impatient scowls of jaded adolescents, and the intimate whispers of young couples in love.

We have watched middle-aged bodies shifting their weight in their seats and the rubber-tipped canes of elders tapping on the aisle to pass the time away. During such moments, and quite unexpectedly, we have felt a sudden awareness of the universal presence of God. The Rev. Richard Rohr's new book, "The Universal Christ: How a Forgotten Reality Can Change Everything We See, Hope For, and Believe," is an invitation to enter into such moments of awakening.

Father Rohr introduces his readers to a spirituality that Jesuits have called "everyday mysticism" and D.T. Suzuki described as being "like everyday consciousness, but two inches above the ground." Christians will find, in the book, a deeper understanding of the incarnation, sacramentality, and the many dimensions of a life lived "in relationship" rather than the illusion of radical individualism and isolation. The author guides his readers to an awareness of how to experience the manifestation of a divine presence in everyday life.

The themes that give the book its shape come from an understanding of "Christ" as: "the transcendent presence of God in every 'thing' in the universe"; the "immense spaciousness" of authentic love; the "infinite horizon that pulls us from within and pulls us forward"; and the "fullness" of everything. Father Rohr grounds this understanding in the scriptures.

He draws from the early Christian hymn in Colossians 1: 15-20, which includes the passages: "For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and

the invisible ... all things were created through him and for him ... in him all things hold together ... that in all things he himself might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness was pleased to dwell" Similar descriptions of the universal Christ can be found in Ephesians 1, John 1 and Hebrews 1.

Father Rohr's approach to the mystery of the universal Christ makes use of the spirituality of the early Church in which he approaches the mystery by way of indirection, through "waiting" and "the practice of attentiveness."

This he describes as being a form of *Lectio Divina* "the contemplative way of reading and listening, and thus being drawn forward." He notes the difference between contemplative reading and "proof-texting" (reading to settle an argument) that is characteristic of our day. "Contemplation," he writes, "is waiting patiently for the gaps to be filled in, and it does not insist on quick closure or easy answers."

Father Rohr promises that the reward of this approach will be an awareness that "the entire physical world ... all of creation, is both the hiding place and the revelation place of God."

He recognizes in this journey what he describes as "the essential function of religion," which is "to radically connect us with everything," and to "see the world and ourselves in wholeness, and not just in parts." This awakens in the reader an awareness that, as Albert Einstein put it, "everything is a miracle."

It will come as no surprise that some readers might confuse what Father Rohr is saying with a form of pantheism, but that would be a misreading of the text. He clarifies that he is, in fact, a "panentheist," as was Jesus and Paul the apostle, which is to say, one who teaches that "God lies within all things but also transcends them."

The readers of "The Universal Christ," regardless of one's faith or polity, are likely to experience the world anew. Their experience will not be very different from what Paul experienced in the Acts of the Apostles: "Things like scales fell from his eyes and he was able to see again."

The *Indwelling* Interview: Stanley Hauerwas

Rev. Mr. Evan Ponton

July 1, 2020

Indwelling: This question may seem a little out of left field (pun intended), but in this time of conspicuous violence and death, what might Americans be missing out on with regards to a public conversation around issues of justice and peace without the benefit of being able to sit down and watch baseball?

Stanley Hauerwas: One of the characteristics of our contemporary politics is the absence of eloquence as constitutive of political judgments. We've been suffering from a kind of ugliness that goes hand in hand with simplifications that do not give those who have come up on the short end of the goods produced by this society the means to argue for appropriate responses schooled by justice. I think this is very much an active responsibility of universities and seminaries to produce that kind of language.

The purpose of our student-led seminary journal Indwelling is to foster creative writing among seminarians in service of forming faithful pastors of the Church. Theological writing, you have pointed out, means writing about God, while so much of modern theology has been concerned with either writing about what theologians have said about God, or that reflects the writer's own subjective experiences of God. In your essay on "How to Write a Theological Sentence," a well-formed theological sentence, you argue, is one about God that "makes the familiar strange." Often, however, the goal for budding pastors, for the sake of evangelization, consists in making strange or complex doctrines feel familiar by getting to "the essentials." What is wrong in your view with this goal?

I think its greatest failure is to make God uninteresting. Exactly what it means to say "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" has always been a challenge for the church, to say what it is we mean to say when we say that. What we're saying when we say that is how that description of what it means to say "God" is a narration of the world as created, which is a claim that requires constant training to see the world rightly. So, how to write an appropriate theological sentence the way Robert Jenson did in terms of the sentence I hold up as the great theological sentence of our time, that is, "God is whoever raised Jesus from the dead having first raised Israel from Egypt," how to be a

people who never get tired of having that kind of sentence challenge how we are to see the world, is part and parcel of what it means to be in training to be Christian.

Seminarians spend a good deal of their time learning to write theologically. In writing a theological sentence, you especially call attention to the grammar and form of our speech about God, the epistemic conditions that make a theological sentence possible. In doing so, I take it you want to emphasize the connection between what we say about God, and the kind of witness and training the Church or even the seminary community provides that make that speech meaningful.

Right.

How would you describe the conditions that make theological writing today possible and how students should approach their study of theology?

I think liturgical practice should be at the center of the courses we teach in theology in a manner that helps us recover the importance of prayer and the silences that surround prayer as part and parcel of the formation of priests for the care of the souls of those for whom they have responsibility. One of the things that Episcopalians have as an advantage, which at times they do not use appropriately, is the Book of Common Prayer. That book I think has a grammar of theological speech that is without parallel for the training of people for the ministry. I think having people know how to use that book is a crucial form of ministry for the church today.

For Catholics, that might mean recognizing the way our daily Liturgy of the Hours shapes our theology?

Exactly.

We have talked about "sentences." I'd like to talk about words. Much of your writing considers the importance of language for the Church. You argue the way Christians learn to speak is always embedded within particular narratives and traditions. You have called the Church to a practice of pastoral theology and liturgy as "word-care." What do you mean by "word-care"? Why do words matter and how are pastors called to care for them?

Word-care means that you pay close attention to how a word is used in relationship to

other words. For example, you don't let the word faith become isolated from what it means to have a faithfulness claim in terms of what God makes possible for us in our lives. So, you work very hard theologically to show the interconnection between words in a way that they're not isolated from one another. Once that kind of isolation occurs, those isolations turn out to be the source of very bad theology.

In a media culture increasingly on-guard against "fake news" and "information wars," many in the Church are suspicious about a narrative approach to theology. Some Christians would claim the best witness to truth is an appeal to principles of universal reason. Why does narrative remain important and what makes the Christian story a convincing alternative for you today?

Well, you have to ask, whose reason is universal reason? All claims to that kind of reason are, as it turns out, particularistic claims of somebody's reason. As Christians, our presumption is that the narratives that make us who we are must be constantly appropriated in way that make possible discoveries that we didn't know we believed. When you believe that God showed up in a Palestinian Jew two-thousand years ago, that's a narrative that constantly forces you to discover aspects of the world you didn't know existed.

By universal reason, I suppose I have in mind the way the Natural Law has such a large claim in the Catholic intellectual tradition, which sometimes generates friction when invoking narrative as a communicator of truth.

One way to put it is, Catholic seminarians need to read more von Balthasar and less Rahner. *(laughs)*

Throughout your career, works of fiction have played a significant role in the way you craft your theology (e.g., Trollope, Iris Murdoch, Watership Down, Anne Tyler's Saint Maybe). Why should priests read fiction? What do compelling works of fiction communicate about the work of theology and the task of the Church, beyond just tools for an occasional sermon illustration?

I think what the novel does is make concrete the formation of selves, both negatively and positively, that illumines the character of our lives as people always involved in a struggle. The novel, we often forget is a fairly recent literary genre. It comes from the eighteenth century and it was the result of, I believe, a loss of a confessional where

people were trained to locate their lives within determinative narratives. I think the novel offers us literary exercises of self-examination through which we discover aspects of our lives that we need to be articulate about. The other reason, of course, for reading a novel is they are entertaining!

What is the most recent novel you read?

I just finished a mystery. It's about the struggle of people to discover a murderer who was completely unanticipated. I like to read mysteries.

The genre of theological writing and speech that will occupy a significant amount of our time and attention to the word in a parish setting is that of preaching and homiletics. Even as an academic theologian, preaching has played an important role in the community you serve. What influence has preaching had on your theology and how we ought to prepare for a life of preaching?

Preaching is the attempt to help Christians discover the narratives that shape our lives in a way that makes our relationship with one another necessary. Preaching is not an amplification of our experiences but rather it is the approximation of the gospel in a way that shapes our lives. Preaching is one of the determinative contexts for the doing of serious theology. For the early church, the theological developments, the trinity, were all made articulate through the preaching ministry of the church.

Many seminarians, including myself, have been forced to reckon throughout our formation with the sinful past of our leaders. I realize that it is a painful question to ask, but two remarkable Christians and theologians who have had a decisive impact on your work, John Howard Yoder and Jean Vanier, are marked in the public eye with the wounds of sexual sin. How might the church respond and grow when the sins of those we view as leaders and exemplary Christians are brought to light?

The pathos that's involved in the lives of people like Yoder and Vanier, people that continue to be very important for how I think about being Christian, the pathos is just profound and tragic. I think cheap explanations are to be avoided and the deception that we are all tempted toward in terms of our failure to acknowledge what it is we are doing when we do what is clearly wrong just has to be named in order to help us see

why we need to have lives open to examination by one another. I just regret terribly what has happened both to Vanier and Yoder and it is a great loss for us, and it is perhaps too soon to know how to respond to what we've learned about each of them. I hope Christians in future years will go back and be able to read some of what they've done and think this is somehow God using them irrespective of their limits. It's just a terrible situation.

Given the opportunity to offer some parting words to a bunch of future priests of the Catholic Church, what would you say?

One of the most important things possible for you is to have a joy in your ministry, and if you're not joyful, people will not flourish under your priesthood. What a wonderful thing it is to be called to be centered on the celebration of the Eucharist in a manner that makes your lives very special. So, have a great time.

Notes on Contributors

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FR ROBERT LEAVITT, P.S.S. (*Introduction*) was president-rector of St Mary's Seminary & University from 1980 to 2007. Fr Leavitt's book *The Truth Will Make You Free: The New Evangelization for a Secular Age* (Liturgical Press, 2019) has been awarded first place in the category of theology for books published in 2019 by the Association of Catholic Publishers. Currently, Fr Leavitt is the France-Merrick University Professor of Theology at St. Mary's.

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