

Transcendentals
Make a
Joyful Noise!

A DIGITAL CATHOLIC JOURNAL



DECEMBER 2020 • ISSUE 4 • VOLUME 1

Copyright © 2020 Transcendentals: A
Digital Catholic Journal

Individual copyright to works belong to
the individual creators and writers.

Photos and art not expressly from the work of the
individual contributors are from canva.com and
used with permission.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be
reproduced in any way without express
permission of *Transcendentals* in writing.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

05 SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

REV.DR. ANDREW BENNETT

ART

*GOD WITH US
TROUBLED WATERS
SURRENDER*

09

ESSAY

15

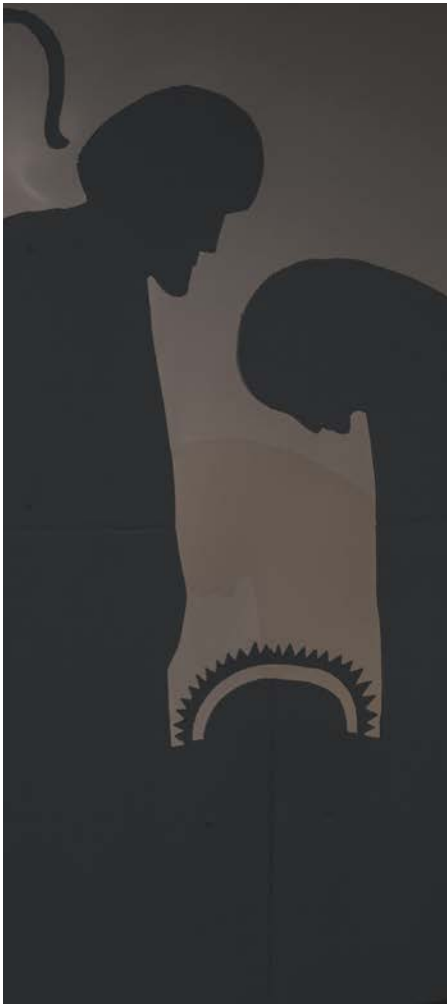
*SWORD OF SPIRIT AND SHIELD OF FAITH
"TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP
ISAIAH AND THE PROMISE OF CHRISTMAS
POETRY AND PRAYER*

POETRY

*ACTS 14
UNTIL THE CLOSE OF AGES
MY CHILD
HEART'S HYMN OF JOY*

32





News From the Front

A Message from Our Team

What a year it has been! Despite the many challenges, we are incredibly grateful that we were given the opportunity to start this initiative and begin building a community that desires to share all that is true, beautiful, and good in our Catholic faith. We are so grateful for the support that everyone has shown, and look forward to continuing building a network of young Catholic writers, artists, and poets who desire a resurgence in the Catholic arts and culture.

This issue, released during the Octave of Christmas, hopes to encourage a sincere rejoicing in the wonder of the season. Make a joyful noise! We want to encourage everyone to consider how we can jubilantly express the love that comes from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In these pages you will see and read the works of young Catholics here in Canada who share this desire to make Jesus known through all that is true, beautiful, and good. Our Special Guest Contributor, Reverend Dr. Andrew Bennett, shares his thoughts on the importance of human dignity and how we can exhibit the joy of Christ.

Another cause for celebration is that this issue features the works of two young Catholics who are not part of our original Founding Contributors groups. Our congratulations to Kathryn Tomiak and Christine Poirier (be sure to enjoy their works!). It has always been our intent to make this a platform for any aspiring Catholic thinker or creator. So we are very pleased to see this starting to happen, and we are now open to receiving submissions from anyone who is interested in being part of this resurgence!

From all of us on the Transcendentals team, we wish you the very best in 2021 and pray that we may all grow in faith, hope, and love!

Transcendentals



THE TRUTH OF THE INCARNATION AND HUMAN DIGNITY

REV. DR. ANDREW BENNETT

"He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become God. He manifested Himself by means of a body in order that we might perceive the Mind of the unseen Father. He endured shame from men that we might inherit immortality. He Himself was unhurt by this, for He is impassible and incorruptible; but by His own impassibility He kept and healed the suffering of men on whose account He thus endured. In short, such and so many are the Saviour's achievements that follow from His Incarnation, that to try and number them is like gazing at the open sea and trying to count the waves."

– St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation

Truth is undervalued, if not rejected outright in many spheres in which we interact as citizens. As Christians, how are we called to present and defend our faith to all whom we encounter, especially those in society who do not share the faith? It is not sufficient to simply present this faith to them and have done with it. No, it must be continually given voice in a spirit of engagement and love. We must make a joyful noise in the public square, proclaiming the Gospel and speaking of God's infinite love in becoming one like us in order to save us. To do so is to be truly Christ-like: calling out to those around us to follow Him. What then is the source of our joy? It is Christ.

And it is this joy in mystery, the mystery of the Incarnation, that St. Athanasius presents to the Church.

The ever-present truth of the Incarnation gives us great joy, especially as we celebrate its full revelation in Christ's birth at Christmas. This ever-present truth is the image and likeness of God in all whom we encounter. The Gospel, in revealing this truth through the mystery of the Incarnation, offers a radical proposition to today's North American society: human dignity. In the face of many significant challenges to the dignity of the human person in our society today, we must not slacken in

our proclamation of the truth of the Incarnation. Human dignity is inherent. It is not about external propriety, about how smart we are, how strong we are, how attractive we are, or how healthy we are, how inherent. It is not about external propriety, about how smart we are, how strong we are, how attractive we are, or how healthy we are. Dignity is not dependent on these external factors: it is dependent on the Incarnation, on Our Lord Jesus Christ and that He has joined Himself to us and redeemed us. Any other understanding of dignity, or so-called dignity, is flawed. Any limited and flawed perception of the *imago Dei*, the revelation of God's infinite love in the Incarnation, is something we must vigilantly seek to heal so that we may continue to seek Christ in one another and in so doing be driven to champion the inherent dignity of every human being. Yet still we are so often confronted with the image of Christ in each other and at the same time confounded and often wounded by our inability to fully perceive it. Addressing such challenges is the work of prayer and of our participation in the sacramental life of the Church. It is in prayer and in receiving God's grace that we will more fully comprehend how our dignity is a manifestation of God's love for us as revealed in the Incarnation. This manifestation, this truth, must be that joyful noise which we make in the world, in every aspect of our public and private lives.

For Christians, truth is not an abstract philosophy that changes with the times. It is a person, Jesus Christ, whose truth, manifested

in his incarnation, death, and resurrection, defines the Christian life and impels the Christian to act. This truth informs Christian action not only in prayer, whether private devotion or communal liturgy, or in the myriad conversations and personal interactions of the Christian community, it must also inform Christians' communications within the broader society of which they are a part.

There is an ever-present need for Christians to actively engage in the public square as Christians, first and foremost. We have something to say about political leadership and decision-making, economic policy and the market, social responsibility, civic virtue, and above all about human dignity. We are reasonably good at discussing these things amongst ourselves typically in select, often private fora in which we feel safe and comfortable. Yet, Christ does not call the Christian to be safe and comfortable. We must make even greater efforts to participate in society openly as Christians and refrain from the temptation either to ghettoize ourselves into the comfortable pew or to place our Christianity in a drawer when it is inconvenient to proclaim it. We must aim to see ourselves in government and not to view government as some secular behemoth, an anti-Christian, Hobbesian Leviathan that is foreign to us. In Canada and much of the Western hemisphere government is us, it is representative, it is drawn from us through a democratic process in which we are called to participate as Christians. Why are we called

to do so? The answer is very simple: to change the world and to bring the Gospel to all, to uphold the dignity of the person. This is a radical message in our world today. It is a message that we often seek to avoid proclaiming in those places that are seemingly off limits: workplaces, schools and universities, social organizations, and even families where the risk of offending we perceive to be ever-present. In order to proclaim the Gospel, we must ask God for the courage, fortitude and perseverance to speak out and to engage our communities. Prayer, daily prayer, is essential in this respect. We also need role models, models of holiness, both Christians present today within the Body of Christ and those who have preceded us to point us towards right action: confident proclamation of the Gospel and active participation in creation, a creation that is not only natural but also political, economic and social. Let us pray that God will raise up new confessors for the Church today as He always has.

What links the confessors of the past to us today, professing Christians, who seek to engage the public sphere and to have Christian faith fully present in public life? What is the *telos* towards which we are and they were oriented? It is Christ. It is to manifest His truth in the world today and to do so without fear of mocking or public reprisal. It is to speak to a universal, objective

truth and to disavow relativized or morally indifferent truths'. It is to place this truth at the centre of all that we do in our political, economic, and social life. Not to do so is to deny our Christian faith. Not to do so is to miss the opportunity to change the world. Not to do so is to deny our true selves, our true humanity that we have been restored to through the Incarnation. This is a radical view. This is an unpopular view, but it is a beautiful and exhilarating view. Often, even for those of us who are faithful and continually strive to manifest the truth in the public sphere it can



be an inconvenient truth. Yet, this has always been the case, whether we are speaking of 1st century Jerusalem, the Roman Empire of the 3rd century, during the height of Christendom, 18th century Enlightenment France,

or today. Again, there are models for us from all of these eras that we look to who struggled to proclaim the faith and to do so in an articulate and sincere fashion.

Of all the Christian figures of the past, there are many who could be pointed to as confessors or defenders of the faith, those we look to as bold advocates who challenge prevailing views in order to bring people to the truth. The second century apologist St. Justin the Philosopher, or Justin Martyr, in his *First Apologia*, gives a clear example of civic participation, of engaging the public sphere: petition as a Roman citizen to the Emperor Antoninus Pius to end the

persecution of Christians. What begins as a petition develops into one of the finest defenses of Christian truth before a political society that misunderstood the Christian faith, viewed it as a threat to public order, and responded with varying degrees of persecution. In his *Apologia*, Justin consistently expounds on the pre-eminence of truth and its public proclamation: "Reason directs those who are truly pious and philosophical to honour and love only what is true, declining to follow traditional opinions, if these be worthless. For not only does sound reason direct us to refuse the guidance of those who did or taught anything wrong, but it is incumbent on the lover of truth, by all means, and if death be threatened, even before his own life, to choose to do and say what is right." Justin confidently speaks to the lawful authority in such a way as to profess the truth and to emphasize that this truth has its place in the public sphere and should not be subject to persecution: "And if these things seem to you to be reasonable and true, honour them; but if they seem nonsensical, despise them as nonsense, and do not decree death against those who have done no wrong, as you would against enemies." Justin serves as an example not only of one able to boldly

and courageously articulate the truth but of a Christian who recognized the need for the public sphere to be enriched by the Christian message. In seeking recognition of Christians as "excellent", he issues a plea for the Christians to have their place in public discourse. We can then by extension say that it is imperative that Christians claim this place within the public sphere and to use it to confidently profess truth and do so in love, since the truth is love. We must also act and, inspired by the Holy Spirit, develop new approaches, new institutions, and new ministries that respond to the needs of our communities with the truth, beauty, and goodness of the Gospel.

Finally, we must draw deeply from the well of the Church's tradition and come to know again its martyrs and confessors. They confidently proclaimed the truth of the Incarnation: that all of us bear the *imago Dei*, the image and likeness of God, and it behooves us to act truthfully towards one another and to change the world into one which is more human as revealed in the God-Man, born for us at Christmas and laid in a manger in Bethlehem. So, as we move from Christmastide to Epiphanytide, let us truly make a joyful noise: *Hodie Christus natus est pro nobis!*



Art



GOD WITH US

ARTIST: IRENA VÉLEZ

MEDIUM: WATERCOLOUR WITH MICRO-
LINE PEN

ORIGINAL SIZE: 22.9 X 30.5 CM (9 X 12 IN)



The birth of Jesus is the most miraculous event in all of history, yet it took place in the most simple setting of all. There was a decree from Emperor Augustus that all the Roman world should be registered, so all went to their own cities to be enrolled. Joseph was descended from the House of David, so he returned with Mary to Bethlehem, the city of David. Mary was pregnant and the time came for her to deliver her child.

“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7).

Mary and Joseph stand around the manger and gaze down at sleeping Jesus. Mary’s hand gently holds her Son’s head. The infant Jesus rests in a manger,

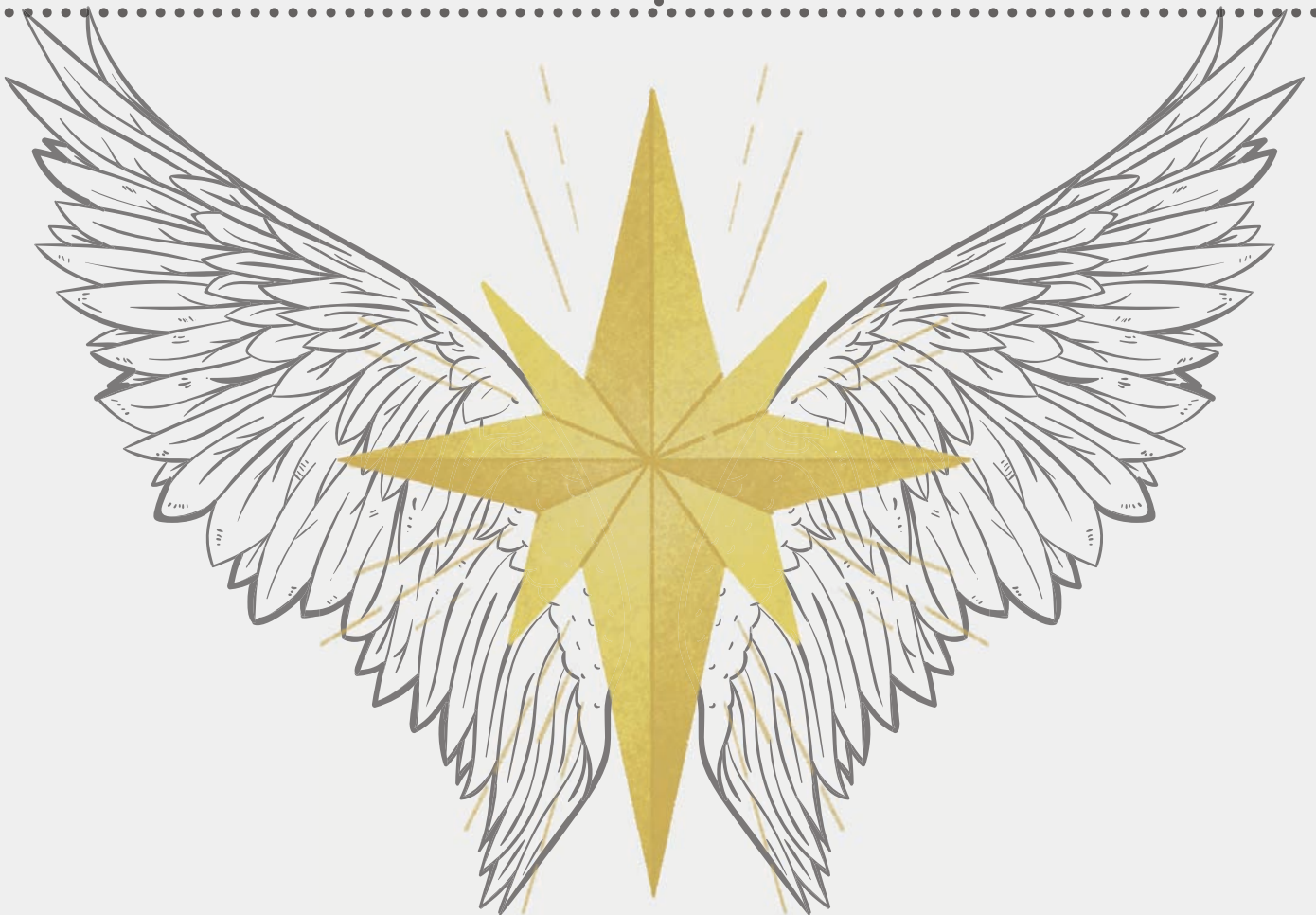
a trough for cattle feed. How humbling for the King of Kings to be born in a filthy stable. A stable is a home for animals, not a home for God, yet Our Lord chose to be born precisely there. The lowly circumstances of His birth do not demean His Godliness, instead they capture His humanity and His ability to come down to our level, as low as it may be. Interestingly, a baby born in an animal stable is the most significant event in the history of the world. If God can use such mundane means to bring salvation to us all, then we are all certainly capable of accepting His love for us.

The angels above the stable are shown celebrating the birth of Christ and *making a joyful noise* with their trumpets. Angels are spiritual creatures that glorify God without ceasing. The sound of trumpets is a call to gather as one to worship God. Angels were the first to announce Jesus's birth, telling the shepherds in the fields to "find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger" (Luke 2:12). They knew exactly what had happened and started proclaiming the Good News of great joy immediately. Upon hearing the Good News, the shepherds went with haste to Bethlehem to see what had taken place. When they saw Mary, Joseph, and the child Jesus in the manger, the shepherds

shepherds began "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen" (Luke 2:20). Such is the nature of perceiving the existence of God; you realize what is true and orient your life towards it. How beautiful that the proclamation of the angels brought the first people to witness God Incarnate.

The star above the stable is important because it was the sign that later led the Magi to the King of the Jews. They travelled a long way to follow the sign they had been sent. "For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage" (Matthew 2:2). When they saw that the star had stopped over the place where the child was, they were overwhelmed with joy, knelt, and paid Him homage with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Once again, the response to witnessing God Incarnate is great joy, celebration, thankfulness, and pure delight.


God came down to Earth so that man could ascend to Heaven. God became man to save human beings. He brings redemption and makes all things new. He mended the relationship between humans and God, broken by sin. Heaven and Earth are reconciled through Christ. Let our souls praise Him endlessly.





TROUBLED WATERS

ARTIST: CHRISTINE POIRIER
MEDIUM: ACRYLIC ON CANVAS
ORIGINAL SIZE: (8 X 11 IN)



"When you go through deep waters, I will be with you."

~ Isaiah 43:2

I will be with you. Through the troubled waters. Through the storm. Through the rainbows that come after it rains. I will be with you. Those words always echoed in my mind that day, the days before, and days after.

One day I was giving her a hug and wishing her a Merry Christmas, and exactly one month later, I was standing at a funeral mass. It felt like time had stopped. She was like a mom to me. I did not know what to say, because, frankly, I didn't have any words. But even in the storm, God was there, always there, and He was holding me tighter than ever, giving me a strength that I could not have found on my own. I needed God's strength so that I could extend my love to the person I cared about most and support them through their darkest of days. God was there in the people who displayed their love, and in the small things that gave us a reason to still smile. He was holding us both

so close in his arms, I know that I felt it. That experience was also a reminder to me that life is short. We must glorify God everyday as if it is our last. We have a limited amount of time here on Earth, and we must strive to live our lives honouring Him and being a beacon of light to the world. That is what I strive to do: to be a beacon of His light and an extension of His love unto others. I am far from perfect, but that is the beautiful thing about Christ's love for us: we are loved despite our imperfections and iniquities.

The deep blue of the water symbolizes the intensity of emotions one may feel when they are going through their own storm, while the waves symbolize the ups and downs of ever changing emotions. The sunset represents the beauty and new beginnings of each new day. It sets daily, but then it always rises again. A comparison can be made to God's unconditional love for us: it is always there. It is important to find blessings in the small things, like the blessing of being given another day here on Earth. The rocks symbolize strength, as the waves hit them again and again, and despite all that, they never falter, but remain steady. Our Faith must be like a rock, remaining steady even through the ups and downs of life. In all the times of my life where I have felt like "this is too much" or "I can't do this anymore", that is when I have heard God's voice the clearest. I have felt His love whether it be through answered prayers, unexpected blessings, through Adoration at Church, or even through the support of the loving friends and family in my life.

Now, I am not saying to only turn to God when things get tough; by no means is that a way to live life as a Catholic and a follower of Christ. Rather, I am saying that the deep waters are often a chance for us to develop an even closer relationship with and trust in the Lord than we may currently have. This is often my advice to others when they are going through tough times.

God does not always answer your prayers the way you see fit, but He answers them the way He sees fit. After All, He is the author of our lives. He does not lead you away from the deep waters and the rocky shorelines, but instead sometimes brings you there so you can rely on Him, see Him, and trust Him. It is then that He reveals His grace to us. It is said that God does not give us more than we can handle, but I believe sometimes He does, because it is an opportunity to place our trust in the One who always provides. God is among us when we choose to see the good in someone whom we may not be on good terms with, when we fail a test and are given a second attempt, when we are having a bad day and someone gives you a reason to smile- and so forth. He is among us in the big moments and in the small. Have you ever had the timing of something fall so perfectly into place that you look up and say, "I know that was you"? I know I have, and that is yet another reminder that God is among us always. He is in the beautiful sunset pictured here, He is in our relationships with others, He is in the smallest details of our lives, and God is there every hour of every day and night.



SURRENDER

ARTIST: MIGUEL ANDRES

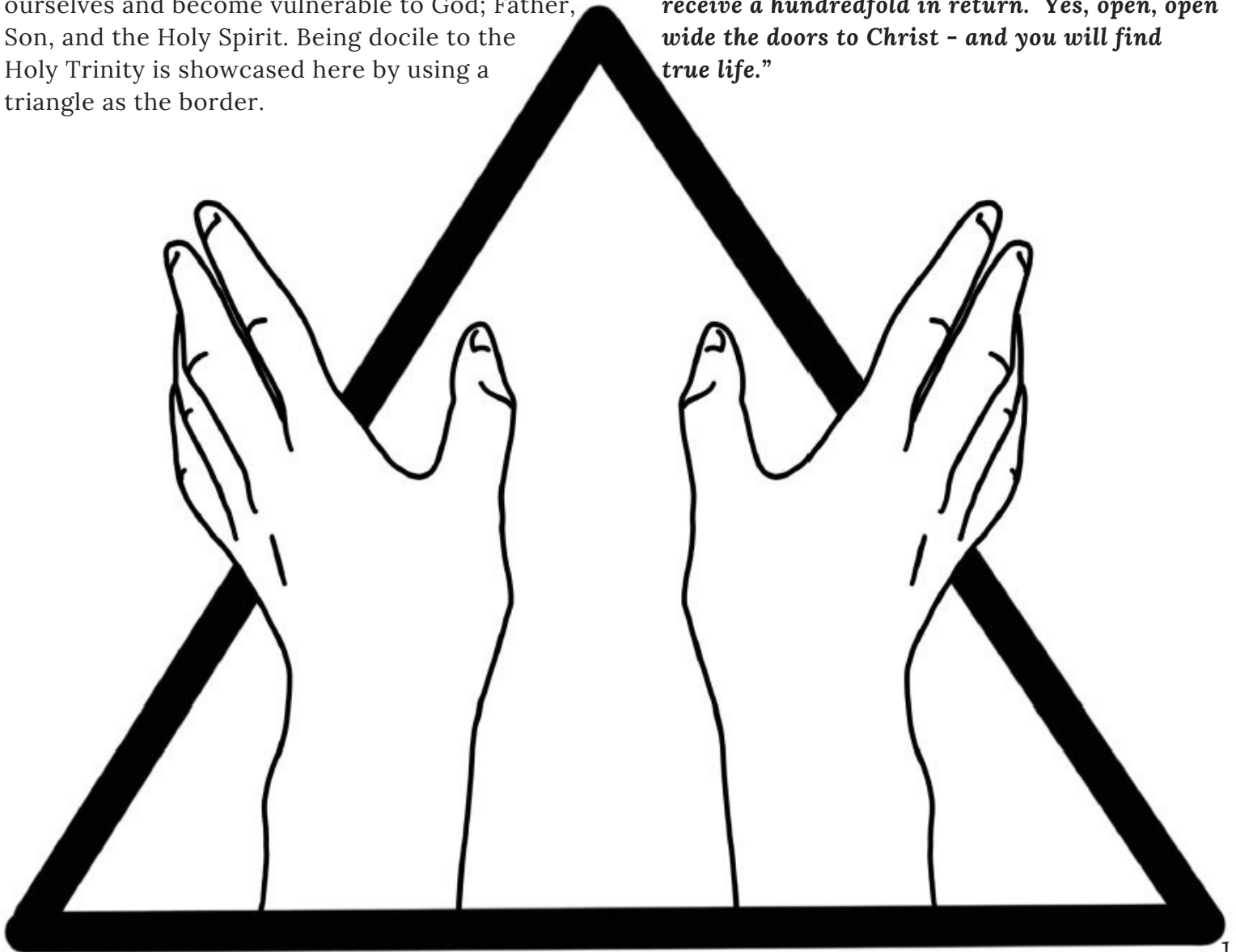
MEDIUM: DIGITAL (PROCREATE)

When I think about making a joyful noise, my mind immediately goes to praise and worship. The image that comes to mind are arms raised high with hands wide open.

I chose to focus on the open hands because it brings forth a few meanings that help us think about worshipping God. When we worship, we raise our hands because we praise and lift everything to the Lord. However, an open hand can also mean surrender. When we approach God with palms open, we acknowledge in a physical way that lay down our lives for Him and that we are ready to receive whatever He gives. The act of opening a hand is an act of vulnerability. As we raise our hands, we offer ourselves and become vulnerable to God; Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Being docile to the Holy Trinity is showcased here by using a triangle as the border.

As I was creating this piece, I realized that the hands looked like wings flying. The image of wings made me reflect on the idea of freedom. True freedom is found in the joy we experience when we truly surrender everything to God. It reminded me of what Pope Benedict XVI once said:

“If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed.... Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ - and you will find true life.”



ESSAYS



SWORD OF SPIRIT AND SHIELD OF FAITH

IRENA VÉLEZ ON MIXING FAITH IN MARTIAL ARTS.

JAN BITARA

There is something captivating about seeing two fighters duke it out in a cage. When the gate closes and the bell rings, all the trash talk on twitter and press conference slander is thrown out the window. All that is left is a contest of pure skill, talent, and intellect. On the surface, it looks like survival of the fittest, but in reality the sweet science of hitting and not getting hit is as complex as a game of chess. It is just that the stakes are higher.

Any fan of the sport will tell you it is not uncommon to see religion come into play both inside and outside the ring. Manny Pacquiao is known to throw up a quick prayer after scoring a knockout, and Khabib Nurmagomedov called out Conor McGregor in the past saying he has "...prayed to God to be left alone in the cage with



this clown..." However, not all athletes in the industry weaponize or use their faith for showboating. George Foreman became a pastor after losing to Jimmy Young and fumbling his chance of a rematch with Ali, and Tyson Fury is not shy about sharing his Christian faith. Even Joanna Jedrzejczyk has mentioned how proud she is over her Polish heritage, and prays a rosary with her sisters in the locker room before any of her matches.

Those of you who read Transcendentals regularly probably recognize Irena Vélez as one of our talented artists, but you might not know that you can find her grappling on the mats when she's not studying journalism or painting sacred art. In a world where boasting is the norm and your scorecard is everything, her dedication to MMA, friends and family, and God proves there is space for self improvement, family values, and Marian humility.



Could you give a brief history of your experience with martial arts?

I started training in martial arts when I was 7 years old. My parents put me into it because they wanted me to learn how to defend myself. The first martial art I did was Kung-Fu, and later on I got into Muay Thai, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, wrestling, and MMA. It became so much more to me than just learning self-defense. I came to love it as a sport, so I kept with it. I got more competitive and started participating in tournaments for wrestling and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. I trained more and more often, at the club anywhere from 2-6 times a week. I've been at Mixed Martial Arts and Fitness Academy for about 13 years now, although I have had to stop going due to the pandemic. In middle school and high school, I was part of the All Saints Catholic High School wrestling team every year. I wrestled at 61 kg and competed at many tournaments. At the annual city championships, I won gold once and silver 3 times in my 4 years of high school wrestling, taking me to OFSAA 4 times (provincials). After I graduated, I stopped competing due to a concussion and elbow injury in my last year of high school wrestling, but I still trained a lot at my club.



Are there any parts of martial arts that you find enrich your spiritual life?

It has been quite difficult growing up training in martial arts because, as you may guess, fight clubs are not the most Christian of atmospheres. Being in a sport so focused on weight and body image was hard on my mental health, and I struggled with body image for many many years. I was also very hard on myself with competitions, tournaments made me extremely anxious and stressed, but I forced myself to do them anyways. Winning medals felt good, but deep down, I did not feel fulfilled and I definitely did not feel completely content. When I started to get into my faith and began practicing Catholicism on my own, my faith helped me to be more comfortable in my own skin and reject the voices in my head telling me I was a failure. Christianity is beautiful in the sense that it teaches how every human being has dignity and immeasurable value, as we are made in the image of God. Applying this belief to my life made me an overall happier person and turned my goal in martial arts from winning to actually being happy and doing it for fun. Jiu jitsu



is my favourite martial art, and it is the art of manipulating the opponent's force against themselves. It shows us that the little guy can beat the big guy. It teaches us how to defeat an opponent without weapons. You do not need anything except for yourself to do it. This martial art can be reflected in light of Christianity when we realize that we do not need anything except ourselves to reach God. I come as I am, I am always learning, and I try my absolute hardest. In this sense, my martial arts life and my faith life are similar. It can also represent our struggles, our challenges, and how we overcome them. Getting a technique wrong is hard, losing a match is harder, but I get back on the mat and try again. Similarly, sinning and admitting my sins is hard, but I confess and try to be better after it. We learn and we grow, we admit defeat and we try again; this cycle is present in all things thanks to Jesus who died for our sins.



In what ways would you say martial arts helps embrace or encourage Christlike behaviour, given that Jesus was non-violent himself?

Good question! Martial arts is a sport, so when I'm on the mats, I play it like a sport. There are submissions in Jiu jitsu and MMA, like chokeholds, armbars, and triangles, and there is lots of punching and kicking in Muay Thai; it's how you play the sport. The trick is winning, but not hurting your opponent, there is a fine line between the two. I never try to intentionally injure my opponent; my goal is to win. Submitting an opponent can be done without severely injuring them, all you have to do is control their body with your technique and strength. As a Christian, I do not seek to hurt people in martial arts, I seek to learn the art of self-defense and be completely in control of my body. Being strong in martial arts is great, but without control and technique, it is nothing. I try to be in control of my movements and I try to be technical, as opposed to not being in control and hurting something with brute strength.



In what ways would you say martial arts helps embrace or encourage Christlike behaviour, given that Jesus was non violent Himself?

I think that in real life scenarios, martial arts should be used to defend oneself if necessary. We must stand up for ourselves and protect ourselves. Similarly, we must defend the Gospel and our faith in Christ against any attacks. Never let evil happen. If I see a human physically hurting another human, I would get involved and try my best to help them. If I hear someone attacking Christ and His people, I would get involved and stop it. We should all be defenders of Christ. Martial arts has helped me to see the value of defending myself, my beliefs, and Christ Himself.



"THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS"

FR. STEPHEN BRUZZESE

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11). These are words taken from the Gospel which is typically read at the Midnight Mass for Christmas. Having celebrated the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, we are reminded by the angel of some particularly important words, "Do not be afraid!" This is especially true as we approach the conclusion of 2020, a year filled with so much uncertainty, anxiety, and fear; we are reminded that Jesus came.

For the world, December 26th marks the end of the Christmas Season; however, we know that the Christmas Season has just begun. The Christmas Season celebrates the birth of the Lord Jesus and the ways He manifested the presence of God among us. Traditionally, the Christmas Season was forty days in length, which concluded on February 2nd. This was known as the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary; it is now known as the Presentation of the Lord (or Candlemass). Following the liturgical changes of the Second Vatican Council, the Season of Christmas concludes with the Baptism of the Lord.

In only a few days, we will celebrate the great feast of the Epiphany of the Lord. At Mass, the readings are from three distinct genres of biblical literature. Together they reveal and define the feast of Epiphany, that great moment when Christ manifests Himself to the nations. The Nativity of Jesus reaches its climax in Epiphany. What do I mean by that? In order to help me illustrate my



point, let me use the popular song "The Twelve Days of Christmas". Of course, when we speak about the twelve days of Christmas, we are referring to the time between Christmas and Epiphany.

In Ann Ball's 1991 book *A Handbook of Catholic Sacramentals*, she describes the following: the "True Love" which is being referred to is Jesus, because love itself was born on Christmas morning. The "partridge in a pear tree", represents Christ, because they are both willing to sacrifice themselves for their young. The "two turtle doves" represent the Old and the New Testaments. The "three French hens" represent the theological virtues of faith, hope, and love. The "four calling birds" represent the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The "five golden rings" represent the first five books of the Old Testament (the Pentateuch). The "six geese a-laying" represent the six days of creation. The "seven swans a-swimming" represent the

sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety, and fear of the Lord. The “eight maids a-milking” represent the eight Beatitudes. The “nine ladies dancing” represent the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit: charity, joy, peace, patience, goodness, mildness, fidelity, modesty, and chastity. The “ten lords a-leaping” represent the Ten Commandments.

The “eleven pipers piping” represent the eleven faithful Apostles. And the “twelve drummers drumming” represent the twelve points of belief in the Apostles' Creed. During the twelve days of Christmas, the Lord offers to us a total of 364 gifts; conveniently one gift for each day of the year, except for one remaining day. That remaining day is Epiphany, in which we offer our gift to the Lord. What can we give to the Lord that He needs or does not already have...the answer is nothing. However, the gift we offer to the Son is our adoration, our worship, our thanksgiving,

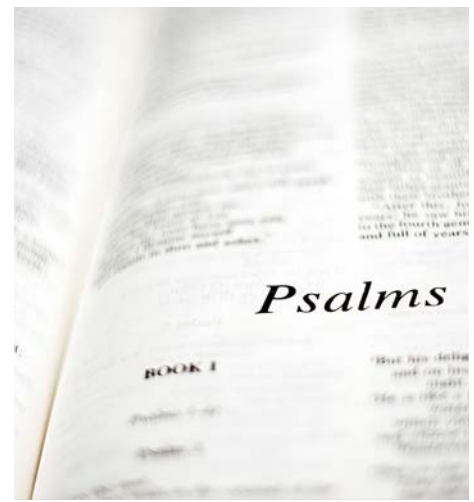
and our praise; which is offered to the Triune God alone: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. The Magi model for us the way to approach the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world! (cf. Revelation 19:16, Isaiah 9:6, John 1:29). We are reminded by the Council of Trent, “For in this sacrament [of the altar] we believe [and worship]...it is the same God whom Magi fell down and worshiped” 2021 years ago. Therefore, each time we approach the altar to receive Holy Communion, we, like the Magi, should prostrate ourselves at the feet of our Lord. Now, of course, it would be very hard to do this literally and, therefore, Holy Mother Church in her wisdom says this to us, “When standing before the minister to receive Holy Communion, the faithful should make a simple bow of the head” (GIRM, 160). We make the external bow of the head, but in our hearts, we make the prostration of the Magi. Then, as we return to our pew, we offer to Jesus the gold of our love for one another. We offer to Jesus the frankincense of our faith and acknowledge Him as Mighty God. We offer to Jesus our myrrh, which is our willingness to die to sin and to rise with Him in glory.

Then, finally, as we hear the words “Go in peace, glorifying the Lord by your life”, like the Magi, we return home by another route, because we have seen the Messiah! We no longer travel home by the same route for we know that just as Herod was hoping to trap the Magi, so are the past sins of our life trying to trap us. This is our call to radical conversion, like St. Paul says to the Romans, “Let us then cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” As we approach the feast of Epiphany, like the Magi we will exclaim with a loud cry of exultant praise, “we have seen the Lord!” Therefore, “Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). St. Leo the Great reminds us that, as the star rose in the East and brought the Magi to Christ, so too we must now imitate the star in its humble service. Today, this very day, we must become like that bright star shining in the East, so that we can ultimately lead others to our Lord and our Saviour, Jesus Christ.



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE WORSHIP?

MEGAN JOSEPH



***Psalm 100 declares,
Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth.
Worship the Lord with gladness;
come into his presence with singing.***

***Know that the Lord is God.
It is He that made us, and we are his;
we are His people, and the sheep of his pasture.
(Ps. 100:1-3 NRSV)***

What happens when we worship? In just a few short verses, this psalm reveals the relational nature of worship and why Christians so desperately need to worship their Creator.

What is worship?

The holy sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest form of worship, along with the other sacraments. However, I wish to leave the liturgies out of this discussion because of their distinction. For the sake of this essay, I wish to define worship as simply a prayer of praise to God. Many of the psalms praise God, as do many ancient prayers. Even spontaneous

praise - using titles of God, listing the attributes of Jesus, stating what Christ has done for us - is a powerful form of worship for Christians.

Music, whether hymns or contemporary Christian music, is another form of worship, especially when the lyrics of the song are directed towards God and His greatness. Aside from the Mass, music is arguably the best way to praise God because it employs the entire body. When we *make a joyful noise to the Lord and worship the Lord with gladness and come into His presence with singing* as the psalmist encourages, what is spiritual becomes physical. We fill our lungs with breath and use our voice to sing words of praise to the Word Who became flesh. As we dwell on spiritual realities, our bodies express them.

No matter what form we take, worship of God always comes in and through the transcendentals. When we reflect on the truth, beauty, and goodness of God, the soul is naturally stirred to praise such a God - in heart, mind, and will.



We remember who God is & who we are

When we worship, we are reminded of who God is. We recognize His power, sovereignty, love, compassion, mercy, and goodness. We recall how He has conquered sin and death and how He has set us free. In the words of the psalmist, worship helps us to *know that the Lord is God* and that we are not. Father Bob Bedard, the founder of the Companions of the Cross, understood worship when he said, “God, of course, does not need our recognition. He has, in fact, no needs at all. He calls us to praise Him because He knows (having designed and created us) that it is something we need to do. If we don’t give honour to God, we’ll forget who we are. If we don’t bow down before our Creator, we will begin to think that we’re in charge.” The Lord knows that we need to worship. The Catechism of the Catholic Church expresses that “creation was fashioned with a view to the sabbath and therefore for the worship and adoration of God. Worship is inscribed in the order of creation” (CCC 347). It is not only for the praise and glory of God - worship is for our own good too. When we worship God, we gain an experiential knowledge of Him. In the same way, the more we know and experience God in all His glory, the more the soul longs to praise Him. This relationship happens because worship affirms the human identity. Psalm 100 proclaims our identity: *we are His people, the sheep of His pasture*. When we worship God as God, we reclaim our identity as His beloved children.



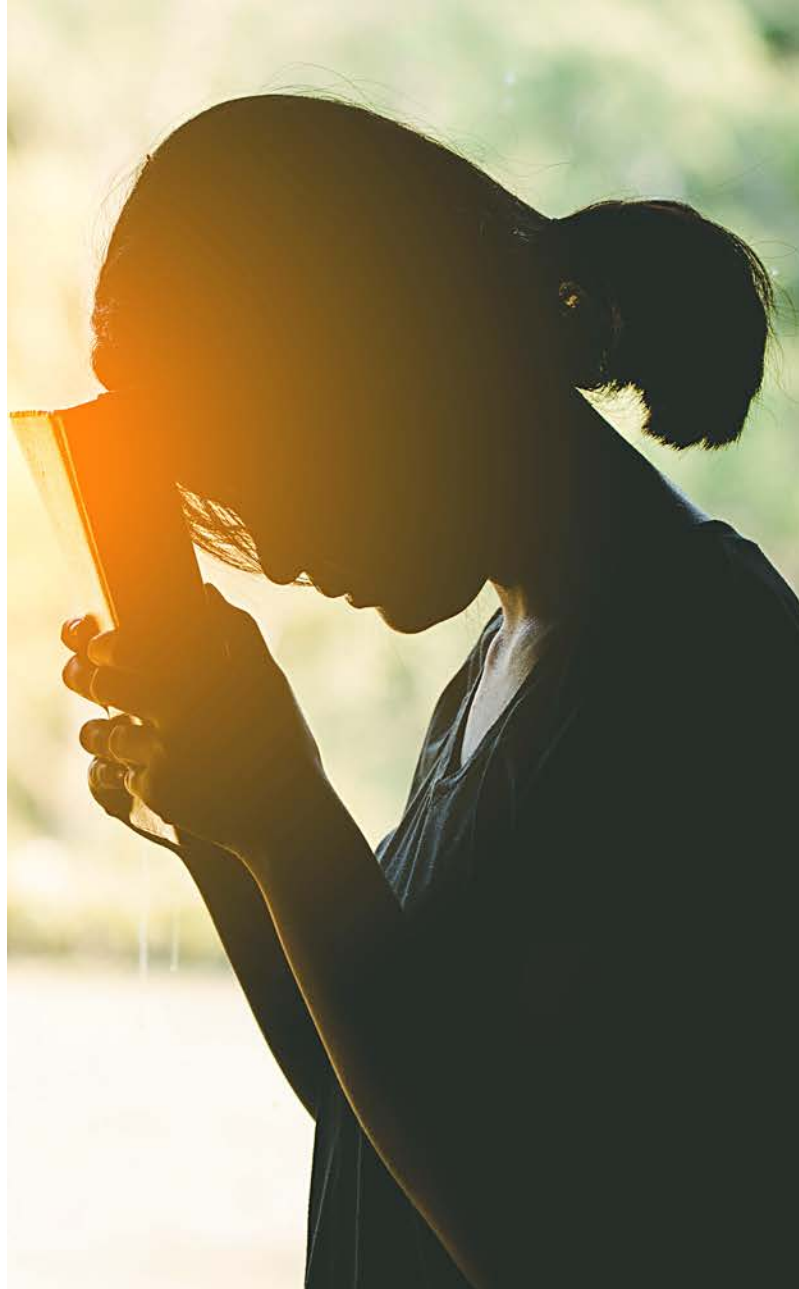
We enter into communion with the Trinity

When we know who God is and who we are in relation to Him, we can enter more fully into relationship with Him. In fact, worship draws us into a trinitarian relationship. Darrell Johnson is a preacher and scholar at Regent College. In his book, *Experiencing the Trinity*, he wrote, “God is receiving the worship that God is worthy to receive. The Father is receiving it from the Son; the Son is receiving it from the Father. And I am invited - I am drawn by the Spirit - into that altogether worthy worship!”

I think it is important to note that when we think of worship, we might think of a young worship leader on a stage with skinny jeans.

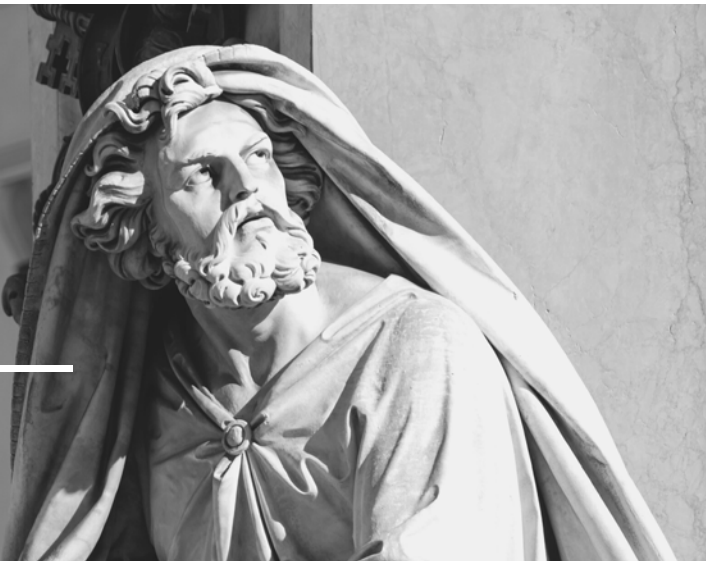
We may think of contemporary Christian music or people with their hands in the air. This type of worship is beautiful. Many have an experience of worship that has pierced them - even brought them to tears. I know I do. However, I wish to emphasize the act of the will in worship. In a romantic relationship, it is easy to love the other person when the feelings are new and exciting. It is much harder to continue to choose to love someone when you do not feel like it over and over again. In a strange way, sometimes an act of love without the fuzzy feelings is even more meaningful than the ones that are emotionally-charged. Worship is relational and thus can be an emotional experience, but not exclusively so. If it is true that worship reminds us of who God is and who we are, how much more do we need to hear these truths in the valleys of life? If worship elevates us to see the face of God, how much more do we need His grace in desolation? Finally, if worship is what God is worthy of, how can we not offer our praise to Him wholeheartedly, whether we feel like it or not? Yes, worship can and ought to be a response of our love for the divine. But love of God can (and sometimes will) be void of feeling. It will be a choice to rise and praise the Lord when we feel angry, hurt, abandoned, or numb. Like a marriage, sometimes the Lord gives even more grace when we praise Him in the moments when it feels like we have nothing to praise Him for. Our worship requires our will. Over and over again, we are called to worship the King of the universe. And He delights in it. He delights in us.

Not only is praising God necessary for one's spiritual life, not only does praise lift the soul into a relationship with God here and now, but Fr. Bob goes so far as to say that, "praise is a training ground for heaven." When we behold the beatific vision, we will be in full communion with God - and we will spend eternity praising Him. When we praise God - especially when we choose to praise Him in the moments we would rather not - we are preparing our hearts to join the endless chorus of angels who sing praises to God. When we worship God, the veil between heaven and earth becomes very thin because we are participating in the perfect eternal worship of God - the worship that we are created for.



Isaiah and the Promise of Christmas

CLIF CLEMOTTE



The following is adapted from a previous paper I wrote arguing for a broad brush-strokes interpretation of the book of Isaiah as a series of prophecies organized by the distance of the future. I have streamlined the text, eliminated quotations, and removed many of the original footnotes; my sources were: “A Land Divided” and “Into Exile,” in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*; “Isaiah 1-39,” in *The Jerome Biblical Commentary: Volume I*; and the relevant *Replies of the Pontifical Biblical Commission*. My hope is that the following can be a useful way of looking at Isaiah, and hopefully encourage you to read the whole book during the Christmas season. I apologize if this is pretentious.

As Christmas approaches, the Church turns to the prophecies of Isaiah to remind us of the long wait of the people of God before the arrival of Jesus. This is very deliberate, as Isaiah's prophecies concerning the Messiah were some of the most explicit in the Old Testament. Yet when reading the book as a whole, it does not feel much like an inspirational foreshadowing of the joy of the resurrection – on the contrary, it is dominated by devastation. In the first chapter, we quickly find the following gloomy comment: “If the Lord of hosts had not left us a few survivors, we should have been like Sodom, and become like Gomorrah” (Is 1:9). This comment is all the gloomier an introduction given that it was written long before the kingdom of Judah (where Isaiah lived) was destroyed – hardly a happy message to its original audience. Where is Christmas in Isaiah?

These prophecies were made in the kingdom of Judah during a tumultuous historical period of shifting political ties and reprisals, dominated by the political threat of powerful Assyria. The once-united kingdom of Israel, governed by the heirs of David, split into a northern kingdom (Israel) and a southern kingdom (Judah), with only the latter being retained by the Davidic dynasty. Both entities, albeit imperfectly, remained a covenanted people, but strayed further and further from this vocation. Isaiah called the kingdom of Judah to repentance from their covenantal infidelity by preemptively connecting the dots between present sin and future suffering. Yet Isaiah also foretold God's ultimate forgiveness and mercy, prophesying a future remnant's return from a future exile (cf. Is 10:20-27) and the coming of a servant of God who would bring a great and just peace (cf. Is 42:1-4). Theologians from the early New Testament onwards have recognized that these latter prophecies in particular point to Christ and the New Covenant, as indicated by the many biblical citations of Isaiah in direct connection with Jesus. By examining the historical context of Isaiah's prophecies, we can better understand why the apparent doom of Isaiah is in fact a profound insight into Christ.

A key principle of Catholic theology is that God has acted in and revealed Himself through history in real places, times, and events. Large portions of the Bible are explicitly historical, from the writings of the Deuteronomic Historian to Luke's Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. In Isaiah's case, the context

reveals the sins prompting the need to repent, and an understanding of why this punishment was fitting for Judah's sins. This in turn becomes the context for the eventual promise of consolation.

As stated above, Isaiah wrote during a tumultuous period of shifting political ties and reprisals in the Middle East. He wrote during the reigns of Uzziah/Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, four kings of Judah in the late 8th to 7th centuries BC (cf. Is 1:1, and "Into Exile," in *The Oxford History*). These kings (except for Ahaz) are each described in other texts as doing "what was right in the eyes of the Lord," and as being generally righteous (2 Kings 15:3, 15:34, 18:3). Ahaz alone of these four is described as doing evil, and stands in the same condemnation as the sinful kings of northern Israel (2 Kings 16:2-4).

Unfortunately, more unites these kings than separates them; throughout their reigns, pagan cultic worship was observed throughout Judah (2 Kings 15:4, 15:35, 16:2-4) and – though Ahaz was the only king of these four personally to promote paganism – the Judeans in general appear to have worshipped as pagans up until Hezekiah's reforms in the same way as the kings of Israel were worshipping, explicitly noted by the Deuteronomic Historian (cf. 2 Kings 16:3-4, 18:3-6). Early in Hezekiah's reign, the Israelites to the north were conquered and deported by the Assyrians as a consequence of their infidelity to God (2 Kings 17:7-8). Thus, the Israelite and Judean political context was directly related to their fidelity or infidelity to the Divine covenant.

Judah and Israel originally became tied and vulnerable to Assyrian predations because of their lack of faith in God as the head of His people. In 2 Kings, Israel becomes a vassal to the king of Assyria when "Menahem [the king of Israel] gave Pul [the king of Assyria] a thousand talents of silver, that he might help him to confirm his hold of the royal power" (2 Kings 15:19). In doing this, Menahem made the people of God subservient to a pagan king, an undesirable situation leading to Israelite discontent and a push for political independence without any consideration of the vocation as people of God – exemplified in the turn towards new pagan

alliances with the (ultimately unreliable) Egyptian political ambitions (2 Kings 17:1-6).

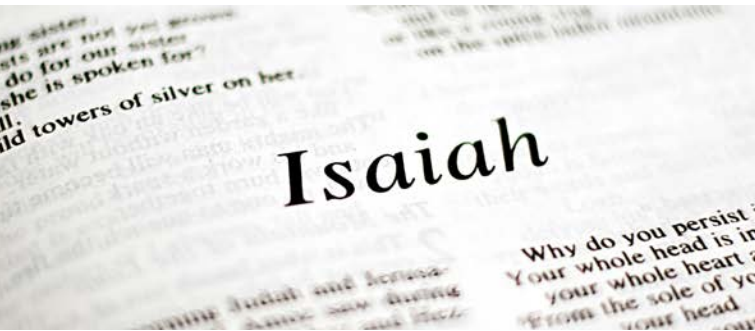
Even before Assyria's conquest of Israel, it was abundantly clear that the northern kingdom faced severe impending instability. As the tragedy unfolded, Isaiah prophesied that God would "do to Jerusalem and her idols" in the same way as He had already done "to Samaria and her images" (Is 10:11). Isaiah thus emphasized that the political destruction just across Judah's border was a consequence of the same idolatrous practices in which Judah was tangled; thus, like the Israelites, the Judeans also would be deported.

Isaiah's prophecy of impending punishment for Judah is prompted by Ahaz's fear of the invading rebels (including the northern Israelites) who attack him as part of their push to end Assyrian dominance. Why, then, did Isaiah prophesy punishment upon Ahaz for doing the opposite, for committing himself to Assyrian vassalage rather than attempting independence as Israel had?

The answer becomes more apparent by investigating the reasons for the rebels's aggression. It appears that the purpose of Syria and Israel's league was to "coerce Judah into armed rebellion against Assyria" (*Jerome Biblical Commentary*, p. 265). At this time, Isaiah prophesied to Ahaz that these attackers would not prevail over Judah. This was no pleasant consolation, but a warning against taking foolhardy action. If Ahaz would not believe this, then he would not be established as king over Judah (Is 7:7-9). Ahaz did not believe Isaiah; indeed, he already worshipped as a pagan, so instead he sent to the Assyrian king for help, declaring himself the "servant" and "son" of the Assyrian king, rather than of God (2 Kings 16:5-9). So much for the covenant! Ahaz's sin was the same as Menahem's. It is perfectly reasonable, then, that the punishment should be the same for both offenders at the hands of their chosen earthly lords. The fundamental problem, therefore, was whether the Judean monarch would approach national subservience or independence under Divine guidance in an effort to uphold covenantal worship.

This is demonstrated by the juxtaposition of Ahaz with Hezekiah in 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles; since

this juxtaposition is incorporated into the book of Isaiah, it provides the necessary historical context for understanding the prophecies. With Hezekiah's religious reforms, Judah's history took a new turn. Temple worship and the observance of the Passover were reinstated, and the pagan cultic worship sites were destroyed (2 Chronicles 29:1-31:21). This strongly contrasts with Ahaz's cowardly offer of service and sonship to the Assyrian king, and reflects Hezekiah's focus on Judah's covenantal relationship with God.



Unfortunately, though a major improvement, this reformatory king was critically flawed. Hezekiah too had a pagan ally, forming an alliance with Egypt in revolting against Sennacherib of Assyria ("Into Exile," *Oxford History*). And as with Israel, the alliance was a disappointment, leaving Judah unprotected and Jerusalem besieged (2 Kings 18:17). The earlier prophecy to Ahaz, that Assyria would afflict Judah as a consequence of grave infidelity, thus comes to a head under Hezekiah. Yet one may wonder why this punishment took place during Hezekiah's reign, when Judah was adhering more firmly to the covenant than it had for generations. Why now rather than, say, during Ahaz's reign? After all, despite a partial lack of faith, Hezekiah generally showed fidelity to God and worked to rebuild and sustain the Judean's faith.

One answer is that it was most fitting that the punishment should come during a faithful king's reign, because the prophecies of punishment were not the entirety of Isaiah's prophecies concerning Assyria; Isaiah had further prophesied that God's anger would end, and that God would ultimately end the Assyrian affliction by punishing the Assyrians (Isaiah 10:24-25). By fulfilling this promise of deliverance during a righteous king's reign and at the time when the Assyrian threat was gravest,

God both tested the Judeans' faith and also demonstrated with greater clarity that He alone could supply the covenanted people with deliverance – neither Hezekiah's allies nor his own armies were able at that point to provide any deliverance. Certainly, Ahaz took no credit! God alone provided succour, miraculously killing the Assyrian army in one night (2 Kings 19:35). Even though 2 Kings praises Hezekiah's refusal to supplant God with the Assyrian king, that praise is probably not founded upon the initial push for independence, but rather upon Hezekiah's final trust in God when all earthly hopes had vanished – it was then that Hezekiah refused to abandon Divine sonship for Assyrian peace. The prophecies of Assyrian affliction thus make a dark setting on which Divine fidelity and mercy are better illuminated.

However, there is a broader dimension to the Book of Isaiah: the prophecies of the small remnant of the people of God, a remnant that would survive the more severe punishment announced in the gloomy introduction. These, however, are supplemented throughout the text by the promise of ultimate pardon upon the arrival of God's servant. Talk of a remnant should have been cause for concern to Hezekiah, since his kingdom was preserved from destruction. The threat during Hezekiah's reign, while a genuine punishment from which Judah was genuinely saved, was apparently a mere prelude. Indeed, Isaiah told Hezekiah that "the days are coming, when all that is in your house... shall be carried to Babylon" (2 Kings 20:17). So much for Assyria, the worst was yet to come! However, there is an oddity here; this prophecy followed the incident with the Babylonian envoys, which is recorded *after* the narrative of the failed Assyrian invasion and the mercy shown to Hezekiah. Why, then, does God appear to have changed His mind and decided to punish the future Judeans after all?



The key lies in realizing that these episodes are not necessarily narrated in chronological order; these particular events are arranged thematically, and chronology would likely obscure this. It appears that the incident of the Babylonian envoys actually happened before the Assyrian invasion. First, one should note that the Babylonian envoys were sent “to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land” (2 Chronicles 32:31). One author suggests that this might have been regarding the death of Sargon, king of Assyria, but this is non-essential – the key point is that the Babylonian king who sent envoys to Hezekiah “was a known foe of Assyria with a record of rebellion,” making it quite probable that rebellion was a subject of discussion during the Jerusalem visit (“Into Exile,” *Oxford History*). Like the Israelites before, Hezekiah seems to have begun seeking pagan Babylonian aid, replacing the old vassalage with a new one, and thus completing the political setup for rebellion, defeat, invasion, and exile.

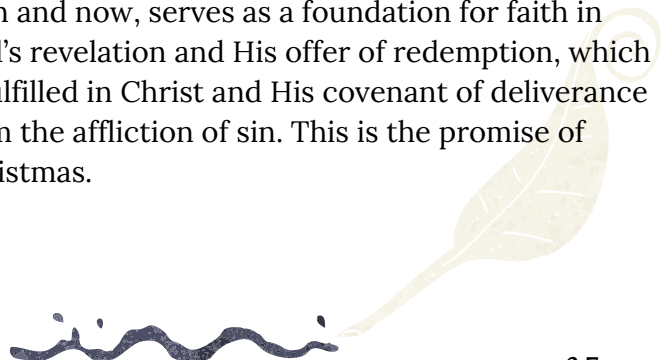
The thematic structure in 2 Kings’ account of these events, then, juxtaposes Hezekiah’s acts of faith (trusting the Lord despite Assyrian threats, and rewarded by a miraculous victory) with Hezekiah’s worldly faith in Babylonian power (which led to the political ties which ultimately resulted in exile). If presented in chronological order, these two distinct themes would have been blended, losing distinction from each other. This same juxtaposition is found in the Book of Isaiah, dividing the second part (chs. 40-66) from the first part. Chapters 36-39 confirm 2 Kings’ narrative of Sennacherib’s invasion, the Assyrian defeat, Hezekiah’s illness, and the Babylonian envoys. It is only after Isaiah’s prophecy of the Babylonian exile that the famous second portion begins (chs. 40-66), with Isaiah prophesying comfort and pardon to Jerusalem (Isaiah 40:1-2).

This second portion of comfort, written for the future exiles, is meant to be interpreted, then, in light of Hezekiah’s imperfect faith. Those suffering under Babylonian exile no doubt saw this bitter point all too clearly. The exile is the punishment for sins which Isaiah had prophesied much earlier, from which only a remnant would return; but now Isaiah’s prophecies of comfort became “live”, assuring the captives that God nonetheless was with them in their sufferings, and would be faithful

to His covenant. The same prophet who foretold the punishment had already foretold the pardon. This nation still was the people of God, and so the exiled Judeans, reading Isaiah’s prophecies from the past, found prophecies written to them, foretelling the coming of God’s servant.

The ultimate purpose, then, of the book of Isaiah is to lay the foundations for faith in Christ. As they returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, the Israelites were reminded in a powerful way that God rules over history and is faithful to His covenant, since He had both foretold their future suffering and their future restoration; yet the restoration was incomplete, as the holy servant had yet to arrive. This promise would only find fulfillment in Jesus. Only in the drama of the Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection do the people of God – and that means us, just as much as the Judean exiles – see how severe an atonement was needed.

Taken together, these three levels of prophecy – respectively concerning Assyria, Babylon, and both the restoration and the Messiah – provide a strong basis for faith in God’s promises of redemption and peace. By studying the historical context surrounding Isaiah during his prophecies, one can better understand their purpose and fulfillment. The people of God, the Church on earth, continues to suffer, especially when she forgets her nature as the bride of Christ. As a Church and as individuals, we are enslaved to our passing desires and inability to love God. This is not some flimsy vulnerability, a prelude to self-help; it should be the horror of discovering what it means to be depraved. Yet this must be the ground of Christian hope, a hope which exceeds mere wishing and instead is grounded in confidence in Divine Mercy. The sufferings consequent to sin can become our purification. The revelation contained in Isaiah’s prophecies, both then and now, serves as a foundation for faith in God’s revelation and His offer of redemption, which is fulfilled in Christ and His covenant of deliverance from the affliction of sin. This is the promise of Christmas.



Poetry and Prayer

BARNABAS NEY

Poetry. That somewhat-nebulous entity might raise an eyebrow, draw forth a sigh, or merit a disinterested shrug. Perhaps for many people, poetry conjures up the contrasting images of Shakespearean tights and droopy-eyed-hipster-wannabes at darkened coffee house poetry slams. Whatever your previous experience of poetry is, I would ask you to have the great kindness of suspending all antipathy, apathy, and anguish for the remainder of my little discourse on the subject.

With the shameless predilection that comes from someone who happened to enjoy all his poetry modules in English class, I will endeavour to convince you, dear reader, that poetry is not a mere frill of language, but an ancient, universal, and intimate form of expression. I will strive to do this by showing the similarities that poetry has to prayer. Not only do poetry and prayer have many parallels, but a proper appreciation of poetry can serve as a pillar in personal prayer.



Conversation

I would like to start by addressing how poetry can play a very personal role in our life of prayer and encounter with Christ. Prayer is fundamentally a conversation with God. For any conversation, there must be both listening and expressing.

I believe that remembering is often a large part of listening. If we forget what someone said thirty seconds after they have said it, we could not have been listening particularly well.

Certainly, when it seems difficult to hear the voice of God, it can be important to remember, to return to, the place where we encountered Jesus, where we clearly heard His first call in our lives. Pope Francis, in his 2014 Easter Vigil homily, said: "This [return] is not to go back in time; it is not a kind of nostalgia. It is returning to our first love, in order to receive the fire which Jesus has kindled."



What has any of this to do with poetry? Well, Robert Frost described poetry as "a way of remembering what it would impoverish us to forget." We would certainly be very much impoverished to forget Christ and all the times we have felt His presence in our lives. Poems have a particular power to persuade us that the past is present. They can reawaken some emotion, some sense, or the very essence of a moment or encounter in our personal history.

"Often I am permitted to return to a meadow as if it were a given property of the mind that certain bounds hold against chaos,

that is a place of first permission, everlasting omen of what is."

Robert Duncan - "Often I Am Permitted to Return to a Meadow"



Expression

Prayer is certainly not simply a way of wistfully reminiscing on past experiences. It is an often-intense expression of the moment. It is not prosaic; it is deeply personal. It is a cry from the depths of our emotions and experiences. As St. Therese of Lisieux best puts it: "prayer is a surge of the heart." We desire to share with Jesus what is on our hearts, whether it is hurt at the very depths of our souls or the joyful praise we find beyond the limits of our expression. At times, prayer puts aside cumbersome prose and becomes an untainted expression.

In a resembling way poetry "communicates feelings that lie beyond or beneath rational discourse" (Dana Gioia, *Poetry as Enchantment*, 2016). Poetry can be pithy yet expansive, puzzling yet illuminating. In poetry, no one claims to lay out some logical thesis with methodical plodding. The lines of a poem can be barely comprehensible to the rational mind, yet immediately recognizable to the sensitive heart.

Universality

Here again I appeal to you on two points. Prayer and poetry are both incredibly primeval. Both these forms of utterances, while ancient, continue to exist as universal forms of expression. Prayer is arguably the first form of human communication. When God spoke to Adam and Eve, they responded: the first dialogue between God and humans. Throughout salvation history, there are countless examples of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – speaking to and with mankind. These ancient prayers continue to be an important part of how we commune with our Creator. Consider the Lord's Prayer, consider the Psalms! Prayed thousands of years ago, and still prayed everyday in the life of the Church. While I will make no outlandish claims that our First Parents, without doubt, also wrote poetry, poetry has been around a very long time. I quote again Dana Gioia: "poetry even predates history because it not only existed, but flourished before the invention of writing." As a primal tradition, older than the bards, older than the Greeks, poetry served as a form of storytelling. Rhythm and rhyme made it possible to retain incredibly long tales and histories without a single scrap of papyrus or chip of stone tablet. Do you pray? I sure hope so. If you do, then my case for the newness of prayer is made. Each day across the world in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, in cold distant monasteries, at the bedside of young children, in whatever time and space you listen and speak to God, prayer is newly formed. Even if the words are ancient, the fact that they are being spoken now makes them as fresh as a newly-formed icicle. You might say that poetry is petering out and that I am an old man raging against the dying of the light when I say poetry remains new. With nonchalant deference,

I simply tout again the contemporary poet laureate Dana Gioia who claims that poetry remains "a universal human art." It is a lingering subtext in many cultures that seem to have grown-up with and then out of poetic literature. There remain some of us starry-eyed types who will memorize classic love poems and dither over our own scratched verses. Others take a much more modern approach and write rap, although this itself is perhaps a paradoxical return to the oral and rhythmic roots of poetry.

A Pillar of Prayer

I still remember that some of the first advice I ever received in formal spiritual direction was to try praying through poetry. While it ultimately was not something that became a regular part of my prayer life, I retain a strong mental association between poetry and prayer. Many of my own attempts at poetry come from a place of contemplation on the true, beautiful, and good in my life.

Beyond my own experiential evidence, I point to the poetic foundations of many songs of praise. "Poetry originated a form of vocal music" (Gioia, 2016) and continues to be infused into songs across cultures. Sung worship, I believe most will agree, is a form of prayer; even if St. Augustine never did say: "he who sings, prays twice." The Psalms are both prayers, often sung, and the subjects of attentive literary examination. Part of the beauty of the Psalms, of ancient hymns, and of some current worship songs can, I believe, be traced to the lyrical richness of the words of these texts.

If you are still not convinced, I will simply encourage you to read poetry written by saints. Without turning a poetry essay into a history lesson, I will simply state that there are many wonderful saints in the Church who wrote beautiful poetry. From St. John of Damascus to St. John Henry Newman to St. John Paul II, the interwoven nature of poetry and prayer is beautifully highlighted.

So please, read some poetry, write some poetry, pray some poetry.

Pray Poetry



*WHENE'ER across this sinful flesh of mine
I draw the Holy Sign,
All good thoughts stir within me, and renew
Their slumbering strength divine;
Till there springs up a courage high and true
To suffer and to do.*

*St. John Henry Newman
- The Sign of the Cross*



Poetry



Acts 14

Kathryn Yakielashek

I walk, I listen, I act
There is soft sand under my feet
I guess these are smallest stones
Not like stones I saw today

I see, I believe, I act
Are you of lightning? Are you deliverer of word?
Then celebrate in ways I deem right
Let me believe your truth, molding it to mine

I see, I hear, I act
Brothers, such a foreign thought
This thing I do not put my value in
Are you still my brother today?

I walk, I listen, I see, I hear, I believe
Are these your evidence of truth?
Knock the dust off from your sandals
Or else I might act

Until the Close of Ages

Nolan Toscano



Rebellion in the joy I know,
it's depth beyond compare.
Rebellion in the love I show,
Good News that must be shared.

Rebellion in my family lines,
For Life and Truth and Way.
Rebellion in their battle cries,
“Faugh an Beallach!” - “Viva Cristo Rey!”

Rebellion in their easy yoke,
Their hearts ablaze, unfurled.
Rebellion in their steadfast hope,
Opposed this wayward world.

Rebellion in the blood they shed,
For Christ the King, and Church.
Rebellion in their fire-tried faith,
More than love of life, its worth.

Rebellion in the lives they lived,
to cling to Cross in strife.
Rebellion in the deaths they died,
Unto eternal life.

Rebellion against to their age and state,
To be loyal to the Truth.
Rebellion I am a part of,
Since my unstable youth.

Rebellion in Dad's Mexico,
Where the Cristeros fought.
Rebellion in Mom's Ireland,
Where freedom Fenian sought.

Rebellion, which is now forgot,
And now I take my turn.
Rebellion in which I take part,
For His Sacred Heart, I yearn.

Rebellion against revolt,
Since the Great Commission rages.
Rebellion against rejection,
Until the close of ages.





My Child

Tyler Brooks

My child who cries out to me,
Why do tears overcome thee?
If only you would dwell on my gifts,
Then perhaps your mood change would be swift.

I have given you my Mother,
The one I love most; there is no other.
My Church is at service to you,
And she desires for your love too.

Every Sunday my sacrifice is on the Altar.
It is made for you even when you falter.
My love for you washes away all sin;
Surely you feel it deep down within.

I know your desires, but am I not enough?
It seems that your heart has grown awfully tough.
You fret and worry about what the future holds,
Instead of letting go and seeing how it unfolds.

Above all I have given you my life.
I hope these words pierce you like a knife.
Your air, food, and shelter all come from me,
For I am God Almighty, the One in Three.

So, child, do not dwell on what you have not,
But praise me for all the things that you have forgot.
Keep your eyes and heart set on love,
That way you and your neighbour may rise above.

Heart's Hymn of Joy

Emily Milan

If our hearts could sing a song
To welcome our Infant King,
Would we create a brand new tune
Or a familiar melody sing?

Would *O Holy Night* suffice?
Our hearts in symphonic voices;
And echo in that thrill of hope where

		world	
	wea-		joi-
The			ces
	ry	re-	

Or choral with the *Angels*
We Have Heard On High, proclaim;
Joined with nature in reply

		their	
E-	ing	joy-	
cho-		ous	
			strains

Or parallel the triumphant tune
Joy To The World employs?
For all creation will confess and

			joy
		ding	
Re-	peat	the	soun-

Nature responds to our hymn,
Imitating in harmonious throng.
How better to welcome this Infant King
Than begin with a joyful song?

Let us fill our staves with joy
And let nothing our melodies dim
For He has come, goodwill to men
COME. LET US ADORE HIM.

BIOGRAPHIES



Miguel Andres

Miguel is a son, a brother, a friend to many, and a fiancé to one. He currently lives in Ottawa, where he serves the Lord as a missionary with Catholic Christian Outreach. He loves anything beautiful, especially his lovely fiancée Megan. You will often find him with a coffee in one hand and his iPad in the other.



Laura Bell

Laura is first and foremost a beloved daughter of Christ, second, a daughter of the Bell family, and third, a student of the Arts. This June, she will be graduating from Ryerson University with a Bachelors in Radio and Television of the Arts: Media Production. Now, as she finishes her education, she is beginning a new chapter in her life by helping Transcendentals; a community in which she can fully engage and combine her two true passions in life: her love for Jesus Christ, and her love for creating art.



Tyler Brooks

Tyler is a faithful Roman Catholic, student at heart, and passionate nerd. After recently obtaining an Honours Bachelor of arts with a major in History and minor in Political Science at UOttawa, he is now in the Master of Divinity program at Saint Paul University. He can be found reading history books, hanging out with his friends, and probably discussing theology.

BIOGRAPHIES



Fr. Stephen Bruzzese

Father Stephen Joseph Bruzzese was born October 11th, 1989. From an early age, he always wanted to be a priest and found great joy in being an altar boy. Between 2009 and 2012, he earned a Baccalaureate in Thomistic Thought from St. Philip's Seminary, & between 2012 and 2017, he earned a Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology and a Master of Divinity from St. Augustine's Seminary. Father Stephen is currently serving the people of God at Our Lady of the Scapular.



Clif Clemotte

Clif is a student of philosophy, currently pursuing graduate studies and living on Vancouver Island. He holds two undergraduate degrees from liberal arts colleges, institutions that fostered his love of reading, research, and stimulating conversation. For a year after graduation, he taught at a private elementary institution; now, a student once again, he plans to conduct research on the human mind and the process of knowledge.



Megan Joseph

Megan has lived across North America, but calls Vancouver, BC home. She has always loved seeking the truth, which led her to graduate in 2019 with a Bachelor of Theology and Culture from Saint Mark's College. Megan is currently a campus missionary with Catholic Christian Outreach in Halifax, NS. She is also a seasoned equestrian, avid rollerblader, and now - an amateur writer!

BIOGRAPHIES



Emily Millan

Emily is a born, raised, and chosen Catholic whose missionary zeal has taken her across both Australia and Canada. She is a seasoned evangelist, and has served with NET, CCO, and various other ministries in her mission to see hearts return to the Lord. She is unashamedly in love with the Eucharist, dancing barefoot, sunshine, and the ocean.



Barnabas Ney

Barnabas is a beloved beggar of the Most High King. He enjoys adventuring in the wilds of his native Vancouver Island, but is even more excited to be serving Christ and His Church as a campus missionary for Catholic Christian Outreach. While he holds an MA in Economic Policy, his real joy is in pursuing and contemplating beauty and its One true source.



Christine Poirier

Christine is a recent graduate of Humber College's pharmacy technician program, and, aside from her passion for pharmacy, her chosen form of meditation in her free time is often painting, and various landscapes in particular. Ever since her high school art projects, she has always found ways to tie her works to religious themes and life experiences in a cathartic way for her as the artist, and in the hopes of connecting on a deeper level with her audience. Christine enjoys long nature hikes, which is often a source of inspiration for her artworks and where she tends to feel close to God.

BIOGRAPHIES



Nolan Toscano

Originally from Pickering, Ontario, Nolan has a passion for history, writing, mixology, and puns. A jack of all trades, he has done everything from life-guarding to landscaping, professional cooking to political staffer, youth camp counselor to long-term care social worker. Currently, he serves as the Mission and Discipleship Director for St. George's Parish in Ottawa, Ontario. You can find him pondering life's silly paradoxes, exercising, engaging in debate, and above all, pursuing the Love of his life: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.



Irena Vélez

Irena is a passionate Ottawa-based artist working mainly in watercolour. Her art inspiration and ideas come largely from her Catholic faith and her desire to share it with others. When Irena is not painting, she is either at church, reading a good book, studying journalism and history, training in martial arts, or spending time with family and friends.



Kathryn Yakielashek

Kathryn is a volunteer for the St. Francis Xavier Chaplaincy in Calgary, Alberta. Her passion lies in seeking and knowing God, and what a delight to do so! Poetry is close to her, as she has been writing poetry since the age of 10.

