



St. Joseph Review
2019-2020

EDITORIAL BOARD

Editor in Chief: Blake Thompson

Faculty Adviser: Jennifer Heil

Poetry Editor: Paolo Taffaro

Short Story Editor: Jesse Barrow

Essay Editors: Andrew Furka and Jacob Daniell

Cover Photo: Blake Thompson

Technical Assistance: Todd Russell

Saint Joseph Review is published annually by the Academic Office at Saint Joseph Seminary College in Covington, Louisiana.

Saint Joseph Review is a limited, free publication. This publication presents the College's effort to foster student creativity in the overall effort to improve student writing. In addition, we have included some of the finest examples of our students' work in literature, philosophy, history, music, and other classes.

Contributions may be sent to: Blake Thompson, Editor-in-Chief:
bthompson@sjasc.edu.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Essays:

Michael Marincel: Integrated Human Good: Aristotle's Inclusive View of Man's Fulfillment	1
Brett Lee: Odysseus as Epic Hero and the Will of the gods	7
C. Blake Winn: That in All Things God May Be Glorified, A Theological Reflection on the Saint Joseph Abbey Church	15
Miguel Melendez: By the Sweat of Your Brow, Prayer as Work in the Christian Life	26

Short Story and Creative Writing:

Rev. Ken Davis: Only Love Sees What Eyes Cannot	29
Carlos Turner III, Carlos Valero, and Carlos Jaime: The Life and Times of Carlisimo Tuveme, A Retelling of Beowulf	31
Joshua Lafleur: An Economic Solution for the Alleviation of the Strain of Aiding Impoverished Nations	35
Blake Thompson: Peacock Rising	38
Jace Gyles: Listening	43

Poetry:

Miguel Melendez: Veni	46
Tanner Darbonne: The Gardener	49
Joseph Marcantel: No. 5	52
Dr. Casey Edler: A Dying Dream	55
Letter from the Editor in Chief	56

Essays:

Michael Marincel

Integrated Human Good: Aristotle's Inclusive View of Man's fulfillment

In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle posits contemplation as the highest end and happiness of man.¹ However, Aristotle also claims happiness can be attained via the other virtues.² Seeking to reconcile this seemingly dualistic view of the human good, David Charles, in his article “Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation,” uses the concept of analogy to unite the moral virtues and practical reason to the single source of good: contemplation. Dominic Scott’s article, which is also titled “Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation,” is a response to Charles’ article. Scott agrees with Charles that goodness by analogy can justify the presence of moral virtues on the list of human goods, but he goes a step beyond Charles to reconcile the seeming contradictions in Aristotle’s view of man’s fulfillment by appealing to Aristotle’s concept of man as a composite being. [I think] Scott acknowledges more fully than Charles Aristotle’s important assertion that, though we have a godlike intellect, we are not gods but humans; as humans, we are composites requiring external goods. Because man has a composite nature, he can find fulfillment in multiple ways and to varying degrees.

The central purpose of Charles’ paper is to discover whether, and to what extent, Aristotle believes man’s happiness is affected by his practice of the moral virtues and practical reasoning. Charles begins his article by asserting that human well-being is contemplation.³ He comes to this conclusion by referring to Aristotle’s statement that “human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete.”⁴ Charles then refers to 1177a12ff where Aristotle explains that the highest virtue is contemplation. Charles puts these two statements together to assert that because Aristotle does in fact claim there to be one virtue that is most complete (contemplation), happiness must rely

¹. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 7*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

². Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 8*.

³. David Charles. “Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation: David Charles.” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 73*, no. 1 (1999): 206.

⁴. Charles, Aristotle, 205.

exclusively on that most complete virtue (contemplation).⁵ This interpretation of Aristotle's words seem to contradict what Aristotle says later: that life in accordance with the other virtues is also happy but to a lesser degree. In an attempt at reconciling these seemingly contradictory views, Charles proposes that perhaps Aristotle believed non-contemplative virtues to be good insofar as they relate to a man in a similar way to contemplation. To support this claim, Charles cites a brief passage in which Aristotle proposes as a possibility that good things all share goodness by analogy: sight being good for the body as reason is good for the soul.⁶ Contemplation, then, is the central good of man's existence and other virtues must be analogous to contemplation if they are to qualify as part of the human good. The extent to which they are similar in some relevant way to intellectual contemplation will determine whether they are worthy human actions. Practical wisdom, then, is valuable in that it exercises man's rational capacity in a similar way to intellectual contemplation: grasping concepts, internalizing them, and processing them through reason.⁷

Scott accepts the possibility of Charles' idea of things as being good because of their similarity to contemplation, but he does not accept Charles' ideas as the final solution. If other virtues, such as practical knowledge and moral virtue, are objectively good and worthy of human action because of their analogous relationship to contemplation, why are they not included in Aristotle's ideal life, that is, the life solely composed of contemplation in which the gods participate?⁸ Scott answers that gods would not work to acquire practical reason because such would not be fitting to their nature. A god who needs not take care of an earthly body has no need for practicalities or interactional virtues. We as men, however, have great need of heuristic reason and moral virtue because our nature and human condition necessitate that we act in these areas.⁹

Scott makes an important distinction here, which Charles fails to acknowledge. Scott acknowledges that, practically speaking, the ultimate fulfillment of man, who is a composite of body and soul, is achieved in a more complex way than would be the fulfillment of gods: beings who have no physical or other needs apart from the intellectual pursuit.¹⁰ Aristotle is very clear as to how the gods achieve happiness. Without the complex needs of composite man, they find perfect fulfillment of their entire being – all their needs are met – through intellectual contemplation. Aristotle is also quite clear

⁵. Charles, Aristotle, 212.

⁶. Charles, Aristotle, 214.

⁷. Charles, Aristotle, 217.

⁸. Dominic Scott. "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation: Dominic Scott." *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 73*, no. 1 (1999): 238-40.

⁹. Ibid.

¹⁰. Ibid.

that this state of purely contemplative action is – objectively speaking – the highest and most happy.¹¹ After explaining the nature of the perfect state of happiness and how it is attained, however, Aristotle turns around and flatly states that such a state is unattainable by humans: “But such a life would be too high for man; for it is not in so far as he is man that he will live so, but in so far as something divine is present in him; and by so much as this is superior to our composite nature is its activity superior to that which is the exercise of the other kind of virtue.”¹² A life composed purely of contemplation, then, is not the perfect human good because it is unattainable; and as Aristotle says, “we are now seeking something attainable.”¹³ Fortunately, according to Aristotle, there are multiple degrees of happiness. He tells us that “those to whom contemplation more fully belongs are more truly happy.”¹⁴ Thus, although Aristotle claims that the highest level of happiness (that comprised solely of contemplation) is unattainable for us, we can attain varying degrees of happiness through various levels of contemplation.

That Aristotle believes there to be various levels of happiness is apparent and consistently present throughout the *Nicomachean Ethics*. However, near the end of book X, Aristotle makes another claim regarding the attainment of happiness, which, in light of the rest of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, seems remarkably inclusive. Aristotle has spent so much time up to this point – and even beyond – speaking of the supremacy of contemplation that it is easy to expect he will write off all other virtues entirely; instead, Aristotle does something quite different: he reaffirms the other virtues as roads to happiness. Aristotle writes, “But in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kinds of virtue is happy.”¹⁵ This potentially poses a problem that can, at first glance, appear to be a discrepancy in Aristotle’s thinking. As was discussed above in the section on Charles, Aristotle seems to imply that because contemplation is the highest virtue, it is the one and only path to happiness. However, such an interpretation is far from necessary. When Aristotle says in Book I that “human good turns out to be activity of soul in accordance with virtue, and if there are more than one virtue, in accordance with the best and most complete,” (a statement which is repeated in different words later in Book

¹¹. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 8*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

¹². Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 7*.

¹³. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book I section 6*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

¹⁴. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 8*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

¹⁵. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 8*.

X) he could mean several things.¹⁶ Aristotle could mean “[exclusively] in accordance with the best and most complete,” or he might mean “[especially and most completely] in accordance with the best and most complete.”¹⁷ The meaning of this phrase is ambiguous when the phrase is isolated; however, the meaning can be confidently ascertained by looking at the passage in its larger context. It seems quite unlikely that Aristotle meant “[exclusively] in accordance with the best and most complete” considering the number of times he equates happiness with virtue in general. However, the proper interpretation of this passage is made most explicit in Aristotle’s straightforward statement that “in a secondary degree the life in accordance with the other kind of virtue is happy.”¹⁸ By this statement, Aristotle makes it clear that happiness (the ultimate end of human action) can be reached through non-contemplative virtue.¹⁹ This frank statement clarifies how the other above-mentioned passages are to be understood.

If indeed Aristotle teaches that there are two “levels” of happiness (primarily: relating to contemplation, and secondarily relating to other virtues) as I have proposed, which constitutes human happiness? I propose the answer is both. However, according to Aristotle, happiness makes life desirable and lacking in nothing; and such we think happiness to be; and further we think it most desirable of all things, without being counted as one good thing among others – if it were so counted it would clearly be made more desirable by the addition of even the least of goods; for that which is added becomes an excess of goods, and of goods the greater is always more desirable.²⁰

If the “primary” happiness of the gods is perfect, and happiness—as Aristotle says—lacks nothing, how can we classify “secondary” happiness—in which the gods lack a share—as happiness? I believe this question can be quite simply answered if we interpret Aristotle’s words to mean that happiness itself is fully self-sufficient and cannot be elevated by anything else. There can be more or less effective pathways to happiness, such as contemplation or other virtues, but happiness itself cannot be elevated by the addition of anything not directly a part of or springing from happiness, such as naked pleasure. I believe this question can be most clearly answered by an analogy: if the happiness brought on by contemplation is represented by a wonderful cake, and the happiness from

16. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I section 7. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

17. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I section 7.

18. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* Book X section 8. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

19. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I section 7. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

20. *Ibid.*

other virtues is a somewhat tasty sweet bread, then the life of the gods is constant enjoyment of the wonderful cake. Unlike the gods, man is unable to constantly partake of the cake of contemplation.²¹ In those moments when we are not able to eat of the cake, we will find greater happiness in partaking of the sweet bread than in going hungry. I think this is what Aristotle meant when he wrote “in so far as he is a man and lives with a number of people, he chooses to do virtuous acts.”²² Because the gods are never incapable of contemplation, they have no reason to stoop from their perfect happiness down to a second-best happiness. Surely, the sweet bread would taste like rubbish in comparison with the wonderful cake.

I think Scott was right in claiming that Aristotle did in fact consider the non-contemplative virtues a part of human happiness. The good of man includes non-contemplative virtue because man has a composite nature, which does not allow him to engage continuously in the highest form of contemplative happiness as do the gods. However, the more man is able to forgo the lower virtues for the sake of participation in higher and higher contemplation, the greater happiness he will achieve. The way in which Aristotle words some of his phrases (such as those mentioned two paragraphs above) can seem a little unclear. However, I think Aristotle uses this ambiguity as a powerful rhetorical tool to emphasize the great primacy of contemplation while still acknowledging the intrinsic value found in the other virtues.

²¹. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 7*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

²². Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics Book X section 8*.

Bibliography

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book I*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics Book X*. Translated by W.D. Ross. The Internet Classic Archive, nd. 16 Oct. 2018.

Charles, David. "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation: David Charles." *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 73*, no. 1 (1999): 205–223.

Scott, Dominic. "Aristotle on Well-Being and Intellectual Contemplation: Dominic Scott." *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume 73*, no. 1 (1999): 223–242.

Brett Lee

Odysseus as Epic Hero and the Will of the gods

The Greeks' ideal man was one who *was* excellent, not merely one who had excellent things or possessions. Perhaps a foreign sentiment to the present day, the fictional ideal Greek man was one of dedication to his country, sharp wit, and above all, an astounding knack at being successful (which may or may not bring fame and fortune to his house). Homer gives the reader a paradigmatic example of this Greek hero in his epic poem *The Odyssey*. Odysseus, the legendary "city sacker" of Troy and "complicated" sojourner attempting to return to his Ithacan home, is portrayed as a cunning master of deception and talented warrior capable of avenging the wrongs of the invading suitors in his home. However, upon closer analysis of the text, the reader wonders, from where does his *arete* (excellence) come, his own merits or the assistance of the gods? The answer to this question is one that has implications for what an epic hero is and what makes him so. Ultimately, Odysseus would not have been the renowned epic hero of the poem if not for the aid of the gods to augment his own skill and power.

The first consideration to be made on this topic should be in the implied extra-textual content on Odysseus' success in the Trojan War. The poem begins *in medias res*, nearly ten years since Odysseus' sacking of the city of Troy, so the reader may not have all the knowledge of the hero's success during the campaign. One notices several references to the gods influencing this success, however, when characters look back on events during the war. For instance, when Telemachus is informing Odysseus' old war pal King Menelaus about the state of the hero's Ithacan house, the king says, "O Father Zeus, Athena, and Apollo, / I pray he is as strong as when he stood to wrestle Philomeleides, on Lesbos".¹ The prayer for divine assistance and strength as Odysseus had in a battle shows a belief that his skill is god-like, but derived *from* the gods. This seems to be the most apt description of Odysseus in the poem: of god-like skill, but lost at sea without the gods' help.

Even the decisive military move in the war, the use of the Trojan horse, was due to the goddess Athena's inspiration. In book 8, upon his arrival in the kingdom of the Phoenicians, Odysseus commands the bard Demodocus to sing

¹ Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Emily Wilson. *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*. Gen. ed. Martin Puchner. 4th ed. Vol. A. New York: Norton, 2018. Book 4, lines 341-342.

of “the Wooden Horse, which Epeius / built with Athena’s help”.² The legend of the Trojan Horse claims that it was Athena’s inspiration that led to its creation. The people of Troy, thinking it a gift for Athena, brought it within the city walls, with Greek soldiers hiding inside. Once inside the citadel, Odysseus led his men forth and attacked the fated city. Homer describes the scene thus: “Like Ares, / Odysseus, with Menelaus, rushed / to find Deiphobus’ house, and there / he won at last, through dreadful violence, thanks to Athena”.³ The poet compares the story’s hero with the Greek god of war Ares, and credits his success to Athena, without whose favor and inspiration the Trojan horse could not have been built and Odysseus’ legend be told. Even the song of Odysseus’ victory over the Trojans is divinely inspired: “A god inspired the bard to sing”.⁴ The muses that give words to the poet Demodocus sing of the hard-fought battle and cunning invention of the horse and glorify the works which another goddess prompted and brought to completion.

After Odysseus sacks Troy, he begins his journey back to Ithaca to reclaim his throne and house. However, partly due to the influence of various gods, it is not to be so for another ten years. What causes most of Odysseus’ misfortune is Poseidon’s anger at the hero’s cunning escape from the island of the Cyclopes. In the timeline of events, the stay on this island was not long after Odysseus’ departure from Troy and was one of the first stops on the way back home. When he begins to tell this story to the king of the Phaeacians, Odysseus claims, “the gods have given me so much to cry about”.⁵ With this admittance of the gods’ control over his fate, he reminisces on how he arrived at the island due to the winds sent by Zeus to blow them off-course. Upon the cyclops’ return, despite Odysseus’ appeal to the custom of hospitality (*xenia*), Polyphemus ruthlessly eats several of the Greek crewmen throughout two nights. Odysseus devises a plan for escape from the cave, which the cyclops keeps sealed with a huge stone. On the second night, he gets their one-eyed host drunk on wine and uses a huge pointed spear to blind the cruel monster’s eye.⁶ The next morning, when the cyclops lets his flocks out to graze, the men sneak out clutching the underside of the sheep. In pride, after escaping on the boats, Odysseus taunts Polyphemus and reveals his name. The cyclops, whose father is Poseidon, prays to the sea-god that he may prevent Odysseus from returning home.⁷ Poseidon

² Ibid., Book 8, 493-494.

³ Ibid., Book 8, 516-520.

⁴ Ibid., Book 8, 500.

⁵ Ibid., Book 9, 15-16.

⁶ Ibid., Book 9, 382-383.

⁷ Ibid., Book 9, 530-531.

hears his son's prayer, and because of his wrath the hero is not allowed to return without the help of gods, especially Athena.

It is important to note two things about the aforementioned episode. First, though Odysseus receives no help from the gods in his defeat of Polyphemus, the wrath of Poseidon that blazes up against him due to his harmful treatment of the cyclops would have kept him at sea for an unknown time, perhaps even causing his death, if not for the intervention of other gods. The numerous storms at sea that destroy ships and throw the hero off course are ample evidence for that, and without the assistance of gods and goddesses like Athena it is unlikely that the skilled city-sacker would have survived. It is thus important to remember the reason that Poseidon is able to curse Odysseus in the first place; he reveals his name to the cyclops in a fit of pride after blinding the cruel shepherd. He ridicules the cyclops, saying with all the self-confidence of a Greek hero, "If any mortal asks you how your eye was mutilated and made blind, say that Odysseus, the city-sacker, Laertes' son, who lives in Ithaca, destroyed your sight".⁸ Despite the skill Odysseus shows in escaping the clutches of Polyphemus, it is this folly, his own rash judgement, that leads to years of pain and wandering outside of his home. In this seeming lapse of thought about the gods, he brags to Polyphemus and "any mortal" about his triumph, but the following prayer from the cyclops ensures that the hero of Troy will not reach his home for many years once it is heard by the sea god. This is a sobering reminder to the reader of his dependence on the aid of the gods and the ease with which Poseidon keeps the great epic hero from Ithaca, seemingly sealing his fate as a wanderer until intervention from Mt. Olympus.

When Odysseus reached the island of the goddess Circe, he sent his crew to explore the citadel, having learned a lesson from the cyclops episode. When the goddess turns the exploring crew into pigs, a survivor returns to tell Odysseus that his men were lost, and the god Hermes appears to help Odysseus survive the same trickery from the goddess. He gives the hero an antidote for Circe's potion and instructions on how to intimidate the goddess, telling him not to "hold out against her-- / she is a goddess, If you sleep with her, / you will set free your friends and save yourself".⁹ Without Hermes' help, either Odysseus would have left without some crew members or the hero would have succumbed to the magic of Circe; in this case, his own skill is unlikely to suffice for protection against cruel divine power. This episode without the intervention of Hermes would have ended badly even more quickly than with Polyphemus because of her divine power. Circe did not have to rely on prayer and brute force to overcome the shipmates, but her own magic; after she is disarmed by

⁸ Ibid., Book 9, 502-506.

⁹ Ibid., Book 10, 295-297.

Odysseus with Hermes' suggestions, she takes him for a while from pursuing his goal to return by offering him all the comforts he could want. It is true that Odysseus and his crew stay with the goddess willingly for a whole year, postponing their return by their own volition, but Hermes had said not to resist Circe in order to maintain their safety, and combined with the obvious pleasure of the sojourn its duration may have been an appeasement of the goddess. When they leave, Circe gives instructions about how to navigate between the multi-headed monster Scylla and the whirlpool Charybdis.

When Odysseus reaches the island of Calypso alone after losing the rest of his men at sea, he stays there for many years, trapped by the goddess. This is where the all-important intervention of the goddess Athena begins in the timeline of events after Troy. At the opening of the poem, Zeus speaks about human suffering, saying, "This is absurd, / that mortals blame the gods! They say we cause / their suffering, but they themselves increase it / by folly".¹⁰ Despite this strong statement from the son of Cronus, his daughter Athena answers with concern for Odysseus, saying, "I am agonizing about Odysseus and his bad luck...on an island where a goddess lives".¹¹ She appeals to Zeus on account of the hero's piety and even says, "[If] the blessed gods at last / will let Odysseus return back home, / then hurry, we must send our messenger".¹² Athena admits in these lines that the reason Odysseus has been held from home so long is the wrath of Poseidon, and that the help of the gods will be the only aid for him to return to Ithaca. Once Hermes reaches Calypso's island, he informs her of Zeus' order to let Odysseus free, and she assents. The ease of her decision shows the helplessness of Odysseus' situation compared to the almost arbitrary way the gods make men their pawns. Calypso reveals that she promised Odysseus immortal life if he stayed with her, and if Athena had not advocated for him, he would have stayed on the island as long as Calypso wished, perhaps never returning home despite his skill and wit.

Athena continues to aid Odysseus through his journey from Calypso's abode to Ithaca, giving him supernatural beauty and charm when talking to the Phaeacians and disguising him once he returns to Ithaca; she reveals herself upon his waking on the shore of his native land. The most important episode of the story regarding the aid of the gods and Odysseus' legacy as the epic hero is the revenge of Odysseus on the suitors in his home. Athena's aid is found before and during the fight, and it is clear that Odysseus would not have been the triumphant king of Ithaca had she not helped him. Before the king returns to his palace, she disguises Odysseus as an old man so as not to give away his identity

¹⁰ Ibid., Book 1, 32-35.

¹¹ Ibid., Book 1, 47-51.

¹² Ibid., Book 1, 81-83.

to all whom he meets on the way. Though he suffers abuse for this, it is probable that without this disguise, word of the king's arrival would reach the suitors before his entrance to the palace, giving them time to prepare for a fight that even the renowned city sacker could not win without divine assistance. In the halls of the palace as the contempt of the suitors for the disguised king grows and the fight breaks out, Athena is there to encourage and challenge Odysseus.

As Odysseus prepares for the redemption of his legacy, Homer says, "Odysseus was left there in the hall, / and with Athena, he was hatching plans / for how to kill the suitors".¹³ Athena is also the goddess who gives Penelope the idea for the archery contest to decide on a suitor; this is the contest which began the bloodshed in the palace hall, showing the way in which the goddess gracefully orchestrates the legendary return of the poem's hero".¹⁴ When Odysseus takes his own bow from the suitors and begins to shoot, he kills many of them without any assistance from the gods. However, when some of his adversaries find arms for their defense from his storage room, Odysseus cries out to Athena, who appears near him, disguised as Mentor, saying, "I have been good to you since we were boys. / So help me now!".¹⁵ He knew that it was Athena despite her appearance, but she rebuked him for his seeming cowardice and attempted to test his own ability. Athena's insistence on use of his own skill to fight may have been her own way of stirring into flame the courage he once had when fighting at Troy, which could have been more helpful than merely delivering him an easy victory. She even calls upon him to remember his Trojan battle, saying "Where is your courage now? / You fought nine years on end against the Trojans...how can you flinch from being brave and using proper force against these suitors?".¹⁶ Despite this, she made the spear throws of the suitors fail while Odysseus and his small band of loyal servants killed off the evil suitors to restore their household.

After the triumph of Odysseus in his house and his reuniting with Penelope, the relatives of the dead suitors seek revenge on Odysseus, who had gone to his father's dwelling to see him after twenty long years. When they approached Odysseus and his companions, the scene quickly turned to battle, with Athena helping Laertes at first to hurl a spear successfully at the enemy. After a short time of fighting, Athena commands Odysseus to stop the war, "or Zeus will be enraged at you".¹⁷ At once the hero obeyed. This simple command

¹³ Ibid., Book 19, 1-3.

¹⁴ Ibid., Book 21, 1-2.

¹⁵ Ibid., Book 22, 209-210.

¹⁶ Ibid., Book 22, 226-233.

¹⁷ Ibid., Book 24, 543-544.

and Odysseus' response exemplify the will of the gods to favor some people in some conflicts and their ability to restrain them.

This last grand theophany is one of the most lucid in the poem, resulting in a quick response from the epic hero. This, compared to other times when the gods are absent (Polyphemus) or choose not to intervene so directly (Athena disguised as Mentor), is a clear way of the gods guiding the actions of Odysseus to ensure his legend may live on. It seems that there is a greater prudence at work between the deities that allowed the epic hero to be victorious, despite the opposition of Poseidon. This brings up the issue of how it is that Athena's intercession guaranteed Odysseus' safety and not Poseidon securing his wrath in destroying the city-sacker. Here is where the unsung hero comes to light with both Athena and Poseidon yielding to a greater power: Zeus. The goddess comes to him to advocate for the hero at the poem's beginning, before going down to earth and guiding the actions of characters in the story. And Poseidon himself is subject to the wishes of his brother, the king of the gods. One way the reader knows this is because of Polyphemus' stipulation while praying to the sea god: "Grant that Odysseus, the city-sacker, / will never go back home. *Or if it is / fated* that he will see his family..."¹⁸ If Poseidon had equal power to do just as he wills, it would make sense to appeal for exactly what he wants rather than depending on a "fate" that seems larger than even the lord of the sea. Poseidon also admits his deference to Zeus in book 13, saying, "I always said Odysseus would reach / home in the end. I did not take away / that privilege from him, no, not at all, / since you had promised it with your own nod"¹⁹ Thus the seemingly arbitrary methods of intervention of the gods may be explained by their doing Zeus' bidding or their sharing of a higher prudence with him to reach the goal that he had: Odysseus' return.

At every turn, Odysseus' story is dependent on the favor or displeasure of the gods. On one hand, without the gods' help, he could not have had some of the great victories won through what may have seemed to be the result of skill. Secondly, if the gods would not have simply had the will to let Odysseus escape or arrive safely at destinations, his story would have ended quickly and his legend would not have been that of the successful and god-like warrior of Troy and the redemption of his house. This raises a question about the epic hero in turn: is the epic hero what he is because of the favor of the gods? Odysseus' destiny was decided in many cases by divine assistance, so would the epic hero in general be the one to whom the gods allot victory, regardless of their skill? It certainly seems that certain victories were won without the help of the gods due to Odysseus' skill in war. Even still, he is often considered blessed by the gods,

¹⁸ Ibid., Book 9, 530-532, emphasis added.

¹⁹ Ibid., 132-135.

so it seems that in the poem these talents could have been granted to anyone to make them an epic hero. Perhaps this is a topic for literary scholars to ponder given the context of the great epic poems, but one thing is sure: as the loyal swineherd Eumaeus said, “Gods give, gods take away, as is their will; / to gods all things are possible”.²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., Book 14, 443-444.

Bibliography

Wilson, Emily. "The Odyssey." *The Norton Anthology of World Literature*
Fourth Edition, edited by Martin Puchner, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.,
2018, pp. 325-602.

C. Blake Winn

That in All Things God May Be Glorified: A Theological Reflection on the Saint Joseph Abbey Church

In 1889 a small group of Benedictine monks from St. Meinrad Abbey in Indiana established Saint Joseph Priory and Preparatory College at a site near present-day Pontchatoula, Louisiana. They were invited by the Archbishop of New Orleans, Francis Janssens, to establish a seminary for local men to study for the priesthood. The Monks moved to St. Tammany Parish in 1902, and the priory was elevated to abbey status in 1903. On November 30, 1907, a fire destroyed the wood frame campus, and the monks built anew a few acres to the west. The present large brick main monastery building dates to 1908. That same year the Postmaster General established a post office at the monastery with the name Saint Benedict, giving the campus its moniker St. Ben's. Begun in 1931 and completed the next year, the basilica plan church at Saint Joseph Abbey borrows from various periods of Italian architecture.

The artwork was painted by Dutch Benedictine monk and artist Dom Gregory de Wit between 1945 and 1955. De Wit's paintings are particularly known for their vibrant colors, stylized lines and occasional anachronisms. The monk-artist made his own colors from powdered pigments mixed with potassium silicate. The overall effect, according to one authority on the artist, is a mural with a fresco-like appearance and durability.¹ The paint penetrates the plaster rather than merely being a surface coating. De Wit also used a slightly textured wall surface when using potassium silicate paint. The swirling angels in the dome and the lettering surrounding the paintings were drawn free hand. The other paintings were traced onto the walls and then filled in. Many consider the Abbey Church to be Dom Gregory's magnum opus, uniting art and architecture in an ecclesiological masterpiece, no doubt inspired by the Christocentric theology of the abbot who received him into monastic life and encouraged his talent, Blessed Columba Marmion.

The Abbey church is a fine example of classic Western Christian architecture. There are three principal areas of the traditional church: nave, dome (choir or crossing), and apse. The three-tiered longitudinal floor plan naturally lifts the eyes to make the ascent from the nave through the choir and on to the heights of the apse. The dominant style of architecture for the Roman or Latin Church is longitudinal and oriented. That is to say, rectangular, processional, and hierarchical, with the altar at the eastern end of the building. This general form is divided into three primary sections (nave, choir and apse) each of which is

¹ Begnaud, *Living in Salvation*.

extended with distinctive tributaries (narthex, transepts and ambulatory). This structure forms a Latin Cross.

The Early Christian Basilica forms the foundation of much of what we know of Church architecture. When Constantine became the patron of Christianity, he wanted to construct churches and sought architecture that had meaning in the Roman world. Clearly the traditional form of the Roman temple would be inappropriate both from associations with pagan cults but also from the difference in function. This led to the use of a category of Roman buildings known as the Basilica. Roman basilicas served as places for public gatherings, law courts, financial centers, and a variety of other functions. These basilicas regularly had an architectural form we call an apse. The apse was a semi-circular projection usually off the short wall of the rectangular building. The apse was the site of the law court. It would be here that the magistrate would dispense the law. Adjacent to the seat of the magistrate would regularly appear the image of the Emperor. This symbolized the translation of legal authority from the Emperor to the Magistrate. The Church follows this with the placement of the presider's chair below the image of Christ, symbolizing the authority of the priest standing in *persona Christi capitis*, "in the person of Christ the head." As the Roman magistrate would speak on behalf of the emperor so the priest speaks on behalf of Christ in the words of consecration here at the altar.

De Wit's paintings both reinforce the architectural movement and build a sound liturgical theology. A church building is a sacramental image of the mystical body of Christ. Many parts come together to form a theological whole. In the New Testament, the body of Christ, the members of the Church were called living stones. In the Book of Revelation, an angel gives Saint John a tour of the heavenly city with a measuring rod, giving dimensions, numbers of gates, and descriptions of materials.² But the heavenly city is not a tangible, material place. It is an icon of the glorified church in which God is seated and the faithful are the "living stones." The church building, then, is an icon of the full living church of the Heavenly Jerusalem. Borrowing from Sacred Scripture there has always been a clear analogy between a building and the Christian people which is why a church building is called a Church even though we think of the Church as being composed of human beings who are members of the Church. Their theological realities are so closely aligned that over time the word Church came to mean both the building and the people who use it.

Church architecture is a sacramental thing with a theological underpinning that reveals the nature of the Church to us. In the Thomistic system of beauty, a thing is called beautiful when it reveals what it is at the level of its own nature. It's called its ontological reality. Two foundational notions come from Scripture. First the incarnation, Christ, who was the invisible God,

² Cf. Rev 21:15-17

took on human nature and took on matter. Therefore, material things of the earth can reveal the mind of God to the world. And at the Transfiguration at Mount Tabor, when Christ's body became dazzling white and radiant with the light of heaven, He showed that the very matter of His body could reveal God's glory. Heavenly realities can burst forth from material substance. In the Mass worship on earth is being conducted as worship is being done in heaven. The Catechism says, "When the Church celebrates the sacraments, she confesses the faith received from the apostles – whence the ancient saying: *lex orandi, lex credendi*. The law of prayer is the law of faith: the Church believes as she prays."³ Dr. Denis McNamara, faculty member at the Liturgical Institute at Mundelein, proposes the Church has an unwritten "*lex edificandi*" or law of building.⁴ The building must represent to us a theological reality that points to the heavenly future we all hope to be part of. This is fundamental in the design of a church, a building that is adequate to the task that Catholic liturgy asks it; to become a revelation of the mind of God and to allow us to participate in that reality. This is architectural theology. What is the sacramental reality that this building should reveal to us?

The Abbey church's great glory is its interior. The nave is defined by composite order arcades along each side aisle in the Renaissance manner with arches springing directly from the column capitals. A towering great round arch marks the transition to the crossing. The nave has an openwork wooden ceiling (in the manner of Early Christian churches). The term "nave" comes from Latin *navis*, meaning ship, an early Christian symbol of the Church as a whole, with a connection to the "ship of St. Peter" or the Ark of Noah.

Each of the Corinthian columns in the nave measure 33 feet tall, recalling Christ's death at the age of 33, the perfect age of manhood. In the ancient world columns were understood as architectural versions of people. Columns have a capital from the Latin *caput* meaning head. As well as a pedestal from the Latin *pedes* meaning feet. In Greek the word the basis, from which we get the word base not only meant foot but also stepping or dance. It was particularly the dance of the religious processions up to the temples. So, columns were understood not only as people with heads and feet but also people doing the celebratory dance of their sacrificial liturgy.

There is a mythological origin from the pagan world of a writer named Vitruvius from the first century BC. His book on architecture is the only one to survive from the ancient world. He wrote of the origin of columns that the ancient Greeks were trying to figure out the proportions of a column, so they

³ Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1124.

⁴ McNamara, Denis. *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy*.

found a man that they thought had good proportions and measured him and found him to be six times as tall as he was wide. So, it's a 1:6 proportion and that we call the Doric column, a simple capital. But it was associated with men from the very beginning because they then measured the proportions of women and found them to be more slender than men with a 1:7 or 1:8 proportion. Then took young girls and found a 1:8 or 1:9 proportion. So not only are columns people but the different kinds of columns are different people. The Doric column was originally associated with male gods like Mars and so became a symbol in Christianity of male saints. The ionic column, based on the proportions of women, was used to symbolize women saints, such as the Blessed Virgin Mary. The scrolls on the capital indicate the curly hair of women. More elaborate columns were used to indicate the status of the church or building, with cathedrals having the most intricate. So, while it may appear that columns are only there to support the building, their presence has a deeper spiritual meaning that is meant to remind the people of their role in the Church. The Church since its foundation has followed this convention using columns. The Abbey Church uses Corinthian capitals to honor the virginity of the Abbey's patrons, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Columns often stand in for people in Sacred Scripture. In Exodus chapter 24, "Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel."⁵ This image finds its fulfillment in Galatians 2:9 where the apostles are called "pillars" of the Church. So, the 12 columns in the nave are a type of the 12 apostles, the primary pillars of the New Testament and fulfillment of the 12 tribes of the Old Testament. This inspired the artist to paint the Apostles above these pillars to manifest the reality of the Church as supported and guided by the firm foundation of the Apostles. The Church is an image of the people as living stones and columns take on a theological import.

Dom Gregory has a real knack for painting strength and grace combined together. All of the portraits of individuals in the Abbey Church are depicted tall and elongated as columns. They become part of the architecture as graceful, strong rising figures as they hold up the Church. As the columns of a building must be strong to function, they should also be pleasing to the eye. One of the indicators of God's blessing sung by the Psalmist is that daughters of Israel are like columns that stand at the corners of the temple, well-formed and shapely, adorned as for a palace.⁶ In the six alcoves of the nave aisles, the female

⁵ Exodus 24:4, New International Version.

⁶ Cf. Psalm 144:12

Saints are on the left and the male Saints on the right. This separation of the sexes stems from ancient days. It was the practice in many regions of the world for the men and the women to sit on opposite sides of the center aisle during the eucharistic celebration for a gender specific catechesis. In his visual litany, Gregory does not simply include personal favorites. Rather, he employs “prototypes” to bracket the community of believers. The represented saints and their patronal charisms include the following: Agnes and Stephen: Proto virgin and martyr. Mary Magdalene and Martin of Tours: Protoconverts. Cecilia and Gregory the Great: Musicians. Catherine of Siena and Jerome: Great Teachers. Gertrude and Antony of the Desert: Monastics. Frances of Rome and Francis of Assisi: Evangelical council of Poverty.⁷

At the end of the north side aisle of the Church is the altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin. Mary, the Virgin Mother of God, is known throughout the many cultures by a multitude of titles. The most ancient and ecumenically recognized is Theotokos, “God Bearer.” Dom Gregory has crowed Mary in the Greek, Πλατυτέρα Ουρανών “Platytera [ton] ouranon.” Poetically, by containing the Creator of the Universe in her womb, Mary has become Platytera ton ouranon, which means: “More spacious/wider than the heavens.” She is depicted full length with her hands in the orans position, and with the image of Christ as a child in front of her chest contained within a medallion. This type is sometimes called the “Virgin of the Sign” or “Our Lady of the Sign,” a reference to Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.” Mary is flanked by the archangel Gabriel on her right and Saint John the Baptist to her left.

In Eastern Orthodoxy John the Baptist is sometimes called the “Angel of the Desert,” and a “heavenly man and earthly angel.” In the Greek New Testament in Mark 1:2-3 first tells us about John: “Behold, I send my ἄγγελόν (angel/messenger) before your face, who shall prepare your way; a voice crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’” John appears then as an angel wearing his characteristic camel hair garment and holds in his hand a chalice containing a baby. This babe is the Christ Child, and the image calls to mind that scene in the Gospel where St. John leapt in the womb and so testified that the unborn Child whom Mary carried was indeed the Son of the Most High.⁸ While Western art generally depicts the “Lamb of God” in the form literally of a lamb, Eastern art prefers to use the image of the Christ Child since his infancy shows his great gentleness and humility.

⁷ Begnaud, *Living in Salvation*, 26.

⁸ Cf. Luke 1:39–56

The use of sacred art within a church building serves a variety of purposes: to serve as an educational tool in order to communicate some aspect of our Catholic faith, to define an area of the church building and the use of that particular space, and it can stir within the viewer a sense of wonder and awe. The goal of the sacred art placed within the Abbey Church is all of the above, thus the building itself, the physical structure in which we find ourselves, has a story to tell and a lesson to teach. The art of Dom Gregory de Wit is entirely purposeful. Like the Rule of Saint Benedict, nothing is left to chance, and nothing is superfluous. Gregory's paintings are not simple decorations on the walls to make spaces somehow more attractive. De Wit has a well-developed, location-specific program which exacts a response from those who encounter the work. The overarching motivation for Benedict and Gregory alike is a personal encounter with Christ in every act. The key Scriptural impetus for Dom Gregory's work in the church comes from Psalm 113:3 "from the rising of the sun to its setting praised be the name of the LORD." The liturgical space where the monks gather to mark the hours of the day with prayer occurs, therefore, between images of the rising and the setting of the sun. The apse, the eastern end of the building, presents the rising of the sun. Over the doors of the narthex at the western end is the setting. What lies in between is the activity of the day, the church at prayer.

At first glance, from a distance, much of the artwork in the Church has an ancient look, but closer examination reveals its contemporary (mid-twentieth century) derivation. Some scenes are strongly reminiscent of New Deal-era murals with chiseled, angular faces and strongly conveyed muscles. His vision of the Last Judgement establishes peace and unity in Christ. All classes of American society from the vantage point of the early 1950s are included: a black laborer, disabled people, a devout widow, Saint Benedict, children (including a boy with polio), Church hierarchy, a cigar-puffing businessman, and Dom Gregory himself in his monastic habit. This grouping is akin to the post office murals commissioned during the Great Depression of the mid-1930s to bring artist workers back into the job market and assure the American public that better financial times were on the way. Other paintings feature the swirling forms and stylized lines of the Art Deco. In the eastern Apse, the Pantocrator, creator and ruler of all things, ascends as the rising sun. The glistening gold used in the apse's half dome is reminiscent of Byzantine mosaics. The brilliance of Christ shines as the Light of the world,⁹ encircled with a white garment emanating rays against a golden background. The white garment is draped so as to reveal the glory of the Crucified's wounds, which also suggests the

⁹ Cf. John 8: 1-2; 9:5

resurrected Christ. His hands are uplifted as if for an epiclesis, giving the overall form of the letter Alpha. At the western end of the church Gregory has balanced the portrayal of Christ in the apse with a “Last Judgement.” His overall form takes the letter Omega. So, Christ is the beginning and the end of this Church. Christ as the “Living Bread come down from heaven”¹⁰ is presented as a host lifted high by the angels which fill the circumference of the apse. This image is presented directly over the earthly altar from which the Eucharistic Prayer is offered.

The one through whom all things came into being is surrounded by the beauty of His creation. He who was foretold by the prophets who surround him makes all things new, symbolized by the golden sky. Jeremiah, the prophet of Lent, is draped with a dark purple garment and holds in his hand a scroll with the antiphon of the season: “Jerusalem, turn to the Lord your God.”¹¹ On the other side of Christ stands the prophet of Advent, Isaiah. His left hand is raised to shade his eyes from the great light and to extend his sight while he holds in his right hand a scroll which reads: “Looking from afar, behold I see the power of God coming.” Next to him is Ezekiel. In his right hand is a closed book rather than a scroll unfurled with words of hope or warning. His left hand is raised in adoration. The placement of Ezekiel in the apse is of particular importance due to his unique contribution to prophetic literature. Ezekiel was a priest in exile, intent on preserving the practices of the temple and the liturgy. It was to Ezekiel that God revealed the fulfillment of Israel's salvation through the prophecies of “the new temple.”

The use of gold for the sky instead of the expected blue indicates the establishment of the Eternal City and the unification of all creation with the Creator. The Holy City, the new heaven and the new earth, is said to be pure gold according to Revelation 21:18 and to gleam with the splendor of God. The river of life-giving water flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb. To the left is the city of Bethlehem, which means “house of bread.” To the right is Jerusalem, the “vision of peace.” The fish of the living waters move from Bethlehem to Jerusalem. The significance of Christ's journey is symbolized by the direction of these fish. On either side of the river grows the Tree of Life, the tree from which Adam and Eve were barred.¹² The fruit from the Tree of Life is the pomegranate. With its numerous seeds, the fruit is symbolic of God's generosity and boundless love. In this tree Gregory has placed an important symbol, the regal peacock. This is a symbol of victory and, therefore, in the Christian context, a symbol of the new life won by Christ's domination of the

¹⁰ Cf. John 6:51

¹¹ *Aspiciens a longe*, Matins for the First Sunday of Advent

¹² Cf. Rev 22:1-2; Gen 3:22

grave. Ancient Greek mythology holds that the flesh of the peacock does not decay. The bird has, especially for Christians, come also to symbolize eternal bodily life. By His death and resurrection, the sin of Adam and Eve (far right) is wiped clean. Below the golden sky unfolds a scene of paradise. The flowery meadow, representing the earth, is pictured according to ancient Biblical thought as floating on the seas. The earth and sea, also according to ancient Hebrew thought, are supported by columns. Here, Gregory has depicted the inanimate structures as active angels. In a very stylized, Art Deco composition, the angels stretch out their hands to form a continuous design around the half dome. The whole of creation rests in their hands. While the angelic hands support the cosmos, their elaborate wings press down on the dark niches below and between them. Within these, Gregory painted nine demons with a dark monochromatic pallet making them appear as bas-relief. Seven of the demons represent the Seven deadly sins (right to left: pride, avarice, gluttony, lust, anger, sloth, envy); the central niche depicts Lucifer himself, and the remaining demon (far left) represents the great temptation of monks: murmuring or complaining.

In the Choir, under the dome, the monks chant the daily round of prayers. Gregory has their earthly voices accompanied by the angels in heaven playing musical instruments. In this way, the words of Psalm 150 are fulfilled: Praise the LORD in his sanctuary. Praise him with blast of trumpet, praise him with lyre and harp, Praise him with timbrel and dance, praise him with strings and pipe. Praise him with sounding cymbals praise him with clanging cymbals.

The angels fly counterclockwise with a variety of musical instruments, the angels beckon the people of God to join in the celestial symphony so that the voices of earth may be joined to the heavenly host of angels. A unique orchestra is summoned to assist in the praise of God. Gregory shows his signature anachronism adding modern instruments such as a violin, tambourine and trombone. In the pendentives are images of the four evangelists (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) reading and writing their respective Gospel accounts. Matthew sits reading while the others continue to write. This small detail suggests Matthean priority, the Augustinian hypothesis, which holds that Matthew's Gospel was written first. These portraits help bridge the gap between the angels of heaven and the people on earth. The Word of God descends from their pens to the attentive listeners in the choir stalls. At each end of the arch which divides the nave from the choir two angels hover high in the corners. The "invitatory angels" each bear banners with verses from Psalm 95, the invitatory psalm which initiates the daily cycle of prayers by calling all to worship. "Come let us exult the LORD" one angel pleads, while the other extends the invitation with "Let us rejoice in our God who saves us." These angels call to prayer and mark the beginning of the day as they frame the rising of the sun. Gregory is constantly emphasizing the importance of light and the sun and how it expresses the contemplative life.

The life of Saint Benedict is found in “The Dialogues” written by Pope St. Gregory the Great some forty years after Benedict’s death. Shortly before he died, Saint Benedict saw the soul of his sister Saint Scholastica rising to heaven in the form of a dove, commemorated in the north chapel. In the following vision, Benedict saw the soul of his friend, Bishop Germanus of Capua, taken by angels in a fire globe: “A wonderful thing followed this vision, for as Benedict reported later, the whole world was brought before his eyes as if collected in a single ray of sunlight.”¹³ These visions, for Pope Saint Gregory the Great, showed a close union between Benedict and God, a union so intense that the Saint was given the share of an even more magnificent vision, the whole of creation as gathered in a sunbeam. Dom Gregory points us to this mystical kind of contemplation with the paintings in the Abbey Church all culminating in Christ rising like the sun above his creation.

The Abbey Church serves as a united whole Christological hymn. Saint Benedict sought to create a community that would incarnate the intimate life as made known to the world through Christ. Benedict taught that if the monk seeks to answer the call of God then he must put all else aside and follow the teaching of Christ in obedience. To this end he established the monastery as a “school for the Lord’s service,” a place where monks prefer nothing to the work of God and the love of Christ. The Abbey Church manifests this relationship in its Christocentric theology and intentionality even to minute detail, “that in all things God may be glorified.” According to Dom Gregory, “art is the most intimate expression of the most intimate life.” He desired to stimulate and reinforce that ideal spelled out in the holy rule of Saint Benedict by placing the monastic community within the very context of Salvation history. The Abbey archives have preserved the only known audio recording of Dom Gregory. In it he explains his work in a lecture to the seminarians, “The main idea presiding through this Church, my dear boys and friends, is the unity in Christ. A Church, as it is here built, the building itself is made of stones all put together. And that is only a symbol, and an image of what we are in Christ. One. I should not even say that we are members of Christ, we are more than that. We are one with Christ... Those saints on the wall are not just standing out there. No, we are one with them. One in Christ!... Christ is the head. Christ is everything. And we are in Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega. The beginning and the end... Don’t just say little prayers but penetrate yourselves with the great ideas of God and Christ.

¹³ Gregory the Great, *Life of Saint Benedict*, 132.

How will you give it, later on, to people if you have it not yourself? If you have not lived it? Have you ever thought about it? That there was a time when there was no creation at all! And “ex nihilo,” out of nothing, He created, light, the earth, the moon, us. And he himself the rising sun, coming up every day. Therefore, I put Christ the Creator there. And the rising sun illuminates every man coming in this world... We see the glory again every day in the beauty of His creation. So that is the beginning, where we came from. Then, on the other side, there is Christ, the Omega, where we have to go. All flesh to thee shall come. All things have come back to his creator, the glorious Christ there... The soul of every Saint was created. The soul of the Blessed Virgin was Created. So, there comes, on the wall, the invisible creation of that mystical body of Christ, His Church! One body in Him. I hope you catch my idea presiding in the composition of the church... Don't think about me if you go to the Church. Think about yourself and the unity you have with Christ and that you are one with all those Saints.”¹⁴

14 *Hand of the Master: The Art and Life of Dom Gregory De Wit.*

Bibliography

- Begnaud, Adam, O.S.B. *Living in Salvation: The Murals of Gregory De Wit at Saint Joseph Abbey*. Saint Benedict, LA: Saint Joseph Abbey, 2005.
- Bredin, Hugh. "The Aesthetic of Beuron and Other Writings." *British Journal of Aesthetics* 44, no. 4 (2004): 445-47.
- DeFrance, Jonathan, O.S.B. *Century of Grace: A Pictorial History of Saint Joseph Abbey and Seminary*. Saint Benedict, La: Saint Joseph Abbey, 1990.
- Gregory the Great. *The Life of Saint Benedict*. Translated by Terrence Kardong, Liturgical Press, 2009.
- Hand of the Master: The Art and Life of Dom Gregory De Wit*. Directed by David Michael Warren. Stella Maris Films, 2018.
- McNamara, Denis R. *Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy*. Chicago. Hillenbrand Books, 2009.
- St. Benedict. *The Rule of St. Benedict in English*. Translated by Timothy Fry, Liturgical Press, 1982.

**By the Sweat of Your Brow:
Prayer as Work in the Christian Life**

A young nun from New Jersey forever changed the way I pray when she pointed out to me the reason why prayer is difficult, and why it should be. This nun is Bl. Miriam Teresa Demjanovich, SC, and her words are worth quoting here at length: “With most people, prayer is easy, and really the best thing in the world- until the sugar plum of consolation is withdrawn, and then the tide turns, ‘Oh what is the use of praying? My prayers are never heard anyways and I am no better for it’ ... Reasoning thus, these poor deluded ones work themselves the greatest harm at the time God wills to do them the greatest good” (Greater Perfection, 43). None of us needs to reflect more than a moment to admit the veracity of her words. We are often guilty of shrinking from the spiritual life because of the demands and difficulties which follow. Our difficulty approaching God should not surprise us since we have been so far removed from Him by our own sins and the sins of our fathers.

Before the Fall, Adam enjoyed the intimate friendship of God. The author of Genesis implies God made frequent visits to the Garden and walked with Adam there (Genesis 3:8). This unmediated experience of friendship with God, this “walking” may not be what we ordinarily call “prayer,” but I think that it truly is. After all, when we speak of prayer, we speak in terms of relationship and in terms of conversation. It would seem that Adam was proficient in both of these before the fall. Let’s recall the words of God’s mandate to us through the Prophet Micah, “He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8). This life of prayer, this “walking” with God was severely handicapped when Adam committed sin through disobedience (Gen. 3:10). He could no longer walk with God in unmediated friendship, but, knowing his sinfulness, hid in his nakedness and shame. He was afraid of God. And how this hurt the Heart of God, who, searching for Adam in the Garden asks, “Where are you?” (Gen. 3:10). When Adam receives his punishment from God, he is condemned to toil over his labors. We can easily understand (knowing that God is Just) that Adam’s punishment was fitting to his crime. He lost his identity in God through sin because he was not going about the business God sent him to do in the Garden: namely, to tend to it. He was not working, but preoccupied in idle conversation with a serpent, which is an antithesis to the conversation with God which he normally enjoyed. After his sin, Adam’s

nakedness, his creatureliness, his impurity became clear to him. He could no longer rest easily in the presence of God.

Upon leaving the garden, sacrifice was introduced as an act of worship. The Church Fathers associate the clothing of Adam and Eve with animal skins and the shedding of blood which is God's demonstration of how they would now make themselves pleasing to Him: through sacrifice. They could no longer tend to the Garden and walk with God; instead, their worship was sacrifice (Gen. 4:4). They had to return something back to God, something pure. The innocent sinless flesh of animals was wrapped around the shame of our fallen flesh, but that was not enough. We required a perfect sacrifice and a New Adam to teach us how to work. The work and sacrifice of prayer is evident in our Christian lives. Let us ask ourselves if we really mean what we say when we call Liturgy, "Opus Dei," "The Work of God?" If so, then why are we surprised at ourselves (or others) when we yawn, and scratch, and squint our eyes at Mass. Prayer, like all work, requires attention and elicits real effort. In our tradition, we don't just call prayer a work, but also a warfare. Three enemies oppose our soul: the world, the flesh, and the devil. St. Paul instructs us to put on the "Armor of God," "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places"(Ephesians 6:12). Our "fleshy" enemy is ourselves. Paul says elsewhere: "To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Romans 8:6-8). Yet it is our own sinful flesh, after being redeemed through the sinless flesh of Christ, which we must sacrifice instead of lambs. Our flesh, once clothed with the faux innocence of animals, is now united to the flesh of Jesus and remade: spiritual, spotless, and pleasing to God. "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship" (Romans 12:1).

Let us be aware that we are at war and at work. We are at war with our three enemies and we are set at the labor of God's will. And although this difficult toil determines so much for souls, not the least being our own, "thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Let's not entertain a single thought of fear or discouragement, for Jesus our Captain, the lamb whose Flesh and whose Blood speak more eloquently and is more pleasing to God than Abel's, has already won for us freedom from sin, freedom from death, and triumph over hell if we only follow him, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). This denial, this sacrifice of self is the true work to which we are set. We must make this continual

concession: God's will before my own. "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Although there is much to say on this subject, let's be content with this call to arms. That in truth brothers, we contend daily with sin and death, present in the world and present in ourselves. When we take up arms in prayer, whether together, praying the Divine Office for the salvation of the world, or alone like Jacob, wrestling with God (Gen. 32:22-31) until he consents to bless us, we must do so resolved not to turn our eyes from the plow (Luke 9:62), but to continue in the labour of Christ. "Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain" (1 Cor. 15:58).

Creative Writing and Short Stories:

The Rev. Ken Davis, O.F.M., CONV., D.MIN.

Only Loves Sees What Eyes Cannot

Roc had a morning ritual. He'd don the suit his wife Gwen had given him, straighten her favorite tie, wipe his shoes, and put a few dollars in a jar marked, "Diamonds," before grabbing his keys. Roc wasn't going to work, he was going to visit Gwen in the Alzheimer's unit. But his son remonstrated: "Dad, why do you put yourself through all this when she doesn't even remember who you are?" Roc smiled, "I don't do all this so she remembers who I am. I do it so I remember who I am."

Roc's son did not understand his dad's ritual sacrifice any more than the disciples understood Jesus' redemptive sacrifice. Jesus exhorts them to "pay attention," or remember. To re-member is to take pieces or members and reassemble them into a meaningful whole. Jesus says "pay attention" because only by remembering who we are can we understand Who Jesus is. Yet we forget.

So Eucharist is the ritual where Jesus exhorts us to "do this in memory of Me." Jesus needn't remember Who He is-- we need remember who we are. At Mass we are gathered with Jesus as present to us as He was to the apostles. "Anamnesis" describes His real presence liturgically, but I'll attempt metaphor or analogy.

Jesus is like a sunbeam. Fifty million years ago this same sunbeam began to stream, eight seconds later it continued through that window, and is already also illuminating the future. Just as two thousand years ago Christ's grace streamed from Calvary, it is the same one, continuous, uninterrupted eternity simultaneously lighting our past, our present, and our future. The Cross from our past is equally present today in our communion unto salvation's

consummation. Christ is the same in our yesterday, our today, and our tomorrow, when we “do this in memory of Me.” Only when remembering who we are do we appreciate Who Jesus is.

And yet we forget. We are a royal diadem, but dulled by time we rarely glow until God’s light penetrates our soul; remembering who we are, we appreciate Who Jesus is. Yet we forget. We are an immortal diamond, but within dark caverns of sin we don’t know until God’s light penetrates our soul; remembering who we are, we appreciate Who Jesus is. We are precious in his eyes, yet remorse and regret make us forget.

Roc regretted the diamonds he promised Gwen and never could afford. But he loved gazing upon her, even when regret welled up and tears rolled down. Remembering that we are loved more than we could ask or imagine illumines our soul in ways only the Beloved knows. So imagine Roc’s surprise if he knew Gwen glimpsed diamonds—glittering—in the corners of his eyes!

Carlos Jaime
Carlos Turner III
Carlos Valero

**The Life and Times of Carlisimo Tuveme:
A Re-telling of *Beowulf***

“Mi nombre es Carlisimo Tuveme,” I said. They didn’t ask for any more information, so I went ahead inside with my mom and brother following behind me. The Casa de Migrantes wasn’t a very impressive building, and all the supplies they had were used and worn out. But they treated us well, and the conditions were much better than our home in Guatemala. I began to pray to Our Lady of Guadalupe, asking for her intercession, hoping that this journey might soon end. Back at home, we had been living off of the land as long as we could, but we knew there was something better in the US--there just had to be. What might have looked like a dump to some, the Casa de Migrantes, for me, was a palace where I was being welcomed as a king. But the celebrating could not last for long because we had to leave in the morning to catch the train. This train would take us from Durango to somewhere outside of Big Bend National Park on the border. Are we in Durango? I can’t remember, but I know we are in Mexico. We’ve been on the road for a few weeks, so I can’t always remember the places we’re stopping at.

All I know is that I will get my family to the US no matter what it takes. Mom can’t handle the stress this is putting on the family; she couldn’t handle it when we were still in Guatemala. I’ve always had to be strong for her, especially since we left. This trip has just about broken apart my family, but I’m holding on with the grip the Almighty Lord has given me. This journey has been a long one, even though we’ve only been on the road for 4 weeks, and it’s a beast. But with the strength the Lord gives me, I can get my family there. This is the last stop before we get on the train to our newfound freedom! Now this Casa de Migrantes is near the railroad tracks, and the train makes a sharp turn here. The train has to slow down a significant amount, but the owners said it is still moving at about 20 miles an hour. We will have to run fast, but I can carry my little brother. The owners also have connections with the train driver, so no one will be checking to see if anyone snuck onto the train. They also told me that it comes by tomorrow sometime around 5:15am. We will not have a lot of sleep tonight. But I know the Lord wills it; I will get them to the other side. Unlike

Juan Diego, who attempted to run from his fate by avoiding the Blessed Virgin's apparition, I face my fate head on. Our Lady of Guadalupe, pray for us.

Now it's 5:12, and I can hear the train. I tell my mom and baby brother to be quiet so we can be sure that's the train. We remained crouched behind a bush for about 2 more minutes; those two minutes felt like an eternity. There it is! "Puedo verlo!" I whispered to my brother and mom. What I saw was not just a train; it was the future of my family and the life we have imagined. All of our hope, contained in a single vessel of freedom. We let the first 10 or so cars of the train pass by, and then we bolted. I was holding my brother, and my mom was right in front of me. We both ran as fast as we could, and I got a firm grasp on the side of the open car. I threw my brother in, and mom was almost there. She had jumped up into the car of the train, but was not able to get her legs up to climb in. I pushed her up, and she was able to get her legs inside. Finally, I jumped in myself, and we were safe! This was the last obstacle between us and the US. Praise be to God! Mom gave me a smile that I hadn't seen in a while, and then I knew that she was going to be ok. My family had survived this monster, and pretty soon we would be in the US. Our Lady of Guadalupe, be with us!

After arriving in the US and having surpassed the difficulties of the journey, we settled in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. My father was eagerly awaiting our arrival. He had left for the States almost immediately after my brother was born. Our apartment complex wasn't a mansion, but it was much better than our place back home. We had arrived a late Saturday night, and so I remember falling asleep on the floor of our living room while mom and Dad were discussing details about the journey, and how dad had gotten mom a job which she could start right away on Monday. The next day we went to Mass to give thanks to the Lord for his great love is without end, for he guided our feet along the way of peace. That day, we were celebrating the Transfiguration of the Lord; I remember it because the priest spoke in his homily about allowing ourselves to be transfigured by the Lord's love and that no matter where we are we can say what St. Peter said, "It is good to be here." I don't know why that marked me so much. I was only 9 when we came, yet I remember it as if it was yesterday.

The next day my mother took me to school to enroll. Classes began the following week. At Broadmoor Elementary School, I found a real refuge. Everyone there spoke Spanish and I found a lot of people like me. However, the real monster came when I went on to middle school. There was none near to where we lived. I had to take the bus to school at 6 am by myself to be there on time because mom and dad were already at work at 5 am. On top of that, all of my classes were in English, and speaking Spanish was forbidden. Sometimes I

could not understand what the teacher was saying because I didn't have a very extensive vocabulary, and being the oldest, there was no one at home that I could ask for help. This caused me to be very shy and I would always sit in the very back. My grades suffered, and I suffered as well. My father had always told me that school was the most important thing. I admired his knowledge; there was nothing he couldn't do or was afraid to do. I wanted to be like him, but every time I said that he would say no. He would say, "I want you to be better than I am." However, for me, it was a real challenge, a real monster that was little by little devouring me, while I so intensely wished that it was just a dream. I spent my first 2 years that way until 8th grade came and a hero came to my rescue and helped me defeat the monster. That year I met Isabella Castillo. She was a new student who had just arrived from Brazil and she was not afraid of anything. Immediately she noticed me hiding amongst the ocean of people and took a seat next to me. I didn't know it then, but she would become my best friend and the one who helped me overcome this great fear.

She was very bright and made me realize I had more talents than I myself even knew. Together we joined Spelling Bee competitions (I let her win that year because I was always taught to be a gentleman) and the Math Club. We also joined the school band that year and I learned how to play the saxophone, something I never even imagined would be possible. For the first time since elementary school, I made the Honor Roll and received special recognition at my graduation at the end of that year. Thanks to Isabella I did things I didn't know I could do. Her constant encouragement and sincere friendship allowed me to be myself and not be ashamed of my culture or where I came from. This helped my high school experience be completely different and helped me never again yield to fear.

"It is God's will that I should continue the work," I whispered in my father's ear as his life slowly faded away. "Carlisimo Tuveme" were the last words my father proudly breathed as he commended his spirit to the Almighty. My father died at 12:00 midnight and, because he was a man of the old traditions, his funeral and burial were celebrated through the night. As we walked to my father's final resting place, the women sang this joyful tune, "I have no place and no countryside much less a homeland. With my fingers I make fire and with my heart I sing, my heartstrings cry out: I am a woman who was born to be determined."

I was remembering how my father and I battled with all our might to conquer the landscapes of our new country. When I was thirteen, I was already working with my father in the fire-breathing oil fields of Louisiana. To me, the heavy machines and oil rigs that we worked on seemed to become monsters that

challenged the honor and pride of our working hands. Before daybreak, my father and I would wake up and pray that God give us the power and strength in order to overcome the difficulties of our work. As soon as we finished praying, my father would always say, "That's enough praying, let's go to work," and I loved it when he said that. A great many men pledged to serve my father in his endeavors, but all these men surrendered to their own fears as they saw the dangerous work that lay ahead. I realized that my father worked harder than the rest of the men only to prove the power of his own manhood. So did I; it was the only way we could establish ourselves as tough, hard men that were willing to take on any challenge. As I grew up, I knew that the people of our clan both loved and feared my father and me. We took advantage of that only because we did not want to see anyone make any mistakes that would damage the respect we gained through the years. Our bodies took a toll after so many years of working in the oil fields, but my father never surrendered to challenges that arose from anywhere.

At 4:00, before the rising of the sun, we reached the mountain top cemetery where we would lay my father to rest for eternity. No one shed a tear as we lowered my father into the tomb, and I was proud of it. As we started to cover the tomb with the dirt, the clan broke out in lamentations. It was understandable; they could no longer see the man who worked and fought so hard for their good. As I saw the sun slowly rise from the horizon, I prayed, "Rest in peace father; Lord, into your hands I commend Carlisimo Tuveme's spirit." I rose from my prayers with the rising sun and said to myself, "That's enough praying, let's go to work." And then I sang with joy. "I have no place and no countryside much less a homeland. With my fingers I make fire and with my heart I sing, my heartstrings cry out: I am a man who was born to be determined."

Joshua Lafleur

**An Economic Solution for the Alleviation of
the Strain of Aiding Impoverished Nations**

Oftentimes when a man is enjoying himself he is reminded of a most sorrowful issue: the despair felt in the hearts of those simply trying to watch their favorite television program when they witness the horribly emaciated forms of adults and children suffering from poverty and lack of nourishment. These souls, unable to work because of the terribly underdeveloped and collapsing economic situation gripping their respective nations, are dependent on the advertisement in order to have some semblance of economic stability. When there is none, the inhabitants are led to commit acts of theft, violence, and terrorism.

It is my belief that the lack of right nourishment for these people, leading to the horrible images taken of those in this state and shown to all people, be they from the East, West, South, or even the North, are because of the delicate sensibilities of the modern man, an attack on the souls of those gifted with plenty; he who could find how to reinvigorate the economy of these impoverished would be so deserving of honor, that he should be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

This is why I, after an exorbitant amount of time involved in study and seeking after a solution, and after proving frivolous the designs of others, have become sure of my own solution that would save from the brink of collapse the global economy and allow each nation to focus its efforts on the economic growth of their own territories. It is a well known fact that the world would cease operation should the energy production of those greater nations be depleted beyond necessary. It can also be easily recognized that the people of this great nation rely on entertainment to such a degree that it necessitates a source of power which has no possibility of depletion.

This solution of mine would serve not only these needs but also solve that horrid reality perpetuated by the production of electricity. My solution will put an end to the use of fossil fuels, nuclear power, and many other energy production methods that cause the destruction of the environment, which ought to be conserved for the enrichment of our lives.

I have done the calculations, and it is known that the continent of Asia alone has over two billion inhabitants, three-quarters of whom live in destitution. It is further known that three-quarters of these destitute have no means of livelihood, and they are unable to obtain one because of the lack of available work. It is true that these people are not accounted as being worth much and that they are barely worth a few dollars a day as laborers because of their condition and their economic status.

I have been informed by a friend of mine from New York City that electricity, being the fuel of the future, is in great demand, and that one person pedaling an electricity-producing bike for eight hours creates enough fuel for two hours of light electric car usage, and for a full day of usage for a toaster oven. It is for this reason that I propose to immediately install facilities for the production of energy to run a home as well as to charge batteries for other devices. Through the agreement to produce electricity, the families of the destitute, no matter where they are brought from, will be given a wage on which they can afford one single meal every day, already more than what can be promised otherwise, and a whole two meals on special days of the calendar.

The average person, factoring in both sex and age, can produce 800 watts of power in eight hours on a bike generator. This, of course, is not enough to power a home, but imagine if everyone who had the financial stability were to utilize the population not able to make use of this energy because of their financial status. Then it could be seen how a group of fifty people, pedaling no less than eight hours a day at a goodly pace, with no weekends off, could power the entirety of a middle-class home.

The worry arises on how this is cheaper, but it is simple--none under the age of fourteen will be made to pedal. They will instead learn how to sell the excess energy in the form of batteries from which the aforementioned wage shall be derived. This, of course, will make great use of the agile hands of the children, who will also be taught to build these same batteries. The building and selling of these batteries will take place in previously abandoned buildings made ready for the shared use of multiple families. This leads to not only a sustainable energy source, but it also solves the issue of destitution which, as stated earlier, is an offense to the senses of modern man.

No longer will the horribly poor be seen as an eyesore to be tolerated! They will instead become the pride of a family, especially because excess power can be sold in the form of charging stations and batteries. There can surely be no objections to such an enlightened solution, indeed one that makes use of wasted

human resources for the benefit of all of our lots. So let none speak of opening better job positions, of doing away with robotic factories, of finding wealthy benefactors for aid organizations, or of showing Christian charity to those in desperate need. These so-called solutions only breed more need, and in no way are advantageous to either the giver or the receiver.

This solution, being the best that my tired mind could venture to rest upon, may be open to debate, though I doubt this is possible being that my exhaustion comes from the laborious study involved in my solution. This truly is for the betterment of families who need only furnish their pedalers with barracks in order that they may become a part of the clean energy future, in which the globe enjoys economic success and a reduction of the burden placed on nations by having to give aid to nations in need. This solution uses those in need to a good end, and the nations that they had previously belonged to will rejoice to be free of them. We will make sure that those who are creating electricity will be made to feel at ease, and so we will make sure that they believe us to be their saviors. This will make sure that they never leave their new lives. Though they will have no other choice, being that this solution will be the only remaining method available to them should they wish to have a livelihood. My solution, which is the only reasonable one left to us, will indeed show the missed opportunity for economic growth before us. This solution could be said to benefit me most of all. This is simply untrue, because my solution profits me not at all, as I am one of the lucky few who uses water turbines to power my homestead.

Blake R. Thompson

Peacock Rising

I stood at the bannister as the barrister made his way across the courtyard. The autumnal breeze chilled my innermost being as if to forewarn the coming of that capricious courtier. My trepidation was of course justified, for the last time the minister Jin Ping entered into my bureau, we departed as greater strangers. Aïdes had nothing on Jin Ping in his cruel and vile cunning and viciousness: an elusive shadow, and intricate webweaver, a naïve appeaser. For, while in the division of the world Aïdes was granted the netherworld, Jin Ping was no doubt granted no more than an ordinal of eight of that portion. A sulfuric pit of woe and torment. And, for some strange reason, I had been cursed to occupy that eighth with Jin Ping.

His smile, piercing white and reflecting the glare of the hazy clouds above the bureau, pained me. Every ounce of my being sought to have his horrid form tossed into the Gygaeus Lacus, but alas such conduct would be unbefitting of an Imperial Scribe. And it is sweet and fitting that I did not dismiss that bile-infused bastard, for bearing brilliant news he was. In his hand he bore an invitation to the Imperial court, gilded halls that I had of course sworn off decades ago when I became a scribe and prefect. Father and husband now was I, long past my prime, yet the ability to be a minister again would be a multitude of blessings.

I stood at the bannister as the barrister made his way out of the courtyard. The autumnal breeze had been dismissed along with that callous criminal, Jin Ping. But in its place was left a warmth. While winter was beginning to knock at the north, from the south was a new beginning, unexpected from the icy late-months. Long gone was my ire with Jin Ping and the trepidation of his arrival. It had, of course, been superseded by a greater anxiety: the anxiety that comes only with a great deal of responsibility. For now, as minister of the interior, what would I do to minister to my own interior? To my home and to my family? To my staff and myself? But the state called, and if I could not answer then how could we continue?

And so I travelled north, so as to fulfill that civic duty to the Emperor. Those gilded halls of Xi'an were as cold as the north winds that blew across the grasslands where the sheep and the horsemen roamed free. Detached from those

steppes was the capital of all of China, Xi'an. Last I was here, I was sixty years younger, a student of rhetoric and diplomacy. Now, I stood here a seasoned veteran of the cruellest war mankind had ever known--the war of the educated person's world. I did not then know how trivial what I knew was, nor did I realize even in my elder years how little we all really were privileged in the ways of knowledge. Were we children we would have seen it. But we had stamped out the heart of a child long ago. Now, with our hearts of stone, we fought bitter battles for vainglory and titles and honors.

The intrigue of any court is deadly. This I knew, for I had been on the dealing side of deceit for decades. The banners that fly over the Imperial Palace are not unlike the colorful wings of the butterfly or the vibrant hues of the poison dart frog. Their coloring sends a message of death to nature, warning the irrational world not to partake in that meal. Had I heeded that same warning as nature so often does, I daresay I'd have been preserved, avoiding my oily fate. But alas, tempted by my pride and so-called rationality, I fell to temptation and partook in the meal that killed my very soul.

Lies and wine had built that home. But as for me, in spite of all my experiences I'd still repose her soul. Those golden doors, intricately carved with the imagery of strength, honor, and virtue truly conveyed the lies that pervade that house. There is strength insofar as one is willing to stab another's back, honor insofar as one is able to cast it out the window and into the exterior darkness, and virtue insofar as it is corrupted by a prevailing sense of sin. By stepping through those doors, I entered into a contract with the home, a contract that I would leave those carvings and what they stand for outside, while inside we would settle for their inverted form. After all, they are carved to be outside, and are not carved on the inside of the hall.

I walked down across the great hall, where torches bathed my humble and hobbled form in a warm yellow light. I looked to the floor, where I looked at myself. A reflection of a hollow and empty man. So empty was the man I saw looking back at me at that time, yet he was fuller a thousand times over in comparison to myself on this day. A decisive determination and a conviction to deceive and to plot and to destroy was in the eyes, but behind those eyes existed also a warm fire of love built from a loving wife and three kind children. A man in the suit of a monster, rather than a monster in a suit of a man. For every monster has deep within him a good man who holds fast to some love. What makes the monster is a distance from that love, be it by circumstance, geography, self, or other monsters.

And as I looked up, I saw for myself other monsters. Good men wrapping themselves in the skins of beasts, who then in turn wrap themselves in decadence. Gold and white and violet were their hues, as if adorned in a uniform of corruption. The Imperial Court was a hulking tick feasting off the plight of the disenfranchised-- but it was in itself a beautiful parasite. That was of course the bureaucracy that I served, nay, that I helped to thrive. The Enlightened Emperor, a self-styled philosopher king, was in fact a pauper and a vagrant, who was bathing in his own ignorance. The steward, a supposed miser and administrator, was in fact an indulgent wastrel who would sell his own soul for the sake of blind ambition. The ministers, who were supposed to be ministering to the state, in fact ministered to their own vices, bedding all things that could be bed, and betting their lives on their ability to perpetuate that vice. I stand with nothing but contempt in my heart for them this day, but that day I was the same as them. I was the seneschal, supposedly a bastion of stability who could not even maintain the integrity of his own family in their sorrow.

The affairs of the court were, always are, and always will be remarkably trivial. Tradition and liturgy dominate a great deal of the day. Between state ceremonies, there was entertainment to appease the simpletons who claimed to be the finest intellectuals in the state. This was followed by remarkably irrelevant matters no greater in stress than the anxiety that plagues the chef. In fact, the chef is an excellent analogy for the king, and the kitchen for a kingdom. The noodle chef carefully crafts his noodles while the king carefully crafts his ambition. The Sous-chefs carry out the preparation of the meal while the courtiers and ministers carry out the affairs of the government. The noodles are then devoured by the hungry masses, while the ambitions of the King are drowned in the cold reality of the people's strife.

One task in my duties that day which I had taken to with a particular zeal was the task of sourcing a pox. It was a pox on the empire that was making virtue difficult for those outside the imperial court, where virtue ought to have been abounding. Artifacts of a mystical nature, supposed to be able to cheat even death, sat in my bureau. An emerald-green gemstone caught my eye in particular. I rationalized to myself that it would be trivial if the one gem went missing... for who would have cared beyond my own bureau, my own subordinates? So in my pocket it went. That peculiar green gem.

After a lengthy day of trivial matters, I returned to my home there in the capital, given to me because of my new position. Far from humble, my abode stood off the Imperial Plaza, parallel to the steward's stronghold and adjacent to the palatial compound. As I entered, I was met with the aroma of hot and savory stir fry emanating from the kitchens that lay to my right and down a lengthy corridor. The warmth of the kitchen was matched by the warmth of

kinship. Food and family are an inseparable bond that is conducive to the contemplative soul. However, the warmth we receive from family is peculiarly distinct from that of food. The smile of the child, emanating eagerness and unmatched optimism is enough to shake off even the sturdiest and most steadfast shards of heart-bound ice and stone. The embrace of one's wife is filling, for man was never meant to be alone. She completes us, and even more so betters us.

I lament, for in the doldrums I now tread. I lament for I have long since lost them. I lament for them, for having never truly had me. Those kids I can never again have. Now in darkness I tread, and foolishly I cast out the oil from my lamp before twilight. But that night I was there with them, present as ever. As close to them as the priest to the altar of the Lord. However distant my soul was.

I was upstairs before dinner, for there my study stood, attached to a library bearing scrolls from all across China. It was here that I sat, switching my shoes from the solid wooden sabots which I wore that afternoon to leather riding boots I would need for the after-dinner ride across the city. They were slick and shiny--no doubt they'd been oiled and shined that day by a servant. They were not unlike myself. They reflected a vigor and passion. They were fresh on the outside, but on the inside, they were empty, hollow, stale, and they smelled faintly of death. And that external shell of oil and lacquer--it was fatal.

And so, I made my way downstairs, wearing my oily boots. A step from the left onto the marble stair, finding stable ground. A step from the right into the second step, too finding true earth. The third step indeed was fatal, sending me into a roll. I fell. Slipped. Descended down the stairs, looking up to the ceiling.

Stained glass in a dome made the ceiling of my stairwell. Depicting scenes from the Saga of the Yellow Emperor-- depicting his grace. I fell from that grace towards the Earth. I suppose it was after all an inevitable eventuality. I could not escape gravity, but it was not destiny. It was intrigue, and I was her latest victim. Jin Ping's laughing face, like the hyenas of Africa, flashed in my head just before I landed. I know he was responsible -- that cowardly dog had oiled my boots to ensure I'd slip and tumble to my death. But now it was too late, for my thoughts turned to a deafening and heart-shattering crack as my bones returned to dust. Pain.

In pain I sat there, laying helpless like a ragdoll. Servants rushed to my side, though I could hear nothing. I closed my eyes, praying for death. I opened

my eyes again, just to see if I could, finding myself at a different spot. I was in my bedroom, surrounded by my servants and several Imperial Apothecaries. I wept. That was justified, I think, for my wife did enter at that moment. There was sorrow on her face and sorrow in my heart, the one thing not broken by the fall. For my capacity to love transcended my body. It seemed that in fact by not being so tied to this life, I was able to love doubly so.

The room then went green. A haze coating my eyes. The last thing I saw with my eyes was the look of fear in my staff and my darling wife's face. And the last thing I felt was fear and sorrow. For it was then I saw my place in the afterlife. Torment and fear. My own life had been spent focusing on temporal glory, and now I would suffer eternal ignobility and drudge on in the absence of love. But I did not join the others in their pain. For, as if being dragged behind a horse down a mountain, I was pulled back to the world of the living.

Again I saw naught but green. The room came into focus. I landed in my bed. I was alive? No, for I was so very cold. So very cold and fearful. And my body shook as though it was being dominated by maggots. I touched my face, feeling nothing. The nerve endings were dead. I was dead, but not. I was fearful. So very cold and fearful. But my fear was unmatched by my servants, who stood around my bed in their horror. My hollow husk did sit up, looking upon them, feeling nothing for their plight. Then, I remembered.

Memory is a strange thing. It is the act of not forgetting, yet what we most often forget is to remember. The elderly have the most to remember, yet that is when disease robs them of their most valuable treasure. The young, who most need the valuable memories of their elders are the most likely to disregard their wisdom. And in that moment, when the memory of my love could have warmed my heart and staved off my fears, it left me. Only the memories of pain and fear were present, happily chilling my bones.

But I could come to a single conclusion from those memories and those feelings — that now I was a ghost in the machine. I lacked a soul, for it had been killed. My own salvation and my own damnation had been robbed of me, leaving what I can only describe as the ultimate suffering--emptiness, and a total separation from love. A monstrous existence that was objectively the most deplorable state of life. And it was something that my own sin had brought me to, something that I was aware of yet oblivious to until I had already sealed my own fate with an unbreakable seal.

Listening

I desire to say a word on behalf of listening, for true hearing and receptivity, as opposed to a hearing and listening that is merely auditory, --to regard man as a contemplative being, discovered through listening, rather than a workaholic. I want to make a bold claim, at that a forceful one, because there are too many enslaved to speaking: the priest, the lecturer, all of you, and myself.

I have encountered no one, save a few, in my entire existence who practiced the art of listening, meaning, actually listening, -- who had a knack, if you will, for *perceiving*: this word comes wonderfully from the Latin ‘percipere’—a combination of ‘per’-‘entirely’ and ‘capere’- ‘take.’²¹ For listening is a type of battle, or better, a reconquest, preached by the Cardinal Sarah inside of us, to advance nobly and reclaim the land once ruled by the peaceable King Quiet which has regrettably now fallen victim to the tyranny of noise. Those who listen carefully to the wind will hear the beautiful voice of Lady Silence as she whispers a promise to reward abundantly the man brave enough to seek her.

Correct it is; we are yet weak soldiers, even the listeners these days, who do not listen in an active, whole way. Our conversations are mere volleys of words, and we only hear what we want to. Much of the conversation is little more than presumption. We ought to set out into the mildest dialogue, perhaps, with a zeal for true receptivity, seeking to really hear another,-- ready to have our ear chopped off as a memento to be sent back home, if only to inspire others to join the noble battle. If you are okay with leaving iPod and iPhone, and television and Netflix, and noise and commotion, to forsake them completely – once you have turned away from the Sirens, and are prepared to put your selfishness to death, and are moved by compassion to seek the good of another, once liberated from your own ego, and are open to receiving whatever comes your way, then, and only then, you are prepared for true listening.

To speak about my own life, my friend and I, for I occasionally have a friend, enjoy thinking of ourselves as soldiers of a young, or better, an ancient army,-- not Spartans or Romans, neither SEALs nor Special Forces, but listeners, an older and more noble army, I trust. For while the ranks of listeners are small in number, they, nevertheless, excel in the noble art that so few dare to learn; they are combat veterans who completed a campaign that few dared to even begin. Indeed, true listening is hard! I am shocked when I realize that I have been in conversation bodily for a great number of minutes, without actually listening to the other. Not infrequently do I consider some task I need to

²¹ See Bing definition for the word ‘perceive.’

accomplish later, a job to do, an assignment to finish. Like an evil warlord, I am busy plotting my next assault of words, my vision fogged with preconceived notions and judgements, my heart held captive by prejudices and apathy. Or, if I manage to avoid wandering into the future, my attention is distracted by the past, of things I said but shouldn't have, or of times I spoke when I should have listened. Yet, true listening, that noble campaign, is not without its risks. In the few times I have actually listened, I have felt the dagger that pierced another person's heart and even received the invisible stigmata of their hidden suffering. Yet, I am still persuaded, in fact, thoroughly convinced, that listening is still worthwhile even though it can give us scars—those who know why they fight the war they are in are content with losing a few battles or a few limbs.

Occasionally I recall that the sports announcers and news pundits talk not only all morning, but also all evening, with ears seemingly closed, the majority of them, -- as if God did not give man two ears and a single mouth as a testament to the primacy of listening – I think they should be commended for not perishing sooner despite acting contrary to their nature. We are quick to forget the words of the Gospel, “Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear” (*NABRE* Mark 4:9).

St. Bruno, that holy founder of the Carthusian order, heard the silent invitation to listen, and responding to it with a zealous vigor, he founded an order of splendid listeners. Each charter house is a phalanx of soldiers, armed with the helmet of solitude, the breast plate of a contemplative heart²², the sword of a love for silence, and, above all, a desire for God. They are quick to hear and obey the Divine Word spoken by the Eternal Father in the silence of their cells.

The listening of which I refer is not to be confused with the hearing of the radio, shows, or recordings. For that type is, I dare say, banal—it is as sick as an electronic romance or as empty as a digital sunset. No, I speak of a listening that is dynamic, alive, and raw—it is charged with the static of love-- like that of a mother listening to her child cry in the night. We must not be fooled into thinking that listening is merely an auditory consumerism that seeks to devour noise.

In order to listen, it is necessary to keep quiet. I do not mean merely a sort of constraint to be physically silent and not to interrupt what someone else is saying, but rather an interior silence, in other words, a silence that not only is directed toward receiving the other person's words but also reflects a heart overflowing with a humble love, capable of full attention, friendly welcome and voluntary self-denial, and strong with the awareness of our poverty. The silence of listening is a form of attention, a gift of self to the other, and a mark of moral generosity. It

²² I borrow the phrase “A contemplative heart” from my diocesan brother, Mr. Gabe Dowden.

should manifest an awareness of our humility so as to agree to receive from another person a gift that God is giving us. (Robert Cardinal Sarah with Nicolas Diat *The Power of Silence* #143)

There are a number of hearers—yet there are regrettably few true listeners—perhaps, there are none, an extinct species dead and gone. Nevertheless, I know that there is a subtle attractiveness to listening which will, if we allow it, lead us to listen in a deeper, truer way, to hear more than words—we will perceive the other as he is, to see beyond the mask of words, sentences, and arguments, even of speech itself, to see the inner brokenness, weakness, wounds, and vulnerability of a fellow human being ravaged by sin and thirsting for Love, and precisely there will we arrive at the destination where true listening begins.

Poetry:

Miguel Melendez

Veni

I sit here- waiting.
Across the table from this lonely chair.
And what a seat, a throne it would be
If you would come to me.

Where are You my Friend, my Lover, my Spouse?

I'm clothed in white- waiting.
In this wedding dress You gave me,
save some spots which you can doubtless take away,
If you would come to me.

Where are You my Friend, my Lover, my Spouse?

I pace this house- waiting.
And look outside at shadows moving past the window pane.
A world which is transformed,
If you would come to me.

Where are You my Friend, my Lover, my Spouse?

I trim my lamp- waiting.
As the shadows from outside invade the room.
And I have oil enough for just the two of us,
If you would come to me.

Where are You my Friend, my Lover, my Spouse?

I put on this band- awaiting,
the fulfillment of this symbol whereby we are sewn together,
And your promise kept securely.
If you would only come to me.

Where are You my Friend, my Lover, my Spouse?

I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

I recline here- calling.
From the inner-room seeking your company,
And I would gladly share with you My Delight,
If you would come to Me.

I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

I AM clothed in light- calling.
Your dress is soiled with dust from stranger lands.
But My glance can burn away the marks of stranger gods,
If you would come to Me.

I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

Patiently- calling.
Though the shadows of this present age
pass away, pass away.
And I remain, you and I.
If you would come to Me.

I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

Suspended here- calling.
Keep your gaze on Me; I will be your Torch!
And those shadows that you fear will bleach before My Light.
If you would come to Me.

I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

I Thirst for you- calling.
I AM a Seal upon your arm,
you are a scar upon My Heart.
And all My Flesh is yours,
If you would come to Me.
I AM here My sister, My lover, My spouse!

Calling- calling.

I knock at the door- let Me in!

I call from within- seek Me there!

For tonight I'll dine in your house,
with My Father and My Guest.

If you would only come to Me.

Come to Me.

“Veni.”

Tanner Darbonne
The Gardener

I sift my hands through the topmost layer.
I can feel a great warmth throughout the air.

Thus, I ask: have I been fooled by the heat of
the day? Nay! To what end?

Casting out all deceit, all doubt, all thoughts,
Those intrusive.
I toss out all that obscures my vision.

I plunge both hands into the heap, to see what
harvest I might reap.

Tossing and turning its warm composition, my
Efforts revealing, the source of my mission.

There I find a display of life, most vibrant, a
treasure to behold.

I stand there hunched over, pondering the
Depth of what lies before me. I Ask:
“What does it mean, for old Adam and old Eve?”

Commanded by this living truth, I close my eyes
and ask: “What can I do for you?”

Seeing there is hope born out of sacrificial
Love, I look up to examine the heavens above.

There I stood so small, yet much love I did feel;
And on that morning everything stood still.

Then a light came down, all warmth increased.
There came a dove, I could hardly see.

There I gave thanks, my heart yearning to be
Filled. Then He revealed Himself, the Gardener,
I was thrilled.

Suddenly, He overcame me.
Like a tempest, without a warning I could see.

He saw my nothingness as He reached into me,
Churning my soul like soil and sand.
Thus, bringing to light a great goodness,
That only He can understand.

He is the one who plants the seed.
He is the one who sets all things straight.

It is priceless, the things I've gained through
Faith. It is dizzying to see what He has done for me.

Again, I tried to search my soul.
Though He knows my worth, more so than I will
ever know.

A worth of which I have so long searched, in
Seeds He did not sow. A search in vain, without
His name, if only I could know.

And so, He showed me The depths of my soul.
Then He waited, that I might see the things He
had prepared for me.

One great purpose to me He gave,
To me He showed, thus I was saved.

When I saw His face, at once I knew,
The powerful grace that made me new.

And that is when His fire had caught,
In the deepest depths of my own heart.

I, who am not worthy, learned to trust in His
mercy. To live for the sake of love, my hands
must get dirty.

Toward this resolve I must give all I have.
By this resolve I may make Him glad.

In return I receive training, by the Gardener's
Hands, mainly;
Those whose hands are not afraid to get dirty.

And when His body is feeling weak, there I'll be
To pull up weeds. There I'll be to plant new
Trees, whose fruit, by grace, will grow so sweet.

When I am finished I'll have done my part.
When I am finished He will have my heart.
When I am finished He will end my sleep.
Then I'll hear those, whose prayers I'll keep.
All those who lie, still deep asleep.

Joseph Marcantel
Number 5, for Ludwig

I.

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
But He is very close.

The struggle of Life
Is determined in the rests:
Life gives way to final sleep.

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
But He is very close.

II.

In the springtime
Of your life
You sang,

And your voice was sweet
But your soul was sad
And your feet danced.

You danced through the fields
Of your youth, through the
Flowers of joy, you sang:

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
And He feels far off.

You laughed in life
And you danced in its music--
You were young.

III.

Life's joke
Was played by your fingers
And contrived by your mind.

It was:
A laugh,
A poke,
A joke,
And smoke.

You burned
In fearless
Dance,
Clap,
Stand,
Shout.

Life's laugh
Was on your face
And heard by many.

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
And you're laughing.

IV.

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
And He's walking away.

Life was always in your house
But now He smiles and sways.
He sleeps in your bed and eats at your table.

His friend Joy comes to stay

With His light and jewels,
You welcome Him.

You know Death,
You've kissed His face,
But He lives alone
And you live with many.

Your home is a band,
Your living room a stage
And your home does dance.

The song is loud
And the dance is fast
As you hear Life's song:

Death is not here,
Death is not here,
He is gone.

Casey Edler, PhD
A Dying Dream

Reality intrudes,
The pieces pull away.
The fragile world of night
Yields rank to mounting day.

Faces that I fashioned
Flash across my mind,
These friends of briefest moment,
The fated wisps of time.

My psyche spews you forth
From seas of clustered thought,
Your sinew, bone, and flesh
From strands of memory wrought.

You come to life so truly,
Your movements as my own,
The seeds of who you are
My waking life saw sown.

Hold tight, my hands, next time
The scattered stars subside,
When sun and clouds crest high,
Forbid my dreams to hide.

As for myself, my life,
Pure fancy might I be?
A tossing ogre's itch
'Mid slumb'ring lethargy?

Might everything I clutch
Emerge from darkened wit?
Could all my fingers touch
Stream from a skull moonlit?

Though I be wraith or shade,
My dreamer, tend my plea,
My whisper as you wake,
My sigh, "Remember me."

A Letter from the Editor in Chief

Blake R. Thompson

I believe that it is very important that as we continue to navigate the murky waters of this pandemic, we retain some sense of normality. The Saint Joseph Review is one way we can do just that. It saddens me to have to resort to digital media, but by sending out the PDF version of the Review we are able to accomplish more than just normality. Firstly, we are able to archive our written works and share them with our peers, and secondly, we are able to record for our successors that life and formation at Saint Joseph Seminary did not stop when Covid-19 took to America's shores and broke the eagle's back. The work of the Review is meant not to serve as a soapbox for a few students to gloat about their writing prowess. The work we are about is the intellectual formation of men studying for the Priesthood, which means providing for the church and the world a proper view into every aspect of the intellectual formation that goes on here at Saint Ben's. I think that this second edition of the Review does just that, provides a view into the Seminarians of 2019-2020 and their written works.

I want to take this time to thank Dr. Heil and Dr. Burns, who have been very supportive of the Review and allowed it to continue past its first edition thanks to their time, hard work, and desire to foster student excellence academically. I also wish to thank Todd Russell, who has been our Technical Advisor and helped to ensure the Review can physically and digitally exist. I'd like to thank each of our editors and writers who submitted their works, regardless of if they were published or not, because of their willingness to participate in the Seminary's intellectual life. Lastly, I would like to encourage everyone at Saint Ben's to submit your works for next year's 2020-2021 Saint Joseph Review, that every 'Saint Ben's Man' might be proud of his own personal accomplishments in formation. May God bless you and keep you through this summer.

I remain,

Blake R. Thompson