

# GOSPEL PROCESSION

# CREATED TO LOVE

Last year, during the Easter Season, the Liturgy Committee began the practice of having the Book of the Gospels processed into the assembly at the beginning of our celebration and having the Gospel proclaimed in the midst of the assembly; we will continue this practice.

Having the Book of the Gospels carried in the entrance procession is one of the ancient traditions of the Church. This practice highlights the Gospels because of our belief that Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of all the Scriptures.

In the Liturgy of the Word, God’s Word is presented to the liturgical assembly, not only in verbal proclamation, but also in music and ritual. The processions with the Book of the Gospels, accompanied with song and candles, appeals to more than the sense of hearing by engaging the sense of sight and our voices as well. In this way, the Liturgy of the Word is able to appeal to and engage the whole person.

The presence of the Book of the Gospels, carried in procession, helps emphasize God’s Word as present and visible to the assembled people. The Gospel Procession highlights the reverence that the Church extends to the proclamation of the Gospel as the Word of Christ. This had such importance in the life of the early Church that the Gospel Procession predates the use of the processional cross for the entrance procession.

In the same way the carrying the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession highlights the importance we place on Christ’s Word and presence in the Gospels, having the Gospel reading for the day proclaimed in the midst of the assembly highlights our understanding that Christ is in the midst of our assembly when we gather to pray, to listen to God’s Word and to celebrate Eucharist.

The Gospel will be proclaimed in the centre aisle. For those in the pews whose backs will be to the Book of the Gospels, you are welcome, and indeed invited, to turn toward the Book of the Gospels for the proclamation.

At the end of the proclamation, the Book of the Gospels is enthroned in front of the Ambo, where it remains visible. Carrying the Book of the Gospels in the entrance procession, placing it on the altar at the beginning of the celebration, having the Gospel proclaimed in the midst of the assembly and enthroning the Book visibly at the Ambo are all ways in which we are reminded of the pre-eminence of God’s Word in our lives and of Christ’s continuing presence among us in and through His Word.

In the fourth century, St. Augustine said, “the church consists in the state of communion of the whole world.” What an amazing and inclusive line, based on his Trinitarian theology. Wherever we are connected, in right relationship—you might say “in love”—there is the life of God flowing freely, there is the authentic image or body of God revealed. This body is more a living organism than any formal organization, denomination, or church group. As Jesus puts it, “Do not believe those who say, ‘Look here! or Look there!’” (Luke 17:23) because the Reign of God can never be contained or fully localized in one place.

Non-human creation is invariably obedient and loyal to its destiny. Animals and plants seem to excitedly take their small place in the “circle of life,” in the balance of nature, in the dance of complete interdependence. It is only we humans who have resisted our place in “the one great act of giving birth” (see Romans 8:22), even though we had the role of consciousness. Instead, we have been largely unconscious, senselessly participating in the death of our own and other species. We are, by far, the most destructive of any animal. As St. Hildegard of Bingen (writes: “Human beings alone are capable of disobeying God’s laws, because they try to be wiser than God. . . . Other creatures fulfill the commandments of God; they honor [God’s] laws. . . . But human beings rebel against those laws, defying them in word and action. And in doing so they inflict terrible cruelty on the rest of God’s creation.”

In poetry, Gerard Manley Hopkins proudly affirms “each mortal thing” as having a soul, not just humans. Each mortal thing does one thing and the same: . . . myself it speaks and spells, Crying What I do is me: for that I came.

Jesus taught that if we would “first seek God’s Reign” (Matt. 6:33), and obey his command to “love God and love one another” (Matt. 22:37-40), all the rest would take care of itself. We would no longer defy the laws of nature but seek to live in harmony and sustainability with Earth and all her creatures. This radical lifestyle demands a deep sense of the inherent dignity of all things. We cannot pick and choose who has inherent dignity and who does not.

We must all firmly know that grace is inherent to creation, not an occasional additive. God’s goodness—not Adam’s sin nor some catastrophic Armageddon—has the first and final word. We thus begin in hope and end in hope, without which history has no purpose, motive, or goal—and love comes with great difficulty. —Richard Rohr, OFM

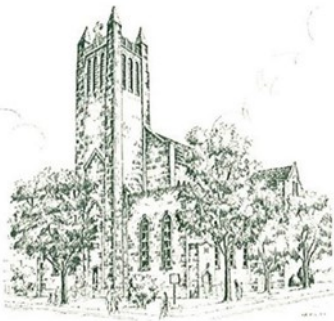
A new heart I will give you, and a

# NEW SPIRIT

I will put within you. Ez. 36:26a

March 11, 2018

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## EASTER CELEBRATIONS

### HOLY THURSDAY

MARCH 29

7:30 P.M.

MASS OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

### GOOD FRIDAY

MARCH 30

10:30 A.M.

CHILDREN’S LITURGY

3:00 P.M.

VENERATION OF THE CROSS

### HOLY SATURDAY

MARCH 31

8:00 P.M.

EASTER VIGIL

### EASTER SUNDAY

APRIL 1

9:30 A.M.

11:30 A.M.



## A LENTEN REFLECTION

“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? ... You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye ....”

Matthew 7: 1-5

One of the hardest spiritual tasks is to live without prejudices. Sometimes we aren't even aware how deeply rooted our prejudices are. We may think that we relate to people who are different from us in colour, religion, sexual orientation, or lifestyle as equals, but in concrete circumstances our spontaneous thoughts, uncensored words, and knee-jerk reactions often reveal that our prejudices are still there. Strangers, people different than we are, stir up fear, discomfort, suspicion, and hostility. They make us lose our sense of security just by being "other." Only when we fully claim that God loves us in an unconditional way and look at "those other persons" as equally loved can we begin to discover that the great variety in being human is an expression of the immense richness of God's heart. Then the need to prejudge people can gradually disappear.

Henri Nouwen

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LETTER TO ST. JOSEPH’S PARISHIONERS:  
PARISH PASTORAL PLANNING PROCESS

The Parish Pastoral Council is beginning a process of developing a Pastoral Plan for our parish. This plan will provide a template for the Parish Pastoral Council to use in directing its efforts in the parish over the next three years. The Pastoral Plan will be based on four Pillars, based on the image of the early Church, which we find in the Acts of the Apostles (2:42, 2:44 and 2:46):

“These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers.  
...they sold their goods and possessions and shared out the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed.  
...they shared their food gladly and generously.”

These four pillars are identified and defined as follows:

- Formation:

Growing in our understanding of the faith, including the Social Teaching of the Church and how that informs the living out of our faith
- Community:

Activities that help us to grow as a community, to build bonds of communion and to identify as part of the broader church
- Prayer:

liturgy, other types of prayer, spiritual life, devotions, etc.

OUR PARISH MISSION STATEMENT

We who choose St. Joseph’s Parish are called, as part of the Body of Christ, in the Archdiocese of Ottawa to be: A **Proclaiming community** which is a living witness to Christ in the inner city and in partnership with the Oblates of Mary Immaculate proclaims the Good News to the poor. A **Welcoming Community** which is gathered together in weakness and strength by the Spirit of Jesus to nurture its faith by sharing the Word and breaking the Bread, remembering and celebrating God’s love for us. A **Discerning Community** which inspired and led by the Holy Spirit on a journey of Faith, encourages the gifts of individuals to flourish; A **Ministering Community** which serves the needs of its people and reaches out in solidarity, especially to those who are poor and marginalized in the community at large.

Service:

How do we as a community serve those outside the community and within the community? How do we identify and address neighbourhood needs? Are there other ways we can serve? Do the existing services require re-defining?

Beginning the weekend after Easter (April 7/8) and continuing until the June 16/17 weekend, you will be invited to give your feedback on each of the four pillars. We will be dedicating two weekends for information gathering for each pillar. For each pillar, there will be a list of the present ministries or activities in our parish that fall under that pillar. You are asked to give your input on how those ministries or activities are filling your needs and the needs of the parish as a whole, as well as any changes you think would be beneficial. You are also asked to indicate any new activities or ministries that you would desire to see in the parish, again according to your needs and/or the perceived needs of the parish as a whole. You can provide your input by:  
Using the paper copy in the pew and leaving it at the welcome desk or mailing to the parish  
Using the online form on the website  
We, the members of the Parish Pastoral Council, are excited to be embarking on this project, and we thank you for your participation. It is our intention to have the three year plan in place by the beginning of September.

EUCHARIST AS GOD’S PHYSICAL EMRACE

There’s a story told of a young Jewish boy named Mortakai who refused to go to school. When he was six years old, his mother took him to school, but he cried and protested all the way and, immediately after she left, ran back home. She brought him back to school and this scenario played itself out for several days. He refused to stay in school. His parents tried to reason with him, arguing that he, like all children, must now go to school. To no avail. His parents then tried the age-old trick of applying an appropriate combination of bribes and threats. This too had no effect.

Finally, in desperation they went to their Rabbi and explained the situation to him. For his part, the Rabbi simply said: “If the boy won’t listen to words, bring him to me.” They brought him into the Rabbi’s study. The Rabbi said not a word. He simply picked up the boy and held him to his heart for a long time. Then, still without a word, he set him down. What words couldn’t accomplish, a silent embrace did. Mortakai not only began willingly to go to school, he went on to become a great scholar and a Rabbi.

What that parable wonderfully expresses is how the Eucharist works. In it, God physically embraces us. Indeed that is what all sacraments are, God’s physical embrace. Words, as we know, have a relative power. In critical situations they often fail us. When this happens, we have still another language, the language of ritual. The most ancient and primal ritual of all is the ritual of physical embrace. It can say and do what words cannot.

Jesus acted on this. For most of his ministry, he used words. Through words, he tried to bring us God’s consolation, challenge, and strength. His words, like all words, had a certain power. Indeed, his words stirred hearts, healed people, and affected conversions. But at a time, powerful though they were, they too became inadequate. Something more was needed. So on the night before he death, having exhausted what he could do with words, Jesus went beyond them. He gave us the Eucharist, his physical embrace, his kiss, a ritual within which he holds us to his heart.

To my mind, that is the best understanding there is of Eucharist. Within both my undergraduate and graduate

theological training, I took long courses on the Eucharist. In the end, these didn’t explain the Eucharist to me, not because they weren’t good, but because the Eucharist, like a kiss, needs no explanation and has no explanation. If anyone were to write a four-hundred page book entitled, The Metaphysics of a Kiss, it would be not deserve a readership. Kisses just work, their inner dynamics need no metaphysical elaboration.

The Eucharist is God’s kiss. Andre Dubos, the Cajun novelist, used to say: “Without the Eucharist, God becomes a monologue.” He’s right. A couple of years ago, Brenda Peterson, in a remarkable little essay entitled, In Praise of Skin, describes how she once was inflicted by a skin-rash that no medicine could effectively soothe. She tried every kind of doctor and medicine. To no avail. Finally she turned to her grandmother, remembering how, as a little girl, her grandmother used to massage her skin whenever she had rashes, bruises, or was otherwise ill. The ancient remedy worked again. Her grandmother massaged her skin, over and over again, and the rash that seemingly couldn’t be eradicated disappeared. Skin needs to be touched. This is what happens in the Eucharist and that is why the Eucharist, and every other Christian sacrament, always has some very tangible physical element to it – a laying on of hands, a consuming of bread and wine, an immersion into water, an anointing with oil. An embrace needs to be physical, not only something imagined.

G.K. Chesterton once wrote: “There comes a time, usually late in the afternoon, when the little child tires of playing policeman and robbers. It’s then that he begins to torment the cat!” Mothers, with young children, are only too familiar with this late afternoon hour and its particular dynamic. There comes an hour, usually just before supper, when a child’s energy is low, when it is tired and whining, and when the mother has exhausted both her patience and her repertoire of warnings: “Leave that alone! Don’t do that!” The child, tense and miserable, is clinging to her leg. At that point, she knows what to do. She picks up the child. Touch, not word, is what’s needed. In her arms, the child grows calm and tension leaves its body.

That’s an image for the Eucharist. We are that tense, overwrought child, perennially tormenting the cat. There comes a point, even with God, when words aren’t enough. God has to pick us up, like a mother her child. Physical embrace is what’s needed. Skin needs to be touched. God knows that. It’s why Jesus gave us the Eucharist.

Ron Rolheiser, OMI

