

ECUMENISME

52e année • No 200 • Hiver • 2017 • 5\$

Promouvoir le dialogue et l'unité

Le baptême



The Baptism

Centre canadien
d'œcuménisme



Canadian Centre
for Ecumenism

INFORMATION • DIALOGUE • RECONCILIATION

52th year • .200 Winter • 2017 • \$5

Promoting dialogue and unity

ECUMENISM



**TABLE DES MATIÈRES/
INSIDE THIS ISSUE:**

Œcuménisme/Ecumenism

Revue trimestrielle publiée par le Centre canadien d'œcuménisme/Canadian Center for Ecumenism, au service de l'unité chrétienne et des rapprochements interreligieux et interculturels

2715, chemin de la Côte-Ste-Catherine, Montréal, QC, H3T 1B6
Tél. : 514-937-9176/1-877-645-6863
Fax : 514-937-4986
Site web : oikoumene.ca
Courriel : info@oikoumene.ca

Directrice : Dre Adriana Bara
Rédactrice en chef et mise en page : Denitsa Tsvetkova
Révision en français : Louise Demarais, SBC;
English Revision: Justine Sentenne
Photo de couverture : Mariana

**Abonnement un an : 15 \$
Prix d'un numéro : 5 \$**

Dépôt légal : Bibliothèque nationale du Québec,
Bibliothèque Nationale du Canada
ATLA

Numéro international des publications en série :
ISSN 0383-4301; Convention de la Poste-
publications : 40036616

Éditorial <i>par Denitsa Tsvetkova</i>	3
Le baptême, la porte d'entrée Œcuménique <i>par Denitsa Tsvetkova</i>	4
<i>Dossier : Le Baptême / The Baptism</i>	5
Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood <i>By Father John Walsh</i>	21
Of Water and the Spirit <i>By Father Alexander Schmemmann</i>	21
Introduction <i>By Paul Ladouceur</i>	33
One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism <i>By Deacon Maylanne Maybee</i>	37
Child Dedication in the Unitarian Universalist Tradition <i>By Rev. Diane Rollert, Minister</i>	39
Par quoi remplacer le baptême? <i>par Migueil Tremblay</i>	43
What Baptism means to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ? <i>By Jay and Fatima Glowa</i>	45
Nouvelles du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme/News of the Canadian Center for Ecumenism	49
Vigile de prières, suite à l'attentat de la mosquée de Québec <i>par Eileen Perry</i>	51
Mouvement des Focolari. Ensemble pour réfléchir sur la valeur de la vie face à la souffrance <i>par Umberto Giannettoni</i>	52
Déclaration commune des Églises Common Declaration of the Churches '67	52

Éditorial

Par Denitsa Tsvetkova



Chères lectrices, chers lecteurs,

Vous avez devant vos yeux le numéro 200 de la revue *Œcuménisme*. La thématique du dossier : *Le Baptême* est symbolique. Après plus de 50 ans d'histoire et 200 numéros, le Comité de rédaction a voulu revenir à la porte d'entrée du Christianisme : le Baptême. Le premier des sacrements, ou un rite pour accueillir l'enfant dans la communauté, le Baptême, vous aller voir, est un rite de passage avec une importance indéniable pour chaque confession chrétienne. Au-delà des différences, des formules et des pratiques variables, des points communs se dégagent quant à la signification de baptême se dégagent.

Le texte de *Father John Walsh* invite à transformer le regard sur l'Église, le Baptême et la prêtrise. Cette reformulation s'inscrit dans les décisions du Concile Vatican II. Du côté orthodoxe, nous vous proposons l'article de *Father Alexander Shneman*, "*Of Water and the Spirit*" avec l'introduction de *Paul Ladouceur*. Pour la perspective anglicane sur le Baptême, nous donnons la parole du diacre *Maylanne Maybeean* : "*One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism*".

La réalité de nos sociétés séculaires pose des défis pour les Églises. La question du baptême est indissolublement liée à la question du mariage et de la communion. Quand les deux parents ne sont pas croyants et pratiquants, mais veulent initier leur enfant et l'introduire à la communauté, faut-il remplacer le baptême? La *révérende Diane Rollert* du *Unitarian Universalist Tradition*, propose ses réflexions sur la "*Child Dedication in the Unitarian Universalist Tradition*", le témoignage d'un père, *Miguel Tremblay* "*Par quoi remplacer le baptême?*" et un schéma de rituel. Pour l'Église de Jésus Christ des Saints des Dernières jours, qu'on connaît plutôt par leur nom populaire Mormons, le baptême rendra le salut au baptisé qui en ce moment entre dans l'Église. Vous en saurez plus sur qui a le droit de baptiser dans le texte "*What Baptism means to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints?*" par *Jay and Fatima Glowa*.

Dans ce numéro nous vous proposons aussi quelques liens vers des *documents d'accords œcuméniques de reconnaissance du baptême* d'une grande importance surtout pour les couples de mariages mixtes. Nous considérons qu'il est important de se rappeler de ce chemin déjà traversé de la part de nos Églises.

Dans notre numéro d'jubilé, vous trouverez également la *Déclaration de la construction du Pavillon chrétien lors de l'Expo'67* il y a exactement 50 ans. Nous vous proposons aussi la rubrique *Nouvelles*, ainsi que une revue de publication.

Nous espérons que les adeptes de l'œcuménisme trouveront dans ce numéro d'information pertinente et intéressante. Et pour celles et ceux qui n'y croient pas encore, ce numéro peut devenir leur baptême œcuménique. Sans d'eau et des formules sacrées, nous sommes heureux à vous accueillir avec « Bienvenue à la communauté œcuménique ! » À travers la découverte de nos baptêmes à la fois si divers et si proches. Nous gardons les traditions de nos confessions et respectons celles des autres. Ainsi, nous sommes en train de « reconstruire » nos relations.

Denitsa Tsvetkova, doctorante en théologie pratique à l'Université de Montréal, travaille au Centre canadien d'œcuménisme depuis 2013, où, entre autres, elle est éditrice de l'Infolettre mensuelle.

Elle a une maîtrise en théologie et une autre en sciences européennes et sciences sociales.

Son mémoire de maîtrise est intitulé « L'identité orthodoxe (chrétienne) et l'identité européenne culturelle ». Sa recherche doctorale « Les communautés des immigrants orthodoxes d'origine d'Europe de l'Est à Montréal à la rencontre de la diversité culturelle » est une continuation de son désir d'explorer l'articulation entre les identités religieuses et le dialogue interculturel. Guidée par la volonté d'apporter une modeste contribution au « Bien vivre ensemble », elle se lance en tant qu'éditrice en chef de la revue *Œcuménisme*.

Le baptême, la porte d'entrée Œcuménique

Par Denitsa Tsvetkova



Denitsa Tsvetkova, doctorante en théologie pratique à l'Université de Montréal, travaille au Centre canadien d'œcuménisme depuis 2013, où, entre autres, elle est éditrice de l'Infolettre mensuelle.

Elle a une maîtrise en théologie et une autre en sciences européennes et sciences sociales.

Son mémoire de maîtrise est intitulé « L'identité orthodoxe (chrétienne) et l'identité européenne culturelle ». Sa recherche doctorale « Les communautés des immigrants orthodoxes d'origine d'Europe de l'Est à Montréal à la rencontre de la diversité culturelle » est une continuation de son désir d'explorer l'articulation entre les identités religieuses et le dialogue interculturel. Guidée par la volonté d'apporter une modeste contribution au « Bien vivre ensemble », elle se lance en tant qu'éditrice en chef de la revue *Œcuménisme*.

Une porte d'entrée de l'Église, le baptême est le premier sacrement qui, en fait, garde la porte fermée pour protéger les membres de la communauté ecclésiale. Avec ce numéro, nous vous donnons accès aux documents œcuméniques qui ont trouvé des consensus concernant le baptême et nous vous le présentons du point de vue de différentes confessions. À part de la beauté et la diversité des pratiques, vous y retrouverez les points communs, les mêmes préoccupations et un sens profond au-delà des différences. Le baptême en d'eau et d'Esprit est la nouvelle naissance pour la vie de la personne croyante. Accompagnée par son Ange gardien, purifiée des péchés, par le baptême, la personne rentre dans l'Église et peut désormais accéder aux autres sacrements. Appelé un « rite de passage » par les ethnologues, le baptême est pratiqué même par des non-croyants. La responsabilité de la communauté à travers le rôle spécial destiné aux parrains, la joie et le besoin de repenser et réinventer d'un point de vue œcuménique le baptême, font l'objet des textes de ce numéro. Nous espérons ainsi, que 35 ans après le document « *Baptême, Eucharistie, Ministère* », du *Conseil œcuménique des Églises*, le Baptême devienne une porte qui s'entrebâille un peu pour permettre des échanges avec les autres Églises.



Quelques documents œcuméniques sur le baptême

[Reconnaissance mutuelle du baptême de 1973 entre les trois Églises reconnues à Suisse](#)

[Baptême, Eucharistie, Ministère, Commission Foi et constitution, Conseil œcuménique des Églises, Lima, 1982](#)

[La déclaration du Magdebourg sur le baptême, 2007](#)

[http Déclaration de Riva Saint Vitale 2014](#)

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh



Introduction

In 2017 many authors are writing a new human narrative. It warrants our attention. Jeremy Rifkin in *The Empathic Civilization --- The Race To Global Consciousness In A World In Crisis*, writes:

“We have to rethink the human narrative ... if we are truly *homo empathicus* then we need to bring out that core nature if it doesn’t come out and if it is repressed by our parenting, our educational institution, business practices, government, the secondary drives come: the narcissism, the materialism, the violence, the aggression. If we can have a global debate ... to begin rethinking human nature to bring out our empathic sociability so we can rethink our institutions and prepare the ground work for an empathic civilization.”

Rifkin offers a thought-provoking prospect in his concluding remarks:

“The Empathic Civilization is emerging. We are fast extending our empathic embrace to the whole of humanity and the vast project of life that envelops the planet. But our rush to universal empathic connectivity is running up against a rapidly accelerating entropic juggernaut in the form of climate change and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.”

Rifkin’s final question is: Can we reach biosphere consciousness and global empathy in time to avert planetary collapse? (1)

Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens ... A brief History of Humankind* challenges us further when he writes:

“After all, today’s debate between today’s religions, ideologies, nations and classes will, in all likelihood, disappear with *Homo sapiens*. If our successors indeed function on a different level of consciousness ... it seems doubtful that Christianity or Islam will be of interest to them, that their social organization be Communist or capitalist, or that their genders could be male or female ... The only thing we can try to do is to influence the direction scientists are taking. Since Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens ... A brief History of Humankind* challenges us further when he writes: After all, today’s debate between today’s religions, ideologies, nations and classes will in all likelihood disappear with *Homo sapiens*. If our successors indeed function on a different level of consciousness ... it seems doubtful that Christianity or Islam will be of interest to them, that their social organization be Communist or capitalist, or that their genders could be male or female ... The only thing we can try to do is to influence the direction scientists are taking. Since we might soon be able to engineer our desires, too, perhaps the real question facing us is not “What do we want to become?” but “What do we want to want?” Those who are not spooked by the question probably haven’t given it enough thought.”(2)

In his sequel Harari in *Homo Deus ... A Brief History of Tomorrow* entitles the first chapter, *The New Human Agenda* and writes:

“It is so vital to think about humanity’s new agenda. Precisely because we have some choice regarding the use of new technologies, we had better understand what is happening and make up our minds about it before it makes up our minds for us ... The great human projects of the twentieth century – overcoming famine, plague and war – aimed to safeguard a universal norm of abundance, health and peace for all people without exception. The new projects of the twenty-first century – gaining immortality, bliss and divinity – also hope to serve the whole of mankind.” (3)

Father John Walsh was born and raised in Montreal, where he completed his elementary and high school education. His post-secondary education has taken him to, St. Dunstan’s University on Prince Edward Island, the Université de Montréal Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome, Italy. Father John’s Irish ancestry comes from Killarney on his mother’s side and Cork on his father’s side. His parents, Margaret Bridget Quinlan and Emmett Sarsfield Walsh, raised their two children, Marlene Patricia and John Emmett, in the North end of the city in Holy Family Parish, where Mr. Walsh worked hard every year to build a float for the parish and with whom he walked in the Parade until his death. Marlene was a princess on the first Queen’s float in 1957.

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood *By Father John Walsh*

Harari concludes:

“If we take the really grand view of life, all other problems and developments are overshadowed by three interlinked processes. 1) Science is converging on an all-encompassing dogma, which says that organisms are algorithms, and life is data processing 2) Intelligence is decoupling from consciousness. 3) Non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms may soon know us better than we know ourselves. These processes raise three questions: 1) Are organisms really just algorithms, and is life really just data processing 2) What’s more valuable ... intelligence or consciousness? 3) What will happen to society, politics and daily life when non-conscious but highly intelligent algorithms know us better than we know ourselves?” (4)

Thomas L. Friedman, a columnist for the New York Times, has written about being optimistic in an age of accelerations and he entitled the book, *Thank You for Being Late*. He refers to the world’s big gears and pulleys as the Machine and how you think the Machine works and then to take your values and push the Machine in that direction. Today the Machine is being driven by simultaneous accelerations in technology, globalization and climate change, all interacting with one another. Friedman proposes an optimist’s guide to thriving and building resilience in this age of accelerations, surely one of the greatest transformative moments in history. (5)

Will religion be part of our future? Recently the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu spent a week in dialogue with each other and a book was published as a record of the dialogue and the book is, *The Book Of Joy*. It may startle some people when they hear or read that the Dalai Lama said:

“It is clear that the only way to truly change our world is through teaching compassion. Our society is lacking an adequate sense of compassion, sense of kindness and genuine regard for others well-being. So now many, many people who think about humanity all have the same view. We must promote human values, the inner value that lies at the heart of who we are as humans. Religion is not sufficient. Religion has been very important in human history, and perhaps for another thousand years it will continue to bring benefit to humanity.”

The Dalai Lama knew he was being controversial, calling the long-long-term value of religion into question, and he had taken the Archbishop’s hand to comfort him and reaffirm that he was not planning to put either of them out of a job anytime soon.

He continues:

“So now we have to think seriously. Just to pray or rely on religious faith is not sufficient. It will remain a source of inspiration, but in terms of seven billion human beings, it’s not sufficient, no matter how excellent, no religion can be universal. So we have to find another way to promote these values. I think the only way really is through education. Education is universal. We must teach people, especially our youth, the source of happiness is within themselves. Not machine. Not technology. Not money. Not power.”

We are not talking about heaven or hell or Buddhahood or salvation; these are too far away. He laughed. So our book is part of this important process to help spread the message that love, kindness, and affection are the source of joy and

“Our society is lacking an adequate sense of compassion, sense of kindness and genuine regard for others well-being.”

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

happiness, As you (Tutu) already made clear, our basic human nature is good, is positive, so that can give us a basis for courage and self-confidence.(6)

Reframing Jesus

One model of Jesus seems to have dominated populist Catholic thinking, the model of God/Jesus the judge. Life on earth ended with a particular judgment and a final judgement that would determine a believer's fate for all eternity. The model also led the priest in the confessional to judge whose sins would be forgiven or retained. The model was a deterrent of fear, losing heaven and being condemned to the fires of hell for all eternity. The Church emphasized the model of Jesus as judge to control the masses of believers. Gradually in the twentieth century there was a shift from the model of judge to a Jesus of love and forgiveness. The priest in the confessional became what he was originally, an educator in the faith. (7)

Reframing Jesus began with a new focus on the Gospel, experiencing what Jesus said and did with his entire life. The evidence clearly portrayed Jesus in a new light. Catholic theologians offered new insights that would transform our understanding of Jesus.(8)

James Carroll in *The New Yorker* writes:

“The key to Pope Francis’s astounding arrival, for beyond all matters of style, doctrine and behavior, he is offering a sure glimpse of a fleeting truth about the faith: The man on his knees washing the feet of the tired poor is the Son of God. Francis is pointing more to that figure than to himself, or even to the church, which is why institution-protecting conservatives are right to view him with alarm. For this pope, the church exists for one reason only — to carry the story of Jesus forward in history, and by doing that to make his presence real. Everything else is rubrics.” (9)

Pope Francis, in his first lengthy interview was asked: “Who is Jorge Mario Bergoglio?” He responded: “I am a sinner” and added that he relied on the mercy of God and wished it were a verb, “mercying” him all the time.” He declares a special Year of Mercy and recently issued an apostolic letter *Misericordia et miser*. He writes:

“Mercy cannot become a mere parenthesis in the life of the church, it constitutes her very existence, through which the profound truths of the Gospel are made manifest and tangible. Everything is revealed in mercy, everything is resolved in the merciful love of the Father. Forgiveness is the most visible sign of the Father’s love, which Jesus sought to reveal by his entire life. No one of us has the right to make forgiveness conditional.”

The biblical text which restricted forgiveness to the priest in confession, the Pope says it is our mission: “Receive the Holy Spirit, if you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any they are retained.” (John 20:22-23)

The Jesus of the Gospel is that of the merciful Son of God. The Pope continues:

“What is central is not the law or legal justice, but the love of God, which is capable of

*“Everything is
revealed in
mercy,
everything is
resolved in the
merciful love
of the Father”*

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

looking into the heart of each person and seeing the deepest desire hidden there; God's love must take primacy over all else. In the iconic story of a woman caught in adultery, the two of them alone remained: mercy with misery."

The entire Letter is a plea for all believers to theologically reflect on the God of mercy, made visible and tangible in the Jesus of the Gospel. Francis in everything he says and in all of his actions is making the love of God visible and tangible as seen in the many people he visited in "Fridays" of the Holy Year. The Church no longer reframes the model of Jesus to be followed, but, the Church is in the process of reframing the Church on the model of the Jesus of the Gospel, the ever-merciful Son of God.

Reframing the Church

Reframing the Church on the Jesus of the Gospel invites a strong theological shift in the thinking of the Church as the People of God. Pope Francis reframes the Church on Jesus. The Church becomes a church of the poor for the poor, a church that is hurting and dirty and in the streets, the church is a field hospital to heal the wounded, and finally, Francis points to what Jesus says, the Church is a Mother who teaches her children but has mud on her shoes in the streets. Francis leads us to the peripheries where the poor await the invitation to come to the center and receive the mercy of God. To encounter the poor is to encounter Jesus and to experience intimations of the transcendent plan of God.

The foundation of the theological reflection of the Church was theism. Theologically there was the existence of two different worlds, a supernatural world and a natural world. This meant that God would intervene from time to time in the natural world from a supernatural world. However, after the Jewish Holocaust, theism was questioned by Catholic theologians. A new focus on Sacred Scripture caused a reinterpretation and rethinking of the meaning of a providential God. It led to the reframing of God, the Church, and prayer. God could no longer be thought of theologically as extrinsic to the natural world. God was not over and against us. There was no God behind Jesus. Jesus is the Son of God. The reframing of the Church has become a pastoral renewal of the Church as Saint Pope John XXIII expressed it in the Opening address at the Second Vatican Council.

A new theological framework was that of panentheism which is expressed as follows:

"Committed and engaged Catholics are very sensitive to the sinful structures that marginalize people and cause them to suffer. They believe at the same time that the Spirit of God is at work in the real world: it is God who allows them to dream of a just and human society, God who leads them to be in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, God who causes them to resist the dominant culture, and God who calls them to action. The faith of Christians in the Incarnation convinces them that a divine living impulse is pushing forth humanity to look for freedom and liberation, and, by their militancy, they participate in the transcendent plan of God." (10)

The icon of God is found in the man kneeling at the feet of the tired poor and washing their feet, this man is the Son of God.

*"To encounter
the poor is to
encounter
Jesus and to
experience
intimations of
the
transcendent
plan of
God."*

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

The Second Vatican Council is the major influence in Francis' pastoral renewal of the Church. He writes:

"At the same time I must add another element that I consider the fruit of a mistaken way of living out the ecclesiology proposed by Vatican II. We cannot reflect on the theme of the laity while ignoring one of the greatest distortions that Latin America has to confront – and to which I ask you to devote special attention – clericalism. This approach not only nullifies the character of Christians, but also tends to diminish and undervalue the baptismal grace that the Holy Spirit has placed in the hearts of our people. Clericalism leads to homologization of the laity; treating the laity as "representative" limits the diverse initiatives and efforts, and, dare I say, the necessary boldness to enable the Good News of the Gospel to be brought to all areas of the social and above all political sphere. Clericalism, far from giving impetus to various contributions and proposals, gradually extinguishes the prophetic flame to which the entire Church is called to bear witness in the heart of her peoples. Clericalism forgets that the visibility and sacramentality of the Church belongs to all the People of God, not only to the few chosen and enlightened." (11)

The Assembly of the Bishops of Quebec has released a very important document entitled *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities - becoming a "Church of outreach" after The Joy of the Gospel*. The title of the French edition has a much more powerful title, "*Devenir une Église "en sortie,"*" which emphasizes a sense of leaving behind what needs to be left behind and going with prophetic freshness into the world.

The Bishops write:

"The scene with which the account of Pentecost opens and unfolds is one that challenges us. It shows a Church of outreach ("en sortie"), a missionary Church, a Church on the open sea, a Church rejuvenated by its boldness and the risks it takes; a Church that startled those who were there, leaving them amazed and perplexed (Acts 2:12). Can the miracle of Pentecost be repeated? Can the Holy Spirit come animate the Churches of Québec and incite us once again to go forth and reach others? It may not be fear that imprisons us, as it was for the disciples in the Upper Room, but rather, as is remarked in *The Joy of the Gospel 3*, it may be: "...pessimism, fatalism, and mistrust. Some people do not commit themselves to mission because they think that nothing will change and that it is useless to make the effort. They think: 'Why should I deny myself my comforts and pleasures if I won't see any significant result?'" (EG 275). This passage describes quite well what we experience on certain days, and puts its finger on the temptations that we face when we discover that certain challenges are too great and exceed our strength." (12)

Our communion with this "immense love" (EG 11) that is at the source of mission releases us from the boredom, sadness, and darkness of our time and of ecclesial weakness. Indeed, Christ "constantly renews his faithful ones, whatever their age: 'They shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not be faint' (Is 40:31)... Whenever we make the effort to return to the source and to recover the original freshness of the Gospel, new avenues arise, new paths of creativity open up, with different forms of expression, more eloquent signs and words with new meaning for today's world" (EG 11). This love, wisdom, and folly of God surprises us and flouts our logic and our calculations. This love that is at the source of mission sets us in motion; it sends us where we did not expect to go, and even where we did not wish to go. As for the Church, sent by the Son and the Spirit, it is only the agent of an action that is God's. The missionary shift, in order to be solidly grounded and properly oriented, must be inspired by theological reflection rather than by the management sciences which have interpreted the word "mission" differently in recent years... The immense love of God, the source

"The scene with which the account of Pentecost opens and unfolds is one that challenges us. It shows a Church of outreach ("en sortie"), a missionary Church, a Church on the open sea."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

of mission, is the object of the Church's missionary outreach for it must announce and manifest this love to the world." (13)

Bishop Vincent Long, OFM delivered a remarkable talk in Australia. He speaks of his particular interest in the biblical experience of the exile, an experience in Quebec where 50 years ago 95% of Catholics went to Church every Sunday; today 3-5% go regularly. Jesus promised he would not abandon any one of us which means that we are challenged to follow Jesus as he leaves the physical building of the Church to be with those who left and to be with them. Our challenge is to understand that a prophetic reframing of Jesus as the model for today's the Church gives meaning to the Gospel for our very contemporary world that is writing a new human narrative and questioning all the shibboleths upon which we have built the Church.

Bishop Long writes:

"I believe that we are living in a watershed and a privileged moment in the history of the Church. Just as the biblical exile brought about the most transforming experience that profoundly shaped the faith of Israel, this transition time can potentially launch the Church into a new era of hope, engagement and solidarity that the Second Vatican Council beckoned us with great foresight. From where I stand, the arrival of Pope Francis and his emphasis on servant leadership have unambiguously signaled this new era. He, himself, said poignantly that we are not living in an era of change but change of an era. By this, he means that it is the Church that needs to live up to its fundamental call to be *Ecclesia semper reformanda* or the church always in need of reform in order to be in sync with the movement of the Holy Spirit and direction of the Kingdom. It is not "business as usual". There needs to be an attitudinal change at every level, a conversion of mind and heart that conforms us to the spirit of the Gospel, a new wine into new wineskins, not a superficial change or, worse, a retreat into restorationism ... I have a my personal story of being a refugee, my struggle for a new life in Australia, coupled with my Franciscan heritage have all contributed to the sense of hope which was the legacy of the exile of old and which should inform and enlighten our present exile experience. Like the prophets who accompanied their people, interpreted the signs of the times and led them in the direction of the kingdom – the arc of salvation history if you like – we must do the same for our people in the context of this new millennium ... I believe that one of the critical challenges for the church today is that of *prophetic reframing*. (14) It is the ability to read the signs of the times and interpret them in a way that offers fresh and hopeful vision for the future despite appearances to the contrary. The prophet knows the past promise of God's word, but knows how to interpret this word in her or his life and to speak that word to others that will lift them up... In fact, history has shown that religious life is invariably involved with a critique of the *status quo*, a dissatisfaction of accommodation and a search for fresh and radical ways of following Christ. The challenge for those who wish to live the ideals of the Gospel is to not lose sight of the divine pathos and God's preferential option for the poor... The church will be less than what Christ intends it to be when issues of inclusion and equality are not fully addressed. That is why you heard me say that I am guided by the radical vision of Christ. I am committed to make the church in Parramatta the house for all peoples, a church where there is less an experience of exclusion but more an encounter of radical love, inclusiveness and solidarity... May we be like the prophets for our people during this our contemporary exile! May we be strengthened to walk the journey of faith with them, proclaim the message of hope, the signs of the new Kairos and lead them in the direction of the Kingdom. May all of us enact the rhythm of the paschal mystery of dying and rising in the pattern of our Lord who is the Alpha and the Omega." (15)

"In fact, history has shown that religious life is invariably involved with a critique of the status quo."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

The reframing of the Church inevitably leads to a reframing of the rites of initiation especially that of baptism.

Reframing Baptism

My phone rang. The message was the doctor wants to see me. He is very sick and in the hospital. He was my cardiologist but I was unaware of his religious affiliation. I was somewhat surprised when he told me that he always told people he was Catholic and added, I have never been baptized. He always said he was Catholic because his education in several countries had been in Catholic schools. I asked him if he ever wanted to be baptized and he said yes. I explained to him that there were three ways by which a person is baptized, with water, by martyrdom, and by desire. Time was short and it was evident he had been baptized by desire. He expressed how this was comforting for him. He was reconciled sacramentally and the next day died. The family asked me to celebrate a funeral service at which I spoke of his spiritual journey. They too were somewhat surprised. It is a moving story but baptism is to be reframed in the context of the reframing of the church.

The baptized person become a disciple of Jesus. Infant baptism means that the realization will take place later in the process of maturation. The three sacraments of initiation are baptism, confirmation and First Eucharist. There is need for clarification and we will deal with this a little later in the article.

At the Second Vatican Council it was forcefully stated:

“The People of God shares also in Christ’s prophetic office ... the entire body of the faithful, anointed as they are by the Holy One, cannot err in matters of belief. They manifest this special property by means of the whole people’s supernatural discernment in matters of faith when, from the bishops down to the last of the faithful, they share a universal consensus in matters of faith and morals. “ (16)

Pope Francis, in the general audience of January 20th, 2016 said that the mercy of God working in baptism is stronger than our divisions. We have a common baptism and baptism affirms that baptism establishes a sacramental bond of unity which links all who have been reborn by it. This shared baptism means that all are sinners and are in need of being saved, redeemed and freed from evil. Christians say they share one baptism, it’s an affirmation that all of them — Catholics, Protestants and Orthodox included — share the experience of being called from unforgiving darkness and alienation from the encounter with the living God who is full of mercy. Restarting from our baptism, Christians again plunge into the source of mercy and hope, from which no one is excluded. Pope Francis pointed to the common mission Christians have in transmitting the mercy they have received in baptism to others, beginning with the poor and abandoned. Pope Francis address the equality of all the Baptized which makes the Church entirely ministerial when he reminds us that no one is baptized a priest or a bishop. The communal nature of baptism unites the baptized person with the whole Church and with the angels and the saints, expressions of a totality, the unity offered in pantheism.

In the early Church sinners wore sackcloth and ashes in public; at Easter the newly baptized wore a white robe in public until Whitsunday (white Sunday), the following Sunday. The public nature of baptism is the missionary spirit of each of the baptized and of the entirely ministerial church. Theologically baptism was a cleansing in water, cleansing from the original sin of our first parents Adam and Eve, and then, the conferring of the Holy Spirit which resulted in the reception of the baptized into the Church. Baptism is received only once and an

*“Baptism
makes offers
to the baptized
person to
become a
disciple of
Jesus.”*

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

indelible mark remains on the soul. The Catholic theology of baptism is confusing and, per se, is drawn from scriptural reference to John's baptism and Jesus' baptism and the reference is that Jesus will baptize with water and the spirit, with water and fire. The later theological developments distracted rather than helped in explaining baptism.

The Bishop was the sole minister of baptism, confirmation and the Eucharist gathered the community around the bishop. Constantine declared the Catholic religion the religion of the Empire and it resulted in a surge of growth of the church. The bishop no longer could provide the sacraments and delegate priests and deacons to baptize. He retained confirmation. The fatal result was a separation of baptism from confirmation and first Eucharist. In the late Middle Ages a theology of confirmation was developed to attribute it to the bishop and confirmation became an independent sacrament. There is nothing in the New Testament to warrant a separate sacrament when confirmation is a renewal and reaffirmation of baptism opening the baptized to the Eucharist. Christian initiation offers a person the symbolic and sacramental experience of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Immersion symbolically delivers the baptized from the power of darkness, dying with Christ, buried with him and resurrected with him, receiving the Spirit of adoption and celebrating with all the People of God his resurrection. The baptized become a new creation becoming truthfully children of God who will give public witness to their new life. Completing their initiation with the Eucharist, they were in the world with all Christians. The Spirit is linked directly to baptism. In the 13th century in Cologne confirmation was to be received at the age of reason and for adults it continued in the proper order. The false decrees of Gratian even judged confirmation of more value than baptism, to confer strength whereas baptism was for pardoning, a doctrine confirmed at Council of Florence and Trent against Martin Luther. The theological implications are that baptism and confirmation form one sacrament. The anointing at confirmation, "Receive the Holy Spirit, a gift of the Father," simply ratifies baptism. Confirmation expresses the missionary character of the Church, the same as that of Jesus, wisdom, understanding, counsel, knowledge, piety, to transform all of creation. The gifts of the Spirit are helpful today to discern the signs of the times and the fruits of the Holy Spirit assure us that we have discerned well.

The Orthodox practice of administering Baptism, Confirmation and First Eucharist at the same time, even in infant baptism, shows the strong link between all three as rites of Initiation into a Christian way of life. The Orthodox Churches baptized, confirmed and gave communion to infants, thus fully initiating an infant into a Christian way of life. The renewal of the Catechumenate or Rites of Christian Initiation recovered the order for adults but the pastoral and not theological reasons given for the partial inverting of the order meant that infant Baptism was followed by First Eucharist around the age of reason, seven or eight years old, and Confirmation was a sacrament to confirm one's faith, and was received as late as 13 of 14 years old. The renewal of the Catechumenate in the R.C.I.A. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) The original order is maintained. The R.C.I.C. (Rite of Christian Initiation of Children) is for children, not infants, the

"The baptized become a new creation becoming truthfully children of God who will give public witness to their new life."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

original order is maintained. I know of one Diocese where they have returned to the original order for all children after infant baptism. The return to the original order creates a major shift in the theology of Baptism that does not deny its efficacious nature to remove original sin, to receive the Holy Spirit and to offer membership into a particular tradition, to a new reframing of the three sacraments to complete a full initiation into a Christian way of life.

Until the Second Vatican Council Catholic baptism was the only baptism recognized as valid. Baptism was not valid in all the other Christian churches. The Council followed by ecumenical dialogue agreements, baptism was fully recognized in all Christian churches, with the exception of those churches where water is not used. Major changes were brought to indissoluble marriages which are marriages when both parties are validly baptized. A Roman Catholic and a Protestant married in a church other than a Roman Catholic Church was judged to be an invalid marriage. Today, with a dispensation of form which respects the faith of the non-Catholic party, that marriage is a valid marriage. The granting of a dispensation of form means that a Catholic priest does not have to witness the marriage (originally to avoid clandestine marriages), the minister of another religion may be the witness. The dispensation of form also enables a Catholic and a person of another faith tradition to be married in a civil union and the marriage is recognized as a non-sacramental marriage for the Catholic party. In Canada for more than forty years, when there is a shortage of priests, a woman or a man can baptize publicly, a woman or man can witness a marriage, and as well as celebrate funerals and interments.

Infant baptism posed a problem since children were innocent and unable to sin and so the purpose was to remove original sin, infuse the child with the Holy Spirit and offer membership to the child. If the child were to die before baptism a place called limbo would receive them.

Baptism in any other Christian Church was not recognized as a valid Baptism. The non-recognition of Baptism had a great impact on the theology of marriage because only two Catholics validly baptized could enter a sacramental marriage. A sacramental marriage meant it was indissoluble until the death of one of the parties. The pastoral implications were enormous when a Catholic married outside the Catholic Church it was declared an invalid marriage and the parents and friends were prohibited from attending not only the marriage but the reception that followed. The marriage of a Catholic and a Protestant in the church was without fanfare, early in the morning and in the sacristy with a few people in attendance. The protestant partner had to pledge that the children would be brought up Roman Catholic. The annulment of such a marriage was pro-forma because it was an invalid marriage and not a sacramental marriage.

However, the acceptance of baptism in all Christian churches, with few exceptions, changed not only the theology of baptism but had a great impact on the celebration of marriages. The reframing of baptism is founded on the reframing of Jesus and the use of such reframing as the model of Church. The Jesus of the Gospels, in what he said

“...the acceptance of baptism in all Christian churches, with few exceptions... had a great impact on the celebration of marriages.”

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

and did, reframed the model of Church. Is it time to prophetically reframe the priest.

Reframing the Priest

The priests of the Latin Rite priest were cultic priests to administer the sacraments piously. The number of baptisms, confirmation, marriages, confessions, and weekend Masses, together with the preparations which were necessary, meant that the priest was in demand. Vatican II had come to a close and the publication of the sixteen documents offered a new blueprint for a new Catholic culture and a pastoral renewal of the Church, the *aggiornamento* offered by Saint Pope John XXIII. Up to that time the Church was self-contained and self-sufficient; however it was eroded as large numbers of the faithful were abandoning the Church.

Within months of ordination a chance invitation to a Kiwanis Club luncheon offered hope when I realized that the group was multicultural, multilingual, ecumenical and interfaith. I was living the document *Nostra Aetate*. The Church was alive in a new way.

I learned quickly that a priest must respect the priesthood of the faithful. I was a very active chaplain of the parish and Diocesan Christian Family Movement (CFM) which gathered five or six couples weekly to transition into a new Church and as chaplain my remarks were held to the end of the meeting. The chaplain learned to be a listener.

The Council opened the Church to the world in *Lumen Gentium*, and the People of God opened the priest to a collaborative ministry without distinction of priest and laity, we simply worked side by side. The cultic priest evolved quickly when the focus of ministry was to allow for the in-breaking into history of God's Kingdom or Reign, a Reign of justice, mercy, love, and peace. The Church began to focus on the Sacred Scriptures, and thus, Kingdom theology refocused the Church which could no longer be an end in itself but a means to the Reign of God.

The Council called the priest to uncover the charisms of the laity and to give them their rightful role in the Church. The laity, from the Greek *laos* - "the people," meant that all people, priest and laity, were mandated to minister in virtue of their baptism and the Church became entirely ministerial. All ministries, the use of our gifts to serve others, are mandated from Baptism. At Baptism everyone is anointed priest, prophet and royalty. We are the People of God, a holy nation, a people set apart, and a royal priesthood.

However, Baptism does not stand alone; it is indispensable to see all three rites in unity, baptism, confirmation, and First Eucharist, in that order, to complete one's initiation into a Christian way of life. A gift of the Council was the restoration of the Catechumenate, the RCIC or RCIA, to prepare children and adults for Initiation. The Council heard the cry of its pastors and so directed that "*the catechumenate for adults ... is to be restored and to be put into*

"I learned quickly that a priest must respect the priesthood of the faithful...The chaplain learned to be a listener."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

use at the discretion of the local ordinary." Vatican II provided a baptismal foundation for the on-going life of the Church. The parish model of renewal was now in place.

Building upon the image of the Church as the Body of Christ, the Council reminded us that it is *through baptism we are formed in the likeness of Christ*. The Body is called to be the New People of God and this new People of God is characterised as *a spiritual house and a holy priesthood* through baptism. The community as the priesthood of the faithful is called to be exercised in the celebration of liturgy - *for such participation by the Christian people as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people, is their right and duty by reason of their baptism*. The mission of the laity is a mission which Vatican II had named as coming from the new life which *they had put on in baptism*.

Baptism is meant to be for adults and so there is confusion about Infant Baptism. Infant Baptism dislodged the order of reception of the rites of initiation by offering First Communion around age seven, the age of reason, and then interpreting Confirmation as a transitional profession of faith for young adults who were thirteen or fourteen years of age. There are presently many attempts to return the order to its more explicable order and give meaning to the sacraments as sacraments of initiation.

Pope Francis, again in reference to the letter he sent to Cardinal Marc Ouellette, he writes:

"The bishop of Rome presents a spirit of discernment and reflection that doesn't fall into the void so that it can help and encourage us to better serve the faithful Holy People of God. It is the faithful Holy People of God to whom, as pastors, we are continually called to look, protect, accompany, support and serve. Looking to the faithful Holy People of God, and *feeling ourselves an integral part of the same*, places us in life and thus in the themes that we treat, in a different way. The bishop of Rome reminds us that the hour of the laity has come, but it seems the clock has stopped." (17)

The first sacrament, which seals our identity forever, and of which we should always be proud, is Baptism. Through Baptism and by the anointing of the Holy Spirit, all of the Holy People of God are consecrated as a spiritual home and a holy priesthood. (18) Our first and fundamental consecration is rooted in our Baptism. *No one has been baptized a priest or a bishop*. We are baptized as lay people and it is this indelible sign that no one can ever erase. It does us good to remember that the Church is not an elite of priests, of consecrated men, of bishops, but that everyone forms the faithful Holy People of God. The faithful Holy People of God is anointed with the grace of the Holy Spirit, and thus, as we reflect, think, evaluate, discern, we must be very attentive to this anointing.

The strong emphasis on baptism and the profound impact it has in developing a new ecclesiology renders the Church, as the bride, and Jesus, as bridegroom, in a relationship of mystery and of being present in the world to reframe the priest and the priesthood in an all new light. The Cohen, the priest in the Hebrew Tradition, was a cultic priest responsible for liturgy and temple worship. The Cohenim and the Levites had no tribal territory and were associated with the Temple. After Bethel and Ai and other temples the United Kingdom of Israel centered on Je-

***"Through
Baptism and
by the
anointing of
the Holy Spirit,
all of the Holy
People of God
are
consecrated as
a spiritual
house and a
holy
priesthood."***

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

Jerusalem to bring unity to the Kingdom in the Solomonic Temple. Sacrifice was for the appeasement of God and the High Priest alone entered the Holy of Holies.

In the 1960s as a Roman Catholic priest, the model was the same as the cultic priest of the Hebrews. I was to administer the sacraments and be present at the liturgies which were held in the Church. Most people identified the priest with the Church on Sunday and going to church for Mass. It was known as the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. So reminiscent of the cultic priest among the Israelites. It was the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and certainly after the Bar Cochba revolution in 135 A.D. that the Israelites were in exile. No longer was there sacrifice and so the priest became obsolete. Prophecies had ceased and the center of the Jewish faith became the Torah. Rabbinic Judaism was born.

The Church is in exile and surveys and statistical reports indicate that the Church is in exile, considering the growing number of Catholics who have disaffiliated themselves from the Church, the shortage of vocations and aging of the clergy and Bishop Vincent Long in Australia refers:

“I have a particular interest in the biblical experience of the exile. My personal story of being a refugee, my struggle for a new life in Australia, coupled with my Franciscan heritage have all contributed to the sense of hope which was the legacy of the exile of old and which should inform and enlighten our present exile experience. Like the prophets who accompanied their people, interpreted the signs of the times and led them in the direction of the kingdom – the arc of salvation history if you like – we must do the same for our people in the context of this new millennium.”(19)

I cannot do full justice to his address but simply repeat what he says, we, including himself, “must offer humanity the radial vision and radical love of Jesus.” The rest is commentary.

The Protestant Reformation in the 1600s ended with a schism in the Church and was led by Martin Luther, John Zwingli and Henry VIII. The Protestants said *Sola Scriptura* -- Only the Scriptures would be the guide for Christians and they were able to interpret the Scriptures personally. The Roman Catholic Church, in reaction, stressed the sacramental character of the church with the seven sacraments regarded as the means to obtain the grace of God. The Catholic Church forbade Catholics to read the Bible because it would confuse them and it was on the Index of Forbidden books for Catholics to read until the 1970s.

The Catholic priest as a cultic priest stressed the rituals and the Protestants, the Word of God. This changed as I was ordained. We recovered the importance of the Word and a full document *Dei Verbum* --- *Word of God* was published along with *Nostra Aetate* and the Dogmatic and Pastoral Constitutions of the Church. The actual ordination ritual changed from saying the priest was to administer the sacraments to spell out his primary responsibility was a Minister of the Word.

The similarities with the Israelites is striking. Recall that the Torah was lost and Ezra and Nehemiah reformed the Torah, read it out loud and it was approved by the people.

*“ We must
offer humanity
the radial
vision and
radical love of
Jesus.”*

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

Catholics found the Bible and we developed a whole new approach to our liturgy of ritual of the Mass which we know call the Eucharist. What we called the altar meaning a place of sacrifice was now a table at which people were fed and remembered that at the last Supper Jesus wished to be remembered at a meal. A meal not unlike the Seder Meal preaching liberation. There were now two tables a table of the Word (the Bimamah) and a table of the Eucharist, the meal.

The sermon which was preaching a lesson for the congregation became a homily from the Greek word *homileo* meaning to speak with, to be an interlocutor between the Word of God and the congregation. The Church Magisterium, the teaching arm of the Church, held that only the Institution could interpret the Word but as scholars poured over the sacred texts and had the approval to do so since 1943 the Word became a living word offered to people to align their lives in accordance with the Word. We became Torah people.

As a priest these adjustments were at the crux of the renewal of the Church. There was opposition, a certain restorationism, and many clergy, including Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, priests and many in the pews wanted to maintain what had been and thought that the new direction of the Church was against the doctrines and dogmas that had developed over the millennia.

We are at a crossroads and choices will have to be made and they are being made. Pope Francis has offered us several images of the Church that will help us reframe the priest today.

He says that we are a church of the poor for the poor, and has told Cardinals to get out of their Cathedrals and from behind their BMWs, that he prefers a church that is hurting and dirty and out in the streets, which is a church that the Bishops of Quebec call a church "*en sortie*," outward bound, and Francis says we are a field hospital called to heal the wounded and later to ask questions about their vital signs, and recently said that it is not him but Jesus who asks the Church to be a mother who has to teach us but whose shoes are still covered with mud in the streets. The priest is framed by these very images of the Church on a journey with all people, to know the smell of his sheep, to prepare the Church to continue the revolution begun at Vatican II and to pray and work for coming of the Reign of God and to work to make this world a better world in which to live and to recognize the enormous challenge to bring about peace among religions, a prerequisite for there to be peace in the world.

The priest as Rabbi would also facilitate a tripartite dialogue including Islam who refer to the three monotheistic religions as People of the Book. The challenge would be to interpret each other's sacred texts to discover the riches of each other's traditions and how the Word is central to the understanding each respective tradition and the interpretation of the one God.

The idea of framing the priest as Rabbi would also permit an active role for women in collaboration with male Rabbis since so many women have acquired academic degrees in theology and are already filling responsible positions in

"We are at a crossroads and choices will have to be made and they are being made."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

academia. There are great possibilities for the renewal of the structure of the Church. The negative would be replaced by the positive. The hierarchical structure would be replaced by a collaborative structure and would be a structure respecting of the theology of Baptism (Initiation), a ministerial church of service and one which would respect a consensus on matters of faith and morals. Ministry would be collaborative. The priest as a Rabbi, teacher, is very much the image of Jesus, the Rabbi, and thus would help a Church that is always in renewal/semper reformanda to constructively critique its present structure and help the whole church to refocus on herself and prepare the future with hope.

Prophetic reframing will be an ongoing process for the Catholic tradition. The methodology is to focus on Jesus and reframe the model Jesus in the light of the Gospel, then to reframe the Church with the reframed model of Jesus, thus reframing the rites of initiation especially highlighting a reframing of baptism, and finally, will open the community to reframe the ministry as ministry in a community of the disciples of Jesus proclaiming Good News in the contemporary world.

Pope Francis says we are not living in an era of change but in a change of era, Pope Francis addressed Congress in his visit to the United States and said that Thomas Merton, one of the four great Americans he signaled out, that Merton was above all a man of prayer, a thinker who challenged the certitudes of his time and opened new horizons for souls and for the Church. He was also a man of dialogue, a promoter of peace between peoples and religions."

A Final Note From Pope Paul VI : Populorum Progressio

In the present day, however, individual and group effort within these countries is no longer enough. The world situation requires the concerted effort of everyone, a thorough examination of every facet of the problem—social, economic, cultural and spiritual. The Church, which has long experience in human affairs and has no desire to be involved in the political activities of any nation, "seeks but one goal: to carry forward the work of Christ under the lead of the befriending Spirit. And Christ entered this world to give witness to the truth; to save, not to judge; to serve, not to be served."

Sharing the noblest aspirations of men and suffering when she sees these aspirations not satisfied, she wishes to help them attain their full realization. So she offers man her distinctive contribution: a global perspective on man and human realities. If development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to enjoy the higher values of love and friendship, of prayer and contemplation, and thus find themselves. This is what will guarantee man's authentic development—his transition from less than human conditions to truly human ones.

"The world situation requires the concerted effort of everyone, a thorough examination of every facet of the problem—social, economic, cultural and spiritual."

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

The ultimate goal is a full-bodied humanism. And does this not mean the fulfillment of the whole man and of every man? A narrow humanism, closed in on itself and not open to the values of the spirit and to God who is their source, could achieve apparent success, for man can set about organizing terrestrial realities without God. But "closed off from God, they will end up being directed against man. A humanism closed off from other realities becomes inhuman."

True humanism points the way toward God and acknowledges the task to which we are called, the task which offers us the real meaning of human life. Man is not the ultimate measure of man. Man becomes truly man only by passing beyond himself. In the words of Pascal: "Man infinitely surpasses man."

We must travel this road together, united in minds and hearts. Hence, we feel it necessary to remind everyone of the seriousness of this issue in all its dimensions, and to impress upon them the need for action. The moment for action has reached a critical juncture. Can countless innocent children be saved? Can countless destitute families obtain more human living conditions? Can world peace and human civilization be preserved intact? Every individual and every nation must face up to this issue, for it is their problem. It must be admitted that men very often find themselves in a sad state because they do not give enough thought and consideration to these things. So We call upon men of deep thought and wisdom—Catholics and Christians, believers in God and devotees of truth and justice, all men of good will—to take as their own Christ's injunction, "Seek and you shall find."

Blaze the trails to mutual cooperation among men, to deeper knowledge and more widespread charity, to a way of life marked by true brotherhood, to a human society based on mutual harmony. (20)

Conclusion

We can create a new human narrative and write a new agenda to prophetically reframe our lives for the benefit of all of humanity.

[1] Jeremy Rifkin. *The Empathic Civilization --- The Race To Global Consciousness In A World In Crisis*. Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin. New York. 2009. 616.

[2] Yuval Noah Harari in *Sapiens ... A brief History of Humankind*. Random House of Canada Limited. 2014. 413-414.

[3] Yuval Noah Harari. *Homo Deus ... A Brief History of Tomorrow*. Random House of Canada Limited. 2015. 350

[4] *Ibid.* 397

[5] Thomas L. Friedman. *Thank You for Being Late*. Farrar. Straus and Giroux. New York. 2016.15.

[6] His Holiness The Dalai Lama And Archbishop Desmond Tutu with Douglas Abrams. *The Book of Joy – Lasting Happiness in a Changing World*. Viking. New York. 2016. 296-297.

[7] John F. O’Grady. *Models of Jesus*. 1981. Doubleday & Company Inc. Garden City. New York. The author offers readers an extensive treatment of models of

“We can create a new human narrative and write a new agenda to prophetically reframe our lives for the benefit of all of humanity.”

Reframing Jesus, the Church, Baptism, and Priesthood

By Father John Walsh

Jesus taken from the New Testament and six models present in the church today. A free download on the Internet is offered for 14 days.

[8] Elizabeth A. Johnson. *Consider Jesus. Waves of Renewal in Christology*. The Crossroad Publishing Company. New York. 1992. The author offer waves or different perceptions of Jesus in the historical development of theology.

[9] James Carroll. *The New Yorker*. November 7, 2014.

[10] *Pacem in Terris – Paix sur La Terre – Relecture engagée dans le Québec d’aujourd’hui*. Novalis. 2016. Ed. Gregory Baum.

[11] *Lumen Gentium*. nn 9-14. Francis addresses clericalism in detail in *The Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Marc Ouellet, President of the Pontifical Commission for Latin America*. Libera Editrice Vaticana. March 19, 2016.

[12] *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities --- becoming a “Church of outreach” after The Joy of the Gospel*.

[13] *Ibid*. 1.2

[14] My emphasis.

[15] *Most Reverend Vincent Long OFM Conv*. Bishop of Parramatta. Ann D Clark Lecture. August 18, 2016.

[16] *Lumen Gentium*. n 12

[17] Francis. *Libreria Editrice Vaticana*. March 19, 2016.

[18] *Lumen Gentium*. n 10

[19] Bishop Vincent Long, OFM Conv. Bishop of Parramatta, Australia. 2016 AnnDClarkLecture. August 18, 2016. The whole lecture warrants everyone’s attention.

[20] Pope Paul VI. Encyclical. *Populorum presgressio*. March 26, 1967.

Le Baptême Du Christ, Le Pérugin, Chapelle Sixtine



“We have ... to begin rethinking human nature to bring out our empathic sociability so we can rethink our institutions and prepare the ground work for an empathic civilization.”

Of Water and the Spirit
By Father Alexander Schmemmann,
présenté par Paul Ladouceur/



Introduction by
Paul Ladouceur

Father Alexander Schmemmann (1921-1983) was a leading Orthodox theologian, educationalist and ecumenist of the twentieth century. He is particularly noted for the promotion of liturgical theology in Orthodoxy: the theological significance of the liturgy, and the liturgy as a source of theology. The goal of liturgical theology, as he writes in the texts below, is "to overcome the fateful divorce between theology, liturgy and piety." Most of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann's books are devoted to this objective: a general introduction to liturgical theology, studies of the sacraments, and of the liturgical year.

The texts which follow are from two of Fr. Alexander's most important books. The first is the introduction to his study of baptism, *Of Water and the Spirit: A Liturgical Study of Baptism* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974). The second is an extract from his well-known book on the Christian sacraments, *For the Life of the World: Sacraments and Orthodoxy* (Crestwood NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998). First published in 1956, this book was originally prepared for the World Student Christian Federation. It has since become one of most popular modern Orthodox books both within and outside the Orthodox tradition.



To Rediscover Baptism

In the past, during the "golden age" of Christian liturgy, the sacrament of baptism was performed on the Paschal night as an organic part of the great annual celebration of Easter. Even today, long after the link between the two solemnities has been broken, the baptismal rites and the Paschal liturgy still keep an indelible mark of their initial connection and interdependence. Not many Christians, however, are aware of this. Not many know that the liturgy of Easter is primarily a baptismal liturgy; that when on Easter eve they hear the biblical readings about the crossing of the Red Sea, or the three children in the furnace, or Jonah in the whale's womb, they listen to the most ancient "paradigms" of baptism and attend the great baptismal vigil. They do not know that the joy which illuminates the Holy night, when the glorious announcement "Christ is Risen!" resounds, is the joy of those who were "baptized into Christ and have put on Christ," who were "buried with Him by baptism into death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," even so they also should walk in the "newness of life" (Rom 6:4). Not many Christians have been taught that Easter as a liturgical feast, and Lent as a liturgical preparation for Easter, developed originally from the celebration of baptism; that Pascha, the "Feast of Feasts," is thus truly the fulfillment of baptism, and baptism is truly a Paschal sacrament.

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann was born in Estonia to Russian émigrés. His family moved to France, where he received his university education. He completed his theological studies at the Orthodox Theological Institute of St. Sergius in Paris and was ordained a priest in 1946. From 1946 to 1951, Fr. Alexander taught Church History at St. Sergius. He was invited to join the faculty of St. Vladimir's Seminary (then in New York City), where he taught from 1951 onwards. There, in 1962, Fr. Alexander assumed the post of dean, which he would hold until his death. He also served as adjunct professor at Columbia University, New York University, Union Theological Seminary and General Theological Seminary in New York. Much of his focus at St. Vladimir's was on liturgical theology, which emphasizes the liturgical tradition of the Church as a major sign and expression of the Christian faith. Fr. Alexander was accorded the title of protopresbyter (also called archpriest in some Orthodox jurisdictions, though in the Russian tradition from which Fr. Alexander came, the two are distinct honorary titles), the highest honor that can be bestowed on a married Orthodox priest. He held honorary degrees from Butler University, General Theological Seminary, Lafayette College, Iona College, and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He was an Orthodox observer for the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church from 1962 to 1965. In 1970, he was active in the establishment of the Orthodox Church in America, which at that time became officially independent from the Russian Orthodox Church.

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

Knowing all this, however, is more than just learning an interesting chapter in liturgical archaeology. It is indeed the only way to a fuller understanding of baptism, of its meaning in the life of the Church and in our individual lives as Christians. And it is this fuller understanding of the fundamental mystery of the Christian faith and Christian life that, more than anything else, we badly need today. Why? Because, to put it very simply, baptism is absent from our life. It is, to be sure, still accepted by all as a self-evident necessity. It is not opposed, not even questioned. It is performed all the time in our churches. It is, in other terms, "taken for granted." Yet, in spite of all this, I dare to affirm that in a very real sense it is absent, and this "absence" is at the root of many tragedies of the Church today.

Baptism is, first of all, absent from the Church's liturgy, if by liturgy we mean that which the term *leitourgia* has always meant: a corporate act in which the whole Church, i.e. the entire community, is involved, in which it really participates. Is it not true indeed that, from the liturgical point of view, baptism today has become a private family celebration performed as a rule outside the corporate worship of the Church, precisely outside its *leitourgia*? Is it not true that one can be a regular church-goer for years and years without having attended one baptism, without even knowing how it is performed?

Being thus absent from liturgy, baptism then is naturally absent from our piety. A Christian of the past knew, for example, that Easter each year was the celebration of his own baptism, of his own entrance into and participation in the life of the Risen Christ. He knew that the Resurrection of Christ was again revealed and reaffirmed in this act of regeneration and rebirth through which new members were integrated into the "newness of life." But today's Christian does not relate either himself or the Church to baptism. He knows, of course, that he was baptized and that baptism is a necessary condition for his membership in the Church. But this knowledge remains abstract. It is not referred to the Church as the very community of those who died with Christ and who therefore were given a new life in Him. His piety is thus no longer baptismal, as was that of the early Christians. Baptism for him has ceased to be a permanent reality and experience illuminating his whole life, an ever-living source of joy and hope. It is recorded somewhere on a baptismal certificate but certainly not in his Christian memory. And he no longer experiences Easter and Pentecost, Christmas and Epiphany, and indeed the whole liturgy of the Church, in their direct relationship to baptism, as realities whose meaning and efficacy in the Church are fulfilled in and through baptism.

Finally, having ceased to feed Christian piety, baptism obviously has lost its power to shape our Christian worldview, i.e. our basic attitudes, motivations and decisions. There exists today no Christian "philosophy of life" which would embrace the totality of our existence, family as well as profession, history as well as society, ethics as well as action. There is simply no difference between the "values" and "ideals" accepted inside the Christian community and those accepted outside of it. A Christian today may be a "parishioner in good standing" while living by standards and philosophies of life having nothing to do with, if not openly opposed to the Christian faith.

"A Christian of the past knew not only intellectually but with his entire being that through baptism he was placed into a radically new relationship with all aspects of life and with the "world" itself."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

A Christian of the past knew not only intellectually but with his entire being that through baptism he was placed into a radically new relationship with all aspects of life and with the "world" itself; that he received, along with his faith, a radically new understanding of life. Baptism for him was the starting point and also the foundation of a Christian "philosophy of life," of a permanent sense of direction guiding him firmly throughout his entire existence, supplying answers to all questions, solving all problems.

This foundation is still here with us. Baptism is performed. But it has ceased to be comprehended as the door leading into a new life and as the power to fight for this new life's preservation and growth in us.

* * *

Such is the tragic consequence of what to many may seem a secondary and purely external development: the transformation of baptism into a private ceremony, its ceasing to be the very heart of the Church's liturgy and piety. From a purely formal-dogmatical or canonical-point of view, this may seem unimportant. Is not baptism valid regardless of how many people attend, of the time and place of its celebration, of the quantity of water used? Yet the very existence of such a "point of view" reveals how deeply divorced from the true spirit and tradition of the Church is our modern dogmatical and canonical consciousness, how radically ignorant it is of the old principle *lex orandi est lex credendi*, "the norm of prayer is the norm of belief."

The simple fact is that such a "point of view," taught today as an Orthodox norm, is the result of that "Western pseudomorphosis" of Orthodox theology which began after the patristic age came to its end and which poisoned the Church with a legalistic spirit totally alien to the Fathers and the early Tradition. This Western influence resulted in a narrowing of the very understanding of baptism. Indeed one can read and reread contemporary manuals of Orthodox theology without ever finding out why water is used in baptism, what is its connection with Christ's Death and Resurrection, why the Holy Chrism is to be consecrated by bishops alone—explanations obviously essential for the understanding of the baptismal mystery. In these manuals baptism is defined almost exclusively as being the "removal" of original sin and as the conferring of grace, both acts being "necessary," in a juridical sense of this word, for salvation. But baptism as the sacrament of regeneration, as re-creation, as the personal Pascha and the personal Pentecost of man, as the integration into the *laos*, the people of God, as the "passage" from an old into a new life and finally as an epiphany of the Kingdom of God: all these meanings which made baptism so central and so essential to early Christian piety and experience are virtually ignored, and this precisely because they do not fit into the legalistic framework adopted from the West. [...]

* * *

We must rediscover baptism—its meaning, its power, its true validity. The purpose of this essay is to help in such a rediscovery, or rather to enumerate preliminary conditions for it. For the real rediscovery must take place each time the Church celebrates this great mystery and makes all of us its participants and witnesses.

The goal of liturgical theology, as its very name indicates, is to overcome the fateful divorce between theology, liturgy and piety—a divorce which, as we have

*"We must
rediscover
baptism—its
meaning, its
power, its true
validity. "*

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

Lately, it is true, there has occurred throughout the Christian world a certain widening of the theology of baptism. There has been a rediscovery of the meaning of baptism as entrance and integration into the Church, of its "ecclesiological" significance. But ecclesiology, unless it is given its true cosmic perspective ("for the life of the world"), unless it is understood as the Christian form of "cosmology," is always ecclesiolatry, the Church considered as a "being in itself" and not the new relation of God, man and the world. And it is not "ecclesiology" that gives baptism its true meaning; it is rather in and through baptism that we find the first and fundamental meaning of the Church.

Baptism, by its very form and elements—the water of the baptismal font, the oil of chrismation refers us inescapably to "matter," to the world, to the cosmos. In the early Church the celebration of baptism took place during the solemn Easter vigil, and in fact, the Easter liturgy grew out of the "Paschal mystery" of baptism. This means that baptism was understood as having a direct meaning for the "new time," of which Easter is the celebration and the manifestation. And finally, baptism and chrismation were always fulfilled in the Eucharist—which is the sacrament of the Church's ascension to the Kingdom, the sacrament of the "world to come."

I have already said that the tragedy of a certain theology (and piety) was that in its search for precise definitions, it artificially isolated the sacraments from the liturgy in which they were performed. The liturgy was relegated to the category of secondary, decorative and ritual elements having no bearing on the esse of the sacrament. By doing so, however, theology lost much of the true understanding of the sacramental reality. Baptism in particular has suffered an almost disastrous loss of meaning. And we must, therefore—in order to recover it—return to the leiturgia of the Church.

* * *

In the past, preparation for baptism sometimes lasted as long as three years. Now that infant baptism has become virtually universal however, this preparation is merely of historical interest. And yet it is important for us to remember that a great part of the Church's life was devoted to the preparation for baptism of the catechumens, those who already believed in Christ and were now on their way to the fulfillment of that faith in baptism. In the Orthodox Church, even today, the entire first part of the Eucharist is called the "Liturgy of the Catechumens." The liturgical seasons of Lent and Advent, the cycles of Christmas and Epiphany, the structure of Holy Week and, finally, the "solemnity of solemnities"—the Easter vigil—were all shaped in their development by the preparation for baptism and its celebration. The meaning of all this for us today is, first, that the whole life of the Church is, in a way, the explication and the manifestation of baptism, and second, that baptism forms the real content, the "existential" root of what we now call "religious education." The latter is not an abstract "knowledge about God" but the revelation of the wonderful things that have "happened" and happen to us in the divine gift of the new life.

The actual baptismal service as it is celebrated in the Orthodox Church begins with what was in the past the final act of the catechumenate: the exorcisms, the renunciation of Satan and the confession of faith.

*"The whole life
of the Church
is, in a way,
the explication
and the
manifestation
of baptism."*

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

already tried to show elsewhere, has had disastrous consequences for theology as well as for liturgy and piety. It deprived liturgy of its proper understanding by the people, who began to see in it beautiful and mysterious ceremonies in which, while attending them, they take no real part. It deprived theology of its living source and made it into an intellectual exercise for intellectuals. It deprived piety of its living content and term of reference. But it was not so with the Fathers. If their theology is still for us the criterion and the source of inspiration, it is because it is rooted in the living experience of the Church, in the great reality of the worshipping community. It is indeed quite revealing that the theological explanation of baptism originated as a catechetical explanation of the baptismal rites—as, in fact, an organic part of the liturgy itself. Theology here began as an inspired reflection on the liturgy, as the revelation of its true meaning. And when we read the Fathers, how refreshingly far we are from the superficial symbolical explanations of the liturgical rites so typical of the post-patristic literature, how far also from the cold legalistic definitions of our manuals!

To understand liturgy from inside, to discover and experience that "epiphany" of God, world and life which the liturgy contains and communicates, to relate this vision and this power to our own existence, to all our problems: such is the purpose of liturgical theology. Of all this, baptism is truly the beginning, the foundation, and the key. The whole life of the Church is rooted in the New Life which shone forth from the grave on the first day of the new creation. It is this new life that is given in baptism and is fulfilled in the Church. We began this introduction with the mention of the initial liturgical connection between Pascha and baptism. This whole study is indeed nothing else but an attempt to explain the meaning of this connection and to communicate, inasmuch as it is possible for our poor human words, the joy with which it fills our Christian life.

Of Water and the Spirit

[The idea of] time and its transformation and renewal has simply no meaning if there is no new man to perform the sacrament of time. It is of him that we must speak now and of the act in which the newness of life and the power to live by it are given him. We began, however, not at baptism, which is the beginning of Christian life, but with the Eucharist and time, because it was essential to establish the cosmic dimensions of the life given in baptism. For a long time the theological and spiritual interest in baptism was virtually disconnected from its cosmic significance, from the totality of man's relation to the world. It was explained as man's liberation from "original sin." But both original sin and the liberation from it were given an extremely narrow and individual meaning. Baptism was understood as the means to assure the individual salvation of man's soul. No wonder that such an understanding of baptism led to a similar narrowing of the baptismal liturgy. From an act of the whole Church, involving the whole cosmos, it became a private ceremony, performed in a corner of the church by "private appointment," and in which the Church was reduced to the "minister of sacraments" and the cosmos to the three symbolic drops of water, considered as "necessary and sufficient" for the "validity" of the sacrament. *Validity* was the preoccupation—and not fullness, meaning, joy. Because of the obsession of baptismal theology with juridical and not ontological terms, the real question—*what* is made valid?—often remained unanswered.

“To understand liturgy from inside, to discover and experience that "epiphany" of God, world and life which the liturgy contains and communicates , to relate this vision and this power to our own existence, to all our problems...”

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

According to some modern interpreters of Christianity, demonology belongs to an antiquated world view and cannot be taken seriously by the man who uses electricity. We cannot argue with them here. What we must affirm, what the Church has always affirmed, is that the use of electricity may be "demonic," as in fact may be the use of anything and of life itself. That is, in other words, the experience of evil which we call demonic is not that of a mere absence of good, or, for that matter, of all sorts of existential alienations and anxieties. It is indeed the presence of dark and irrational power. Hatred is not merely absence of love. It is certainly more than that, and we recognize its presence as an almost physical burden that we feel in ourselves when we hate. In our world in which normal and civilized men "used electricity" to exterminate six million human beings, in this world in which right now [1956] some ten million people live in concentration camps because they failed to understand the "only way to universal happiness;" in this world the "demonic" reality is not a myth.

And whatever the value or the consistence of its presentation in theologies and doctrines, it is this reality that the Church has in mind, that it indeed faces when at the moment of baptism, through the hands of the priest, it lays hold upon a new human being who has just entered life, and who, according to statistics, has a great likelihood some day of entering a mental institution, a penitentiary, or at best, the maddening boredom of a universal suburbia. The world from which the human being has received his life, and which will determine this life, is a prison. The Church did not have to wait for Kafka or Sartre to know it. But the Church also knows that the gates of this hell have been broken and that another Power has entered the world and claimed it for its true Owner. And that claim is not on souls alone, but on the totality of life, on the whole world. Thus—at the beginning of baptism—the Church makes that claim. The priest "breathes thrice in the face" of the catechumen, and "signeth his brow and his breast thrice with the sign of the cross and layeth his hand on the head saying:"

"In Thy Name, O Lord God of Truth, and in the Name of Thine only-begotten Son, and of Thy Holy Spirit, I lay my hand upon Thy servant, who has been found worthy to flee unto Thy Holy Name, and to take refuge under the shelter of Thy wings. Remove far from him his former delusion, and fill him with the faith, hope and love which are in Thee; that he may know that Thou art the only true God. Enable him to walk in all Thy commandments and to fulfill those things which are well pleasing unto Thee, for if a man do those things, *he shall find life in them*. Make him to rejoice in the works of his hands, and in all his generation that he may render praise unto Thee, may sing, worship and glorify Thy great and exalted Name."

The exorcisms mean this: to face evil, to acknowledge its reality, to know its power, and to proclaim the power of God to destroy it. The exorcisms announce the forthcoming baptism as an act of victory.

"Then the priest turneth the person who is come to baptism to the west, unclad, unshod, and having his hands uplifted, and he says,

"Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his Angels, and all his works, and all his services, and all his pride?"

And the catechumen makes answer, or his sponsor for him, and says "I do."

The first act of the Christian life is a renunciation, a challenge. No one can be Christ's until he has, first, faced evil, and then become ready *to fight* it. How far is this spirit from the way in which we often proclaim, or to use a more modern

"...at the moment of baptism, through the hands of the priest, it lays hold upon a new human being who has just entered life..."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

term, "sell" Christianity today! Is it not usually presented as a comfort, help, release from tensions, a reasonable investment of time, energy and money? One has only to read—be it but once—the topic of the Sunday sermons announced in the Saturday newspapers, or the various syndicated "religious columns," to get the impression that "religion" is almost invariably presented as salvation from something—fear, frustration, anxiety—but never as the salvation of man and the world. How could we then speak of "fight" when the very set-up of our Churches must, by definition, convey the idea of softness, comfort, peace? How can the Church use again the military language, which was its own in the first days, when it still thought of itself as *militia Christi*? One does not see very well where and how "fight" would fit into the weekly bulletin of a suburban parish, among all kinds of counselling sessions, bake sales, and young adult get-togethers.

And yet it is, indeed, the necessary condition of the next and decisive step.

"Dost thou unite thyself unto Christ?" says the priest, when he has turned—has converted—the catechumen to the east.

Then comes the confession of faith, the confession by the catechumen of the faith of the Church, of his acceptance of this faith and obedience to it. And again it is difficult to convince a modern Christian that to be the life of the world, the Church must not "keep smiling" at the world, putting the "All Welcome" signs on the churches, and adjusting its language to that of the last best seller. The beginning of the Christian life—of the life in the Church—is humility, obedience, and discipline. The last act of preparation for baptism, therefore, is this order:

"Bow down also before Him." And the Catechumen answers, "I bow down before the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit."

* * *

Baptism proper begins with the blessing of the water. To understand, however, the meaning of water here, one must stop thinking of it as an isolated "matter" of the sacrament. Or rather, one must realize that water is the "matter" of sacrament, because it stands for the whole of matter, which is, in baptism, the sign and presence of the world itself. In the biblical "mythological" world view—which incidentally is more meaningful and philosophically consistent than the one offered by some "demythologizers"—water is the *prima materia*, the basic element of the world. It is the natural symbol of life, for there is no life without water, but it is also the symbol of destruction and death, and finally, it is the symbol of purification, for there is no cleanliness without it. In the Book of Genesis creation of life is presented as the liberation of the dry land from the water—as a victory of the Spirit of God over the waters—the chaos of nonexistence. In a way, then, creation is a transformation of water into life.

What is important for us, however, is that the baptismal water represents the matter of the cosmos, the world as life of man. And its blessing at the beginning of the baptismal rite acquires thus a truly cosmic and redemptive significance. God created the world and blessed it and gave it to man as his food and life, as the means of communion with Him. The blessing of water signifies the return or redemption of matter to this initial and essential meaning. By accepting the baptism of John, Christ sanctified the water—made it the water of purification and reconciliation with God. It was then, as Christ was coming out of the water, that the

"The beginning of the Christian life—of the life in the Church—is humility, obedience, and discipline."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

Epiphany—the new and redemptive manifestation of God—took place, and the Spirit of God, who at the beginning of creation "moved upon the face of the waters," made water—that is, the world—again into what He made it at the beginning.

To bless, as we already know, is to give thanks. In and through thanksgiving, man acknowledges the true nature of things he receives from God, and thus makes them to be what they are. We bless and sanctify things when we offer them to God in a eucharistic movement of our whole being. And as we stand before the water—before the cosmos, the matter given to us by God—it is an all-embracing eucharistic movement which gives the baptismal liturgy its true beginning.

"Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvellous are Thy works, and there is no word which sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders. For Thou, of thine own good will, hast brought into being all things which before were not, and by Thy might Thou upholdest creation, and by Thy providence Thou orderest the world.

Before Thee tremble all the Powers endowed with intelligence. The Sun singeth unto Thee. The moon glorifieth Thee. The stars meet together before Thy presence. The light obeyeth Thee. The deeps tremble before Thee.

Thou didst come and didst save us!

We confess Thy grace. We proclaim Thy mercy. We conceal not Thy gracious acts."

Once more the world is proclaimed to be what Christ revealed and made it to be—the gift of God to man, the means of man's communion with God. This water is manifested to us as "the grace of redemption," the remission of sins, the remedy of infirmities. "For we have called upon Thy Name, O Lord, and it is wonderful, and glorious, terrible to adversaries."

It is in this water that we now baptize—i.e., immerse—man, and this baptism is for him baptism into Christ (Rom 6:3). For the faith in Christ that led this man to baptism is precisely the certitude that Christ is the only true "content"—meaning being and end—of all that exists, the fullness of Him who fills all things. In faith the whole world becomes the sacrament of His presence, the means of life in Him. And water, the image and presence of the world, is truly the image and presence of Christ.

But "know you not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?" (Rom 6:3). Baptism—the gift of the "newness of life"—is announced as "the likeness of death." Why? Because the new life which Christ gives to those who believe in Him shone forth from the grave. This world rejected Christ, refused to see in Him its own life and fulfillment. And since it has no other life but Christ, by rejecting and killing Christ the world condemned itself to death. Its only ultimate reality is death, and none of the secular eschatologies in which men still put their hope can have any force against the simple statement of Tolstoy: "And after a stupid life there shall come a stupid death."

But the Christian is precisely the one who knows that the true reality of the world—of this world, of this life of ours—not of some mysterious "other" world—is in Christ; the Christian knows, rather, that Christ is this reality. In its self-sufficiency the world and all that exists in it has no meaning. And as long as we live after the fashion of this world, as long, in other words, as we make our life an end in itself, no meaning and no goal can stand, for they are dissolved in death. It is only when we give up freely, totally, unconditionally, the self-sufficiency of

"In faith the whole world becomes the sacrament of His presence, the means of life in Him. And water, the image and presence of the world, is truly the image and presence of Christ."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

our life, when we put all its meaning in Christ, that the "newness of life"—which means a new possession of the world—is given to us. The world then truly becomes the sacrament of Christ's presence, the growth of the Kingdom and of life eternal. For Christ, "being raised from the dead, dies no more; death has no more dominion over him." Baptism is thus the death of our selfishness and self-sufficient, and it is the "likeness of Christ's death" because Christ's death is this unconditional self-surrender. And as Christ's death "trampled down death" because in it the ultimate meaning and strength of life were revealed, so also does our dying with him unite us with the new "life in God."

The meaning of this "newness of life" is manifested when the newly baptized person is clothed, immediately after baptism, in a white garment. It is the garment of a king. Man is again king of creation. The world is again his life, and not his death, for he knows what to do with it. He is restored to the joy and power of true human nature.

* * *

In the Orthodox Church, what we call today the second sacrament of initiation—that of chrismation (or confirmation)—has always been an integral part of the baptismal liturgy. For it is not so much another sacrament as the very fulfillment of baptism, its "confirmation" by the Holy Spirit. It can be distinguished from baptism only insofar as life can be distinguished from birth. The Holy Spirit confirms the whole life of the Church because He is that life, the manifestation of the Church as the "world to come," as the joy and peace of the Kingdom. As institution, teaching, ritual, the Church is indeed not only in this world, but also of this world, a "part" of it. It is the Holy Spirit whose coming is the inauguration, the manifestation of the ultimate, of the "last things," who transforms the Church into the "sacrament" of the Kingdom, makes her life the presence, in this world, of the world to come.

Confirmation is thus the personal Pentecost of man, his entrance into the new life in the Holy Spirit, which is the true life of the Church. It is his ordination as truly and fully man, for to be fully man is precisely to belong to the Kingdom of God. And again, it is not his "soul" alone—his "spiritual" or "religious" life—that is thus confirmed, but the totality of his human being. His whole body is anointed, sealed, sanctified, dedicated to the new life: "The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," says the priest as he anoints the newly baptized, "on the brow, and on the eyes, and the nostrils, and the lips, and on both ears, and the breast and on the hands, and the feet." The whole man is now made the temple of God, and his whole life is from now on a liturgy. It is here, at this moment, that the pseudo-Christian opposition of the "spiritual" and the "material," the "sacred" and the "profane," the "religious" and the "secular" is denounced, abolished, and revealed as a monstrous lie about God and man and the world. The only true temple of God is man and through man the world. Each ounce of matter belongs to God and is to find in God its fulfillment. Each instant of time is God's time and is to fulfill itself as God's eternity. Nothing is "neutral." For the Holy Spirit, as a ray of light, as a smile of joy, has "touched" all things, all time—revealing all of them as precious stones of a precious temple.

"The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit," says the priest as he anoints the newly baptized, "on the brow, and on the eyes, and the nostrils, and the lips, and on both ears, and the breast and on the hands, and the feet."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

To be truly man means to be fully oneself. The confirmation is the confirmation of man in his own, unique "personality." It is, to use again the same image, his ordination to be himself, to become what God wants him to be, what He has loved in me from all eternity. It is the gift of vocation. If the Church is truly the "newness of life"—the world and nature as restored in Christ—it is not, or rather ought not be, a purely religious institution in which to be "pious," to be a member in "good standing," means leaving one's own personality at the entrance—in the "check room"—and replacing it with a worn-out, impersonal, neutral "good Christian" type personality. Piety in fact may be a very dangerous thing, a real opposition to the Holy Spirit who is the Giver of Life—of joy, movement and creativity—and not of the "good conscience" which looks at everything with suspicion, fear and moral indignation.

Confirmation is the opening of man to the wholeness of divine creation, to the true catholicity of life. This is the "wind;" the ruah of God entering our life, embracing it with fire and love, making us available for divine action, filling everything with joy and hope... .

* * *

We have already mentioned that in the past baptism took place on Easter—as part of the great Paschal celebration. Its natural fulfillment was thus, of course, the entrance of the newly baptized into the Eucharist of the Church, the sacrament of our participation in the Pascha of the Kingdom. For baptism opens the doors of the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit leads us into its joy and peace, and this means into the eucharistic fulfillment. Even today, baptism and confirmation are immediately followed by a procession—which now has the form of a circular procession around the baptismal font. Originally, however, it was the procession to the doors of the Church, the procession of the entrance. It is significant that the Introit hymn of the Paschal liturgy is the same which we sing as we lead the "neophyte" in the baptismal procession: "As many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. Alleluia!" It is baptism, it is the baptismal Pentecost that originates the Church as procession, as entrance, as ascension into the eternal Pascha of the Lord.

And then, for eight days—the image of the fullness of time—the newly baptized were in the church, and each of those days was celebrated as Easter. On the eighth day took place the rite of the washing off of the holy chrism, the cutting of hair, and the return into the world. From the fullness of time and joy into the time of the world as witnesses and bearers of that joy—such is the meaning of these rites, identical to the meaning of the eucharistic dismissal, "Let us go forth in peace." The visible signs of the sacrament are washed off—the "symbol" is to become reality, the life itself is now to be the sacramental sign, the fulfillment of the gift. And the cutting of hair—the last rite of the baptismal liturgy—is the sign that the life which now begins is a life of offering and sacrifice, the life constantly transformed into the liturgy—the work of Christ.

* * *

It is only in the light of baptism that we can understand the sacramental character attached by the Orthodox Church to penance. In its juridical deviation, sacramental theology explained this sacrament in terms of sheer "juridical" power to ab-

"For baptism opens the doors of the Kingdom and the Holy Spirit leads us into its joy and peace, and this means into the eucharistic fulfillment."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

solve sins, a power "delegated" by Christ to the priest. But this explanation has nothing to do with the original meaning of penance in the Church, and with its sacramental nature. The sacrament of forgiveness is baptism, not because it operates a juridical removal of guilt, but because it is baptism into Jesus Christ, who is the Forgiveness. The sin of all sins—the truly "original sin"—is not a transgression of rules, but, first of all, the deviation of man's love and his alienation from God.

That man prefers something—the world, himself—to God, this is the only real sin, and in it all sins become natural, inevitable. This sin destroys the true life of man. It deviates life's course from its only meaning and direction. And in Christ this sin is forgiven, not in the sense that God now has "forgotten" it and pays no attention to it, but because in Christ man has returned to God, and has returned to God because he has loved Him and found in Him the only true object of love and life. And God has accepted man and—in Christ—reconciled him with Himself. Repentance is thus the return of our love, of our life, to God, and this return is possible in Christ because He reveals to us the true Life and makes us aware of our exile and condemnation. To believe in Christ is to repent—to change radically the very "mind" of our life, to see it as sin and death. And to believe in Him is to accept the joyful revelation that in Him forgiveness and reconciliation have been given. In baptism both repentance and forgiveness find their fulfillment. In baptism man wants to die as a sinful man and he is given that death, and in baptism man wants the newness of life as forgiveness, and he is given it.

And yet sin is still in us and we constantly fall away from the new life we have received. The fight of the new Adam against the old Adam is a long and painful one, and what a naive oversimplification it is to think, as some do, that the "salvation" they experience in revivals and "decisions for Christ," and which result in moral righteousness, soberness and warm philanthropy, is the whole of salvation, is what God meant when He gave His Son for the life of the world. The one true sadness is "that of not being a saint," and how often the "moral" Christians are precisely those who never feel, never experience this sadness, because their own "experience of salvation," the feeling of "being saved" fills them with self-satisfaction; and whoever has been "satisfied" has received already his reward and cannot thirst and hunger for that total transformation and transfiguration of life which alone makes "saints."

Baptism is forgiveness of sins, not their removal. It introduces the sword of Christ into our life and makes it the real conflict, the inescapable pain and suffering of growth. It is indeed after baptism and because of it, that the reality of sin can be recognized in all its sadness, and true repentance becomes possible. Therefore, the whole of the Church is at the same time the gift of forgiveness, the joy of the "world to come;" and also and inescapably a constant repentance. The feast is impossible without the fast, and the fast is precisely repentance and return, the saving experience of sadness and exile. The Church is the gift of the Kingdom—yet it is this very gift that makes obvious our absence from the Kingdom, our alienation from God. It is repentance that takes us again and again into the joy of the Paschal banquet, but it is that joy which reveals to us our sinfulness and puts us under judgment.

The sacrament of penance is not, therefore, a sacred and juridical "power" given by God to men. It is the power of baptism as it lives in the Church. From baptism

"To believe in Christ is to repent—to change radically the very "mind" of our life, to see it as sin and death. And to believe in Him is to accept the joyful revelation that in Him forgiveness and reconciliation have been given."

Of Water and the Spirit

By Father Alexander Schmemmann

it receives its sacramental character. In Christ all sins are forgiven once and for all, for He is Himself the forgiveness of sins, and there is no need for any "new" absolution. But there is indeed the need for us who constantly leave Christ and excommunicate ourselves from His life, to return to Him, to receive again and again the gift which in Him has been given once and for all. And the absolution is the sign that this return has taken place and has been fulfilled. Just as each Eucharist is not a "repetition" of Christ's supper but our ascension, our acceptance into the same and eternal banquet, so also the sacrament of penance is not a repetition of baptism, but our return to the "newness of life" which God gave to us once and for all.



“Baptism is forgiveness of sins, not their removal.”

One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism

by deacon Maylanne Maybee



When my brother was baptized at our Anglican parish church in the mid 1950s in Ottawa I was pre-school age, but I well remember the event. It took place on a Saturday morning in October, possibly the Thanksgiving weekend, when close friends and visiting members of my family could be present. It was a mid-morning service of Morning Prayer, recited while we huddled around the font, where my brother, dressed in a white christening gown, was baptized with water poured from a shell. The gospel was about Jesus letting the little children come to him. The words were about the mystical washing away of sin. The whole thing may have taken an hour. For my family and me, it was a private event celebrating the birth of a new child.

Last Easter, more than half a century later, I served as deacon at the Easter Vigil at my parish church in Winnipeg. The service took place in the late evening. Three families brought infants or small children to be baptized. The congregation was small and scattered compared to Sundays, there was no choir and minimal singing (they were saving their voices for Sunday). The families huddled around the font where the candidates were baptized with water from a shell. This time the event was more public. The readings were about the crossing of the red sea, Ezekiel and the dry bones, Mary weeping at the tomb. The words were about being made one with Christ in the waters of baptism, sharing in his death and resurrection. When it came to the baptism, it was not the godparents alone but the entire congregation who joined in the words of the Baptismal Covenant – the recital of the Apostles' Creed and the affirmation of five baptismal promises.

In spite of marked differences, in both services those baptized were infants or small children; the congregation took a back seat to the families of the baptized; the ceremony took place apart from the more fully attended Sunday service; the use of water was minimal.

In the course of the last half of the last century, I am aware and have been part of a deep re-thinking of baptism in the Anglican Church of Canada and in wider ecumenical circles. Yet for all the efforts that have been made to revive the more ancient customs of baptism, I had to admit that for me, the liturgy itself had not changed that significantly. We were using new words, but following old actions.

At the time of my brother's baptism, the prevalent teaching was about regeneration – about being spiritually reborn, removed by God's grace from of our sinful nature and made members of Christ. The Prayer Book Catechism taught us that in baptism we are made "a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." We were taught that our Godfathers and Godmothers on our behalf, "did promise and vow... to renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, and all sinful desires of the flesh."

Candidates for baptism were assumed to be infants or children, baptism was assumed to be about naming a child, choosing godparents, renouncing the devil, worldly pomp and sinful desires, and being made new. Though grounded in the traditions and doctrine of the Church, baptisms, or "christenings" as we called them, were often regarded and practised as a cultural event, a way of celebrating

Maylanne Maybee is an Anglican deacon. For the past five and a half years she has served as Principal of the Centre for Christian Studies, an Anglican-United Church theological school based in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She has worked for the Anglican Church of Canada in the areas of peace, justice and ecology, and staffed an ecumenical network of inner city parishes and organizations across Canada. She edited *All Who Minister: New Ways of Serving God's People*, a collection of case studies of innovative models of ministry.

One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism *deacon Maylanne Maybee*

a birth, rather than a rebirth. Adult baptism was regarded as an exception, for which provision was made in an alternative ritual of Baptism for “such as are of Riper Years.”

In the 1950s, a gradual awakening to new directions in liturgy was taking place among Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. The renewal movement gained momentum among Anglicans after the Lambeth Conference in 1958 (bringing together bishops from the global Anglican Communion) and the 1963 Anglican Congress in Vancouver. Liturgical scholars were intent on recovering the richness of the patristic, pre-Constantinian model of making disciples and baptizing them into Christ's Body, the Church. They were also intent on making adaptations to accommodate contemporary conditions and changing perceptions of mission and pastoral care.

The 1979 *Book of Common Prayer of The Episcopal Church*, the *World Council of Churches 1982 ecumenical statement on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM), and the 1985 *Book of Alternative Services of the Anglican Church of Canada*, were all significant milestones in this renewed understanding of baptism.

Together they continue to have profound implications for the practice of liturgy and understanding of ministry in the Anglican Church and elsewhere. The singular focus on baptism as regeneration was expanded to include other images and teachings from scripture, as set forth in the BEM document of 1982.

- Participation in Christ's death and resurrection – passing through the waters of baptism and emerging into a new life in Christ.
- Conversion, forgiveness, and cleansing – overcoming sin and death, continuing to grow into the fullness of life in Christ; being given infinite second chances;
- The gift of the Spirit - assurance of God's continuing action in our lives through prayer and forgiveness;
- The sign of the Kingdom – a sacramental affirmation that we are beloved children of God.

As a young adult attending chapel at university, the faith of my childhood and adolescence was rekindled by these changes in the familiar rituals and words of the Book of Common Prayer. I loved the new words of the Eucharistic prayer and was transported by my first experience of the Easter Vigil in the mid 1970s. The ritual and music were new to me and wonderful. They evoked a memory my mother had shared of attending an Orthodox Easter liturgy in her childhood, where candles were lit and “Christ is risen!” was proclaimed. I felt I was participating in a new ritual with ancient roots and wide usage among different kinds of Christians.

There continues, however, to be tension and polarization among Canadian Anglicans regarding the old and new rites of baptism and their underlying theologies, for both forms are kept alive in two parallel prayer books that are both authorized

“I felt I was participating in a new ritual with ancient roots and wide usage among different kinds of Christians.”

One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism *deacon Maylanne Maybee*

for usage. On the one hand, the “classical” or “orthodox” view of Anglicanism set forth in the 1969 Book of Common Prayer emphasizes the regenerative aspect of baptism. On the other, the “modern” or “liberal” view set forth in the 1985 Book of Alternative Services (Anglican Church of Canada), emphasizes baptism as full initiation into the Body of Christ.

The biggest innovation in the American and Canadian prayer book revisions was to expand the baptismal promises into a Baptismal Covenant which included the profession of the Apostles' Creed and a series of solemn affirmations by the candidate: (1) to continue faithfully in the worship and faith of the Christian community; (2) to resist evil and be ready to repent and return to that community; (3) to proclaim the gospel in word and deed; (4) to seek and serve Christ in all persons; and (5) to do justice, seek peace, and respect every human being. Recently a sixth has been added, (6) to safeguard the integrity of God's creation, and to respect, sustain and renew the life of the earth.

The Covenant seems to express in more fulsome and contemporary language what had been asked in previous prayer books: “Dost thou believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith, as contained in the Apostle's Creed? Wilt thou then obediently keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same wasp all the days of thy life?”

Those who hold to the older baptismal service see the renunciation of sin and profession of belief followed by God's action of regeneration as primary. For them, the action is initiated by God and the person receives, not the other way around. In this view, the new Baptismal Covenant puts too much emphasis on the action of the person being baptized, making God the receiver of action rather than the doer.

The tension has played out over different issues and in different ways. The idea of baptism as full initiation into the body of Christ is redefining our understanding of what church is, what ministry is, and how we as Christians should relate to context and culture. If baptism is full initiation, what is the meaning of confirmation? If baptism is full initiation into the Body of Christ, what does that mean for ordination?

The new rite of baptism has also raised significant questions of inclusion. If baptism is about incorporation into the Body of Christ, on what grounds would a person be excluded from it or other sacraments? Just as the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, “what is to prevent me from being baptized?” the church is asking, what is to prevent those who are judged or rejected because of gender or sexual orientation from being baptized? And if baptized, what is to prevent them from being admitted to other sacraments such as marriage or ordination?

As one who was baptized according to the old rite and grew up keeping pace with the newer rite, I have found the terms of the Covenant a compass for how to live my life in God. It is a compass for reflecting on what I believe and know about God, and a compass for living day to day within the apostolic tradition of the

“The idea of baptism as full initiation into the body of Christ is redefining our understanding of what church is, what ministry is, and how we as Christians should relate to context and culture..”

One Anglican's Perspective on Baptism *deacon Maylanne Maybee*

Church, in communion with Christ and with one another, and in the world in all its sinful brokenness. The concept of “baptismal ministry” has allowed me to see myself as fully participant in the Church’s ministry as a member of the priestly People of God first, and a deacon second.

I believe it is important to pay attention to the tension between the “old” and “new” rites of baptism and seek to be in dialogue about them. Regrettably, in these days of blogs and list serves, the different camps are becoming more fixed in their differences. There is a tendency to reinforce one point of view for the benefit of those who already agree, while expressing disagreement with those who hold a different position in terms that are all too often uncharitable and disrespectful.

In my better moments, I prefer to think that among Anglicans as among other Christians, there are those who have received one kind of teaching and those who have received another. There are differences and contradictions, but the deeper truth is that we belong to Christ in whom we are learning to find our deepest unity.

As I was walking home from that Easter service last year, I passed the neighbouring Roman Catholic Church, lit up from within, and decided to join their Vigil while it was still in progress. The church was full. I arrived while the baptismal candidates were processing toward the font – five or six adults, most appeared to be under 40, but no infants or children. The font was a shallow pool with steps, and each was baptized by full immersion, followed by abundant chrismation of the whole head. While they disappeared to dry off and change (a process which seemed interminable!), the congregation sang litanies and hymns. When they reappeared there was warm applause and a joyful celebration of the Eucharist.

The experience made me long for intercommunion within and among our churches. While there is a growing practice of ecumenical observances on Good Friday, what I would love to see is the possibility of holding joint liturgies of the Easter Vigil. In the meantime, I believe it was the suggestion of the Lutheran theologian Gordon Lathrop that churches should make a practice of inviting representatives of neighbouring denominations to be present at baptisms, in order to bear witness to the unity for which we long and for which baptism is a foretaste.

It is well to remember that “in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.” (1 Corinthians 12:13). In the end, baptism is a sacrament of unity, a truth that is being sorely tested in our time. I believe that the ecumenical contribution of Anglicanism is our unique struggle to stay in love and charity with one another in spite of profound differences, but ones, we pray, that do not ultimately threaten our communion in God’s saving act in the risen Christ, our baptismal grafting into the Body of Christ, and our participation in the living dance of the Trinity.

“I believe it is important to pay attention to the tension between the “old” and “new” rites of baptism and seek to be in dialogue about them.”



Child Dedication in the Unitarian Universalist Tradition *By Rev. Diane Rollert, Minister*

La plupart des traditions religieuses incluent une façon d'accueillir les enfants dans le monde. What matters above all when welcoming a child into the family and into the wider world is to make an immediate connection to the parents' understanding of that which is holy. Among some Christians the tradition is baptism, among many Jews and Muslims the tradition is a naming ceremony.

Dans notre tradition unitarienne et universaliste, la cérémonie d'accueil a pour but d'accueillir un enfant dans la famille de l'humanité et dans une communauté attentionnée. In the Unitarian Universalist tradition we do not practice baptism. Although our roots are Christian and although a simple form of baptism was practiced in our distant past, today we celebrate the birth of a child by welcoming them into the community and into the family of humanity. We call this ceremony a "child dedication." In French, we may call it "*une cérémonie d'accueil d'un enfant*" or "*une cérémonie du don de nom.*" It is a rite that signifies our hope that the beautiful spark born within each of us will be kindled and burn brightly throughout the child's life.

By dedicating a child in the Unitarian Universalist tradition, we covenant with the child and the child's family to be present in their lives. We pledge our love and care as a blessing that the entire community bestows upon the child. We have no set ritual, though most of our congregations have long held traditions. In my community, I use a ceremony that I tailor to each child's unique situation. I ask parents what dreams and blessings they have for their child and I weave those wishes into the ceremony. Sometimes a family has a very specific ritual in mind. Many times the parents come from different religious traditions that they need to reconcile, or they have had no religious upbringing at all. In some cases, the grandparents have strong religious affiliations while the parents do not. Frequently, parents will tell me that they are "spiritual but not religious." They know that they want to do something to mark this precious new life, but they are unsure of what to do.

In each case, I help the parents explore their desires and concerns. In a few cases, this has meant encouraging parents to seek out a baptism in their tradition of origin, especially if parents come to realize that the sacrament of baptism is important to members of the family. In most cases, parents are either members of our community who want to dedicate their children within our church, or they are parents who have come to us seeking a way to mark the birth of a child that is an alternative to the tradition of baptism. In general, my preference is to conduct child dedications as part of a Sunday service as an rite of dedication within the congregation. The most important moment in the service is when the congregation makes its commitment to support the child as they grow. It is a beautiful and deeply significant covenant between our religious community, the child and the family.

At times, I am approached by parents who would like to have a private ceremony, either at the church or at home. These private ceremonies may be conducted by me or one of our lay celebrants whom we train as lay chaplains. In October 2015, I conducted just such a private child dedication for a beautiful young couple and

"Among some Christians the tradition is baptism, among many Jews and Muslims the tradition is a naming ceremony."

their first child. After the event, they published this article in Huffington. I think these words explain our tradition well, as well as the reasons that parents seek our assistance when they wish to welcome their child to the world as an alternative to traditional baptism.



“The most important moment in the service is when the congregation makes its commitment to support the child as they grow.”

Par quoi remplacer le baptême?

par Miguel Tremblay

***Cet article a été publié dans
Québec Huffington Post,
le 1 novembre 2015***

Ma conjointe et moi désirions célébrer la naissance de notre premier enfant en organisant une cérémonie d'accueil laïque. Ce moment se voulait l'occasion de souligner l'arrivée parmi nous d'un nouvel être, que nous souhaitions présenter à sa communauté, à nos amis et à nos familles qui, habitant sur deux continents différents, se verraient pour la première fois rassemblées. Ma conjointe n'est pas baptisée, et pour ma part, bien que baptisé, je suis agnostique. Il n'était dès lors pas question d'opter pour un baptême comme cérémonie d'accueil pour notre enfant. Mais alors comment fêter cet événement de vie de manière solennelle?

Parmi nos critères, nous désirions une institution qui soit conforme à nos valeurs, à nos croyances, et qui pourrait nous recevoir dans un lieu symbolique. En plus d'une fête, nous voulions que cette cérémonie soit accompagnée de rites que nous n'aurions pas inventés de toute pièce, qui auraient un sens, et qui seraient menés par un célébrant.

Une lettre dans Le Devoir décrivant un questionnaire analogue fut publiée alors que ma conjointe et moi tenions ces réflexions. Je partageai l'article sur mon mur Facebook, ainsi que nos interrogations, et un ami nous suggéra l'Église unitarienne universaliste de Montréal. N'ayant jamais eu vent de cette Église - la myriade d'églises anglo-saxonnes a toujours été plus ou moins un mystère pour moi -, nous avons exploré leur site web pour constater que cette église semblait en effet partager nos valeurs.

Curieux, nous rencontrâmes la responsable francophone de l'église et assistâmes à quelques célébrations du dimanche à leur lieu de culte. Nous sûmes alors que nous avions trouvé le bon endroit. En cette église, tout le monde est le bienvenu: croyants de toutes religions, agnostiques ou athéistes, hétérosexuels, homosexuels ou transgenres. Des mariages gais y sont célébrés et le drapeau arc-en-ciel flotte dans l'entrée. De plus, la notion d'environnement est présente, tant comme valeur dans les discours des cérémonies auxquelles nous avons assistées, que dans l'enceinte de l'église (aucune vaisselle jetable n'est permise dans la salle de réception). Il y a des groupes de réflexion sur divers sujets; lors d'une cérémonie à laquelle nous avons assisté, les gens étaient invités à un groupe ayant pour mission de venir en aide concrètement aux réfugiés syriens en Hongrie. Un des aspects qui tient à cœur aux universalistes est de ne se soumettre à aucun dogme, mais d'exercer plutôt notre libre choix, de se construire un esprit critique et de partager nos réflexions. Finalement, le célébrant était une célébrante, les femmes ayant le même statut que les hommes dans cette église. Nous étions séduits.

***“Un des
aspects qui
tient au cœur
des
universalistes
...
de se
construire un
esprit critique
et de partager
nos
réflexions.”***

Par quoi remplacer le baptême?

par Miguel Tremblay

Cette église, fondée au XVI^e siècle et ayant siège à Montréal depuis 1842, est à Montréal de tradition anglo-saxonne. Les Québécois francophones étant restés catholiques pratiquants jusqu'à récemment, et utilisant encore aujourd'hui des églises catholiques pour les mariages et baptêmes, il y a une minorité de membres francophones dans cette église. Cela dit, ce nombre est croissant et un effort notable est fait vers le bilinguisme.

Convaincus que nous avons trouvé un lieu de culte correspondant à nos valeurs, nous avons rencontré la révérende à deux reprises pour concevoir la cérémonie de notre petite fille. La révérende nous a invités à nous questionner sur nos valeurs, sur ce qu'on nous voulions transmettre à notre enfant. À partir de nos demandes, de ce que nous souhaitions mettre de l'avant, elle nous a présenté la « cérémonie du don du nom » qui est souvent pratiquée en pareille occasion, et nous a proposé deux rites: un premier pour la parrain et la marraine, et un second pour les grands-parents. Nous lui avons fait parvenir les discours que nous avons rédigés autour de la signification des prénoms de notre enfant, et elle a harmonieusement intégré notre message, notre vision, pour élaborer et animer la cérémonie.

Suite à la cérémonie d'accueil, alors que nous partageons un repas avec nos invités dans la salle communautaire attenante (dans de vraies assiettes en faïence), nous avons reçu beaucoup de bons mots au sujet de la célébration. Nos amis ont trouvé la cérémonie touchante, émouvante. Ils ont apprécié que chaque parole ait eu un sens, par opposition aux récits abscons de passages de la Bible lors des célébrations catholiques. Nos invités ont aussi été séduits par le charisme et la douceur de la révérende.

Ma conjointe et moi sommes comblés de la manière dont nous avons pu accueillir notre petite fille à l'Église unitarienne universaliste de Montréal. Il peut être angoissant de trouver un rite remplaçant celui utilisé depuis des siècles par nos aïeux, de rompre, dans mon cas, la chaîne catholique. C'est pourquoi nous avons voulu partager notre expérience. Il existe des alternatives au rite du baptême catholique, et celle-ci est la nôtre.

When I came to Quebec to serve the Unitarian Church of Montreal, I brought with me a child dedication ceremony that had been passed on to me by ministers I had served with for years in Concord, Massachusetts. The origin of the words has been lost in the sands of time, and over the years I have reworked and revised the original form. Today, I am most likely to use a bilingual version, as I serve a fairly bilingual community. In this ceremony, we use water as a symbol of purity and a fresh cut, thornless white rose to symbolize the child's unfolding life. Here are some excerpts.

"In this ceremony, we use water as a symbol of purity and a fresh cut, thornless white rose to symbolize the child's unfolding life."

Exemple d'une cérémonie d'accueil d'un enfant dans la tradition unitarienne universaliste

À l'enfant : *Tu es arrivée avec de la poussière d'étoiles dans tes cheveux, avec le mouvement des planètes dans ton sang, ton cœur battant au rythme des saisons de l'éternité, avec une lueur dans tes yeux comme la lumière du soleil.*

Your parents have brought you here to be dedicated, to celebrate the joy they have and to count themselves blessed that you are a part of their family. As you grow, may you come to love what it is that your parents and this community of Unitarian Universalists value. May you learn to count the number of your days, to weigh their meaning, and to gather into your mind the wisdom of your ancestors.

Puisses-tu apprendre à savoir pourquoi nous disons d'une chose qu'elle est bonne et d'une autre qu'elle est mauvaise, à chérir la beauté, la miséricorde et la justice du plus profond de ton être.

To the parents: As parents of this child, will you please repeat this pledge after me:

We pledge to help you to realize the best that is in you. We will seek, to the best of our ability, to instruct you by our teaching and by our example. We promise to love you with an unselfish love.

Nous nous engageons à t'aider à réaliser le meilleur de toi-même. Nous nous efforcerons du mieux que nous pouvons de t'instruire par notre enseignement et par notre exemple. Nous nous engageons à t'aimer d'un amour désintéressé.

To the grandparents: Dear grandparents, this is a special day for you. As this child grows, she will need your wisdom, counsel, and love. To the best of your ability, will you lovingly give your support to your granddaughter and to her parents, as you forge this bond as a family? Please say "We will."

Aux gardiens : *Les parents de cet enfant vous ont demandé de jouer un rôle spécial dans sa vie, d'être son parrain et sa marraine, ses deuxième parents en cas de besoin. Acceptez-vous ce rôle? Si oui, dites s'il-vous-plaît: « Nous acceptons ».*

To the surrounding family: Will you, the surrounding family, to the best of your ability, supplement this child's parents' love and care with your support and encouragement? If so, please say, "We will."

To the child: Je te consacre au service du bien, de la beauté et de la vérité. I touch you with this water, which is a symbol of purity, and with this rose which is a symbol of your unfolding life, sur ton front, tes yeux, tes lèvres, ton cœur et tes mains, that your thoughts (*tes pensées*), your vision, your speech (*ton langage*), your love (*ton amour*) and your generosity (*ta générosité*), may be dedicated to the care of the earth and its people. May all that is beautiful and good within you continue to strengthen your whole life long.

"Your parents have brought you here to be dedicated, to celebrate the joy they have and to count themselves blessed that you are a part of their family."

Exemple d'une cérémonie d'accueil d'un enfant dans la tradition unitarienne universaliste

Que tout ce qui est beau et bon en toi continue de se fortifier tout au long de ta vie!

To the Congregation: A dedication in the Unitarian Universalist tradition is a covenant, a promise of love and care that the entire community bestows upon a child.

To the children of the congregation: Will you promise to help this child as she grows, to be her friend, to play with her and to help her learn by your good example?

Promettez-vous d'aider cet enfant dans son développement, d'être ses amis, de jouer avec elle et de l'aider à apprendre en suivant votre bon exemple?

We will! *Nous le ferons !*

Do you, as this religious community called the Unitarian Church of Montreal, take upon yourselves the privilege and the responsibility of helping to nurture the character and spirit of this child?

Congregational Response:

We rejoice with this family in the promise of this child. We pledge to her now and always the love and care of this community.

Nous nous réjouissons avec cette famille du potentiel de cet enfant. Nous lui promettons, maintenant et toujours, l'amour et l'attention de cette communauté.

[In this moment, I usually carry the child in my arms around the congregation so that she can be seen and greeted by everyone. Everyone smiles, and the child almost never cries or fuses, mesmerized by the many beautiful beaming and joyful faces they see.]

Bénédictio : Source of Love that connects us all, bless this beautiful child, this day and all the days of her life. May she be blessed with her parents, wishes to see the beauty in all people, to find the confidence to speak her mind, to love herself, trust herself, and to find her passion in life.

Qu'elle puisse vivre les vœux de ses parents de voir la beauté dans tous les êtres, d'avoir la force de dire ce qu'elle pense, de s'aimer elle-même, de se faire confiance, et de trouver sa passion dans la vie.

Ainsi soit-il! So may it be!

"A dedication in the Unitarian Universalist tradition is a covenant, a promise of love and care that the entire community bestows upon a child."



What Baptism means to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ?

By Jay and Fatima Glowa



For me Baptism was a wonderful beginning to my spiritual journey. I truly believed that as I entered the waters of Baptism that I would be washed clean my sins and would be witnessing that I was willing to follow Jesus Christ. I felt different after I was Baptised, I felt that I was forgiven and that I was capable of being a better, kinder and more loving person. I believed that He was my Redeemer, that He redeemed me from my sins and that he died for me. My Baptism was an acknowledgement of this faith and belief in Him, and an outward demonstration that I would strive to follow His teachings for the rest of my life.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints believe that Baptism by immersion in water by one having authority is the first saving ordinance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is a necessary ordinance for an individual to become a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) and to receive eternal salvation. All who seek eternal life must follow the example of the Savior by being baptized and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost. Jesus himself taught this when he said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (John 3:5)

Members of our Church are baptized by immersion following the example of Christ himself. This method of baptism was reinforced by the modern day prophet, Joseph Smith as recorded in LDS scripture, “Then shall he immerse him or her in the water, and come forth again out of the water“. (D&C 20:73–74). The Apostle Paul taught that being immersed in water and coming out again is symbolic of death, burial, and resurrection. After baptism we start a new life. Paul said: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. “ ([Romans 6:3–5](#)). LDS members believe that baptism is symbolic of a new birth in Christ.

Our members believe that baptism involves making a covenant, or sacred promise with God. At baptism, members promise to obey the commandments of God, serve him, and follow the example of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Church members believe that they renew this covenant each time they partake of the sacrament during Sunday worship services. We also believe that the blessings received by making this Covenant with God include the constant companionship of the Holy Ghost, the remission of sins, and the privilege of being spiritually reborn.

The LDS Church does not believe in the baptism of infants. From latter-day revelation, we are taught that little children are redeemed through the mercy of Jesus Christ. Our second article of faith states that men are accountable for their own sins and not for the transgression of Adam and Eve. (See Article of Faith 2) As such, individuals can only be baptized when they are capable of understanding and obeying the promises they make in connection with the covenant of baptism. Children can be baptized after the age of 8.

As members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints we try our best to follow Jesus Christ and His example. Baptism is an important beginning in our

*“For me
Baptism was
a wonderful
beginning to
my spiritual
journey.”*

*What Baptism means to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints ?
By Jay and Fatima Glowa*

commitment to do so. It's symbolism teaches us that we can begin again, that we can be washed clean of our past and that we can try to live his commandments. We believe it is important that we should continue to try to improve and that through the Atonement of Christ we can repent of our sins and through faith in Him we can change our hearts. We partake of the Sacrament or Lord's Supper each week and renew the promises we made at baptism. Our baptism confirms our desire to take upon us the name of Christ and to try to love Him and serve our fellow men. To me Baptism is the beginning of a life long journey and commitment to try to become a disciple of Jesus Christ and to live his teachings.



"It's symbolism teaches us that we can begin again, that we can be washed clean of our past and that we can try to live Christ's commandments."



Nouvelles du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme

Réaction du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme à l'attaque contre le Centre Culturel islamique de Québec, le 29 janvier 2017

Le Centre canadien d'œcuménisme (CCO), par ses représentants Paul Paradis, président du Conseil d'administration, et Adriana Bara, directrice générale, expriment leurs plus sincères condoléances aux victimes et à leurs familles au sujet des attaques contre le Centre Culturel Islamique de Québec, le 29 janvier 2017. Nous condamnons cette horrible attaque, pleurons avec la communauté musulmane et prions pour les victimes et leurs familles.

Nous rejetons la violence, en particulier lorsqu'elle est perpétrée au nom de la religion. Nous ne pouvons pas et ne voulons pas vivre dans la peur, le désespoir et les préjugés. Nous restons ainsi en solidarité avec tous les groupes qui construisent des ponts de compréhension et de paix par le dialogue interreligieux respectueux et pacifiste.

CCE's Reaction to the Shooting at the Centre culturel islamique de Québec

The Canadian Centre for Ecumenism (CCE) by its representatives : Paul Paradis, President of Board of Directors and Dr. Adriana Bara, Executive Director of the CCE, express their deepest condolences to the victims and their families of the attacks on the Centre culturel islamique de Quebec City, Canada, on January 29, 2017. We condemn this horrible attack, grieve with the Muslim community and pray for the victims and their families.

We reject violence, in particular when it is perpetrated in the name of religion. We cannot and do not want to live in fear, despair, and prejudice. And so, we stay in solidarity with all the groups who build bridges of understanding and peaceful interreligious dialogue.



Nouvelles du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme



La Grande célébration œcuménique a eu lieu cette année le 21 janvier à l'Église Luthérienne Saint-John. À la célébration ont participé : l'Archevêque Mgr. Christian Lépine- Église Catholique de Montréal; l'Évêque Mary Irwin-Gibson-Église Anglicane de Montréal; l'Évêque Ioan Casian-Église Orthodox Romainian de Montréal et les prêtres : Pasteur Eric Dyck-St. John's Lutheran Church; Pasteur Richard Bonetto-Presbyterian Church of Montréal; Pasteur Rosemary Lambie-United Church of Canada; Rev. Nicholas Pang-Représentatif œcuménique Anglican; Diacre Brian Cordeiro- Église St. Luc Catholique. Plus de 200 personnes ont prié ensemble pour la paix, la solidarité et des relations harmonieuses. Le diacre Brian Cordeiro a démontré dans son homélie l'importance du dialogue œcuménique.



Nouvelles du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme

Nancy Ingram, dirigeante de l' Imani Family Gospel Choir a dirigé une chorale œcuménique, réunie pour l'événement, qui a chanté pour démolir les murs qui nous séparent. M. Joel Peterson- Organiste de l'église luthérienne a contribué à l'atmosphère solennelle, ainsi que la chorale Harmoniam avec Pamon Jena de Madagascar-Nonot, dirigée par Randriaharifara. Les étudiants du Centre Benoît-Lacroix ont démolit un mur symbolique, construit des préjugés pour ériger à sa place une croix des valeurs et des vertus, couronnée par « l'amour ».



La célébration a continué avec une rencontre informelle autour des bouchées au sous-sol de l'église.

L'équipe du Centre canadien d'œcuménisme remercie la paroisse Saint-John et le père Eric Dyck-St. John's Lutheran Church pour leur hospitalité. Nous remercions aussi tous les membres du Comité organisateur, et tous les bénévoles impliqués à l'événement.



Le Centre canadien d'œcuménisme et les organisateurs ont exprimé leur désir de rassembler l'année prochaine plusieurs groupes œcuméniques de Montréal et les environs pour une Célébration commune.

Autres célébrations de la Semaine de la prière pour l'unité des Chrétiennes

Chaque année, les chrétiens des tous les horizons dans le monde entier se réunissent pour une prière pour l'unité chrétienne. C'est un moment de partage organisé conjointement par des communautés sœurs pour fraterniser, mais aussi pour implorer Jésus : « Père que tous soient un comme toi et moi nous sommes un ».

C'est aussi une occasion spéciale pour IKTUS, groupe œcuménique à l'UQAM de se rappeler l'essence même de son existence : « être un lieu d'accueil chaleureux, simple, spontané qui favorise la rencontre, l'échange et l'engagement non dogmatique ou fondamentaliste pour vivre dans le respect des convictions de chacun. »

Ainsi quatre communautés : Église unie Saint-Jean, Camino de Emaús, IKTUS et l'Église FJKM-Église de Jésus Christ à Madagascar, nous nous sommes donnés rendez-vous le dimanche 22 janvier 2017. Rassemblés par des chants, des textes bibliques, la prière, le témoignage et le partage fraternel, nous nous sommes unis aux célébrations partout dans le monde où des chrétiens de tous horizons prient pour l'UNITÉ CHRÉTIENNE.

Jorge Falla Luque, IKTUS-UQAM



Une prière œcuménique à l'occasion du cinquième centenaire de la Réforme s'est tenue le 6 décembre 2016 dans l'église Saint-Thomas de Strasbourg en présence des nombreux responsables d'Églises. Les prédications ont été assurées par Mgr Vincent Jordy, président du Conseil pour l'unité des chrétiens et les relations avec le judaïsme de la Conférence des évêques et le Pasteur Laurent Schlumberger, président du Conseil national de l'Église protestante unie de France.

[Lire la prédication de Mgr Jordy](#)

[Lire la prédication du pasteur Schlumberger](#)

(Source : Unité des Chrétiens)



*Vigile de prières,
suite à l'attentat de la mosquée de Québec
par Eileen Perry, responsable des communications
au diocèse de Gaspé*

Plus d'une centaine de personnes étaient présentes à la veillée de prière œcuménique du 31 janvier à la cathédrale du Christ-Roi de Gaspé en soutien aux victimes de l'attentat à la mosquée de Ste-Foy à Québec.

Cette célébration de la parole était présidée par Mgr Gaétan Proulx, O.S.M. et Révérende Cynthia Patterson, prêtre anglicane. Chandelles à la main, tous les participants ont prié et chanté en solidarité, afin d'offrir un témoignage de paix dans notre monde.



*Mouvement des Focolari. Ensemble pour réfléchir sur
la valeur de la vie face à la souffrance
Par Umberto Giannettoni*

Soixante hommes et femmes, membres du Mouvement des Focolari en provenance du Québec, de Dallas, de Denver et d'Atlanta, se sont rencontrés à la citadelle « Mariapolis Luminosa » à Hyde Park, NY, du 23 au 27 février dernier, pour un approfondissement spirituel et culturel de la valeur de la souffrance. Nous savons que la culture actuelle cherche souvent à donner des réponses qui visent, le plus possible, à éliminer la souffrance à tout prix. Les solutions qu'elle propose tendent surtout à l'éradiquer de l'existence humaine, qu'il s'agisse de la douleur physique, psychologique, économique ou morale que l'individu considère comme insupportable.

Les risques d'aller trop loin dans ce sens sont très présents et sont souvent accompagnés de lois toujours plus permissives et libératrices.

Il est vrai que la recherche pour soulager la souffrance humaine, quelle qu'elle soit, est un engagement scientifique de la société à encourager et à soutenir. Cependant, les penseurs modernes, appuyés par les moyens techniques actuels, oublient parfois de reconnaître à la souffrance sa valeur naturelle intrinsèque, et par conséquent, considèrent l'existence humaine uniquement sous les aspects étroitement liés à la qualité de la vie, voire la santé et l'efficacité.

L'idée de vivre intensément sa vie en tant que valeur inestimable, quels que soient l'âge et les conditions, est désormais à son déclin.

Les thèmes et les échanges au cours de la rencontre ont considéré les divers points suivants :

- La vie et la souffrance des personnes de tous âges et de toutes conditions;
- La valeur de la souffrance morale ou physique;
- La sagesse millénaire des hommes, face à la souffrance;
- Les témoignages d'innombrables personnes partout dans le monde;
- Les souffrances de Jésus qui n'a pas refusé de les accepter et de les vivre jusqu'à son offrande sur la croix.

Le cri de Jésus sur la croix : « Mon Dieu, mon Dieu pourquoi m'as-tu abandonné » a aidé les participants à comprendre que ce cri donne la lumière et l'espérance à tous les cris de douleur et de séparations qui s'élèvent chaque jour de la terre vers le Ciel. Cette dernière réflexion a été accompagnée de partages tirés d'un livre de Chiara Lubich, fondatrice du Mouvement des Focolari : « Le Cri » publié récemment par Nouvelle Cité de France.



Déclaration commune des Églises Common Declaration of the Churches

*UNIS par leur baptême dans une même foi en Jésus-Christ et une même espérance, les chrétiens du Canada, à l'occasion de l'Exposition universelle de Montréal en 1967, ont voulu exprimer leur amour à leurs frères de toute la terre et répondre aux angoisses et aux espérances de notre siècle par une proclamation commune de l'Évangile. Au-delà de déchirures imposées par l'histoire, les chrétiens du monde entier se réjouiront d'apprendre la décision à laquelle nous sommes parvenus après plusieurs mois de rencontres et d'échanges : nous érigerons ensemble un **Pavillon Chrétien** qui puisse proclamer au monde que Dieu s'est fait Chair pour habiter parmi nous et qu'Il est présent à tout ce qui se passe sur la « Terre des Hommes ».*

*JOINED together through their baptism in a same faith in Jesus Christ and in a same hope, the Christians of Canada, on the occasion of the 1967 Exhibition of Montreal, wish to express their love to their fellow-men throughout the world and to alleviate the anxieties and fulfill the expectations of our century by a common proclamation of the Gospel. Beyond the cleavages imposed by history, the Christians of the whole world will rejoice at the news of the following decision that we have reached as a result of many months of meeting and exchanges of views : we will erect a **Christian Pavilion** capable of showing the world that God was made Flesh to dwell among us and that He is present in all that is happening concerning "Man and his World".*

Église Catholique Romaine
Roman Catholic Church
Cardinal Paul-Émile Léger
Archevêque de Montréal

Église Inie du Canada
United Church of Canada
Ernest Marshall Howse

Église Anglicane
Anglican Church
Maguire Bishop of Montreal
Kenneth

Association des Églises Baptistes de l'Est
Eastern Association of Baptist Churches
Emrys Jenkins

Église Grecque-Orthodoxe
Greek-Orthodox Church
Bishop Timothy (Rodostolon)

Église Luthérienne
Lutheran Church
Earl Treusch



Revue de littérature:
Daniel Blaj, Yves Congar, pionnier de l'œcuménisme

Daniel Blaj, Yves Congar, pionnier de l'œcuménisme. Comment accueillir les valeurs des autres chrétiens, Namur, Lessius-Paris, Éd. Jésuites, 2015, 240 p.

Théologien roumain installé en France depuis 1995, D. Blaj a soutenu à la faculté catholique à Strasbourg une thèse sur *Le principe ecclésiologique de l'œcuménisme chez Yves Congar : élaboration, réception et perspectives ecclésiales*. Il en a tiré un volume préfacé par son directeur de thèse, le père **Michel Deneken**. Ce livre tente d'abord de « penser l'Église à partir de l'œcuménisme ». D. Blaj évoque la thèse de doctorat d'Yves Congar en 1931, puis ses chroniques parues dans divers bulletins et revues : *L'ami du clergé*, *Nova et Vetera*, *RSPT*, *Vie intellectuelle*, *Vie spirituelle*, *Unitas*, *Unité de l'Église*... On parvient ainsi de son ouvrage-Programme Chrétiens désunis.

La deuxième partie du livre de D. Blaj (1946-1954) considère « la fécondité de l'Église comme communion ». Et la troisième, « la participation des chrétiens au corps du Christ » (du concile de Vatican II à nos jours).

Le rappel de pareil parcours historiques est précieux pour des lecteurs risquant d'être quelque peu étourdis par l'ampleur des publications du savant Congar. En fait, comme le D. Blaj le souhaite : « L'étude de son corpus théologique conduit non seulement au fondement du mouvement œcuménique en théologie catholique, mais à la découverte que ce fondement joue le rôle d'un véritable principe héménéutique [...] Il s'agit de penser théologiquement la vie chrétienne des baptisés non-catholiques dans et par les assemblées dont ils font partie lorsqu'il est question d'une Église une.

En ses dernières pages, D. Blaj prend position rapidement dans des débats, parfois intra-catholiques, postérieurs au décès en 1995 de son héros : par exemple, la signification du verbe subsistens au concile Vatican II ou la déclaration romaine *Dominus Iesus* de l'année 2000.

Plus théologique qu'historique, le travail de D. Blaj est clair, mais dense dans sa formulation, apporte de précieux aperçus sur ce qu'Yves Congar appelait les « principes d'un œcuménisme catholique » que nous désignons plutôt aujourd'hui comme les principes catholiques à mettre en œuvre au sein d'un mouvement œcuménique quoique de plus en plus diversifié en ses formes.

