Full Issue

Abstract
This is the full issue of Volume 1, Issue 2 of Verbum, published in Spring 2004 by the REST Club at St. John Fisher College. Articles from this issue are available as separate PDFs at http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol1/iss2/

This article is available in Verbum: http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol1/iss2/8
Dave Mammano, founder of nextSTCP® & Rev. Al Cylwicki

Prizes furnished by Dr. Costanzo
This marks the second issue of the Religious Studies Club journal, *Verbum*. The first issue of *Verbum*, which came out in the fall semester of 2003, was an enormous success. We would like to thank the Fisher community for the wonderful response. To keep pace with the fast growing Religious Studies Department, we are glad to present another issue of *Verbum*.

From a psychological take on priests as counselors to the meaning of lent and Jewish funerals, this issue of *Verbum* opens the doors into a scholarly forum of religious studies. As Editors, we have had the privilege of reading the submissions from our talented peers and are happy to share their works with the whole college.

We hope that this issue will be successful and carry us into another academic year. Although all the essays in this issue are outstanding, two have received prizes that were graciously furnished by Dr. Costanzo. We look forward to reading your submissions in the future and hope that the Fisher community will continue to share its talent with us.

We hope you enjoy this issue as much as we do.

Sincerely,

Jodi Rowland, Editor
Linda Wert, Editor
Jonathan Schott, Alumni Advisor
Faith—it is . . .*  
Tony Gravitte

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Sarah Guarnere

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Jennifer Hitchcock

Comparison of Church Services  
Jodi Rowland

* Prize awarded.
Faith—it is . . .

by

Tony Gravitte
Faith—it is everywhere around us, a part of us, a gift from God. By providing my personal definition of faith, enunciating pertinent details, and explicating my experiences, I hope to paint an accurate picture of what faith is. Denotatively, faith is the “theological virtue defined as secure belief in God and a trusting acceptance of God’s will” (“Faith”). To be critical, what is meant by “secure?” What is defined as “God’s will?” These are all good questions and each subject to controversy. Consequently, I have connotatively come to know faith as simply the belief in a higher power. Allow me to explain.

Faith is internal and directs us beyond our own finite and conditional existence to something infinite, unconditional, and otherworldly. After all, “faith, in a sense, is always ‘without seeing’” (Hill, Knitter, and Madges 11). If you cannot see something, how can it be so? That is where faith comes into play. As for the definition of faith, it is indefinitely subjective due to the fact that we have faith in something that cannot be visually depicted or proved scientifically. On the other hand, common grounds can be found in each individual’s faith that can be used to bring us all together and reinforce an important point. One of these grounds is recognizing that there is something or someone of a higher state of being than us that we are constantly in search for. The discrepancy arising from that search is that one faith may rest in a God that is the embodiment of all justice and goodness, while another faith may be offered to a strictly biblical God. However, we all share something in common: faith. As Paul Tillich said, faith is “ultimate concern” (Hill, Knitter, and Madges 36). The infinity we long to reach is the ultimate state of being, the last and final stage. Christians believe that state of being is in heaven and mastered by the God revealed through Jesus Christ. Faith can be in a God, in a heaven, or in a religion itself. Faith takes on many forms.
Faith can be “a commitment on many levels: intellectual, emotional, volitional, even physical, imaginative, and aesthetic” (Hill, Knitter, and Madges 9). In other words, faith can be enlivened through the things we do. These activities can range from engaging in the sacrament of marriage, creating an inspiring piece of artwork, or simply imagining who God is. It is through these activities that we experience faith and, in a sense, experience God. Faith is alive everywhere. You have faith that your car brakes will work at the stoplight. You have faith that you will get to school safely in the morning. Faith is an inevitable and unavoidable characteristic of humanity. It is something inside of us yearning to be evoked, and is, thus, given intrinsic value. Faith is also a gift. It is a gift because “in faith, we are enabled to reach beyond, transcendent to our human capacity” (Hill, Knitter, and Madges 36). As Brother Roger put it, “let us never forget that this simple desire for God is already the beginning of faith” (Roger).

My desire to be faithful and understand God has been an ever-changing process that began at a young age. I was raised in a traditional, Roman Catholic family where Sunday masses were a given. It was understood that I go to a Catholic school and accept the tenants of my faith undoubtedly. I was “living my parents faith,” as Father Chase has put it. Fowler instructs that faith comes in stages. That was simply the beginning of my faith journey. As I got older and surpassed the intuitive-projective and mythic-literal stages, I explored more and more into how I felt. By the coming of adulthood, I reached the synthetic-conventional stage (Conn). I began to put things together and decide what had meaning in life. Instead of reinforcing my faith, I grew wary about it. I began to question if there even was a God. I took it that all the suffering around me and all the hardship I faced was what God threw in my path. As time passed, the day came when my
mother told me a story that altered my pessimistic train of thought and revitalized my faith. She told me how on a snowy day she was taking my brother to the dentist office for an emergency brace repair. The roads were snow ridden and traction was low. As she was approaching a corner adjacent to a streaming river, she lost control of the car and began sliding down the bank towards the freezing water. She and my brother sat motionless. Out of nowhere, a tow truck cam and stoped to help. In no time, the car was lifted off the bank and my mother began thanking the man with fervor. The snowfall was coming to a halt. She then got in her car and the man got in his. She started it, looked up, and to her astonishment saw no one—not for a clear half-mile down the road. That story touched not only my heart, but also the inner depths of my soul. I began to realize the problems humanity creates for itself. God did not make my mom drive onto the bank; God is the one who helped her out. My faith grew stronger as a result. I was beginning to understand the world and approach the individuative-reflective stage of faith. Now, here I stand somewhere in between the fourth and fifth stage—conjunctive faith (Conn).

The next step towards furthering my understanding of faith occurred quite recently. I was meeting with Father Chase in a disclosed location to debate my many ambiguities concerning faith and Catholicism. After much discussion, I left the room feeling closer to stage five in my faith. I understand that my growing faith has been the result of my growing experience. All the symbols and doctrines of religion I thought were keeping me from being faithful are beginning to reassert my faith. I am coming to know that I cannot know anything for certain. No one knows of an absolute truth. With that in mind, I need to do best with what is at hand. Why not join in a communal celebration of faith? Why not ask questions? I thought my intense questioning was revealing a lack of
faith, when it was actually benefiting my search for just that. There is so much out there
to be discovered and some that never will be. Accepting that statement is not unfaithful or
sacrilegious. I am finding out who “I” am, and with that search for identity, came the
search for true faith. Faith is knowing that I can believe in something greater than myself,
while at the same time accepting that I could be wrong, at least about what I have faith in.
Judging from experience, I can only move forward in my stages of faith.

In the end, I have come to see that faith is subjective. That each and every one of
us endures our own journey in search of faith and arrive at different understandings.
Brother Roger notes, “today, more than in the past, we enter into the faith by going
forward in stages” (Roger). Regardless, faith is that belief in something so much greater
than humanity, so much more perfect than us, that we cannot even begin to fathom or
imagine it. As worldly conditions change, faith changes. Perhaps I will never move
beyond Fowler’s fifth stage of faith, but I am at peace with my understanding. It has been
an immense journey and I am left with one piece of advice for everyone: have faith.
Bibliography


Catholic Priests as Counselors:  
An Examination  
of Challenges Faced and Successful Techniques  

by  

Mary McHale
Today’s Catholic priest plays a number of roles. He is expected to live a life similar to that of Jesus by setting an example as a leader, a helper, and a healer. Part of his job as a helper is to provide pastoral counseling services to parishioners and members of the public. Within this context, the Catholic priest must employ his knowledge of the Bible and spirituality to help individuals overcome such problems as depression, anxiety, marriage and family conflicts, and drug and alcohol abuse (see Worthington, Kurusu, McCollough, & Sardage, 1996). Americans often enlist the help of a Catholic priest when dealing with a personal problem as an initial means of coping or because they prefer to have spirituality included in their therapy sessions. According to Woodruff (2002), three million hours annually are spent with individuals in pastoral counseling, a form of therapy that combines both secular therapeutic techniques and spirituality. Clearly, Catholic Priests’ use of spirituality within therapy is a welcome treatment plan for many and can lead to a more holistic course of treatment for the counseled person.

Unfortunately, this role as a counselor can be a frustrating experience for many clergy members. Issues such as 1) a limited knowledge of psychotherapeutic skills and theoretical perspectives, 2) trust and boundary issues, 3) limited supervision in their roles as counselors, and 4) unrefined referral skills can leave a priest feeling burned out, frustrated, and possibly unable to meet the needs of the person he is counseling (see Bilich, et. al., 2000, Haug, 1999, & O’Kane & Millar, 2002). While happy to help others within their clergy roles, priests’ demanding schedules may also lead to difficulty in properly meeting their parishioners’ needs. All of these factors can contribute to Catholic priests’ lack of confidence in the counseling area. The limited range of extensive counseling training and skills of some Roman Catholic priests may contribute to the
unsuccessful outcomes of their clients. Because of the importance of the integration of spirituality and therapy, this study will examine how Catholic priests counsel and identify how often, and in what capacity, each of these previously identified challenges present themselves.

The purpose of this project is to understand Catholic priests’ perspectives on how they counsel and what they deem as successful or unsuccessful within a counseling session. By asking a series of questions related to each of the four challenges faced by priests, one can assess what makes a priest a successful or unsuccessful counselor. Based on this information, conclusions can be drawn related to each of these challenges and what skills or background training seems to be most effective in producing positive client outcomes and what added training may be necessary. Similarly to Lount and Hargie’s (1997) study, this study examines how Catholic priests counsel by asking open-ended questions and allowing them to analyze their own counseling situations and use of skills. By including a range of years one has practiced as a priest and differing levels of background training, one is able to compare and contrast the counseling styles.

Method

Sample

Of the seventeen contacted, 8 Roman Catholic priests ranging from 6-38 years practicing as a priest were interviewed. The participants were of varying background education and training; some have had minimal counseling training (e.g., undergraduate psychology courses) and some have had more extensive or specialized education in counseling (e.g., marriage and family therapy training.)
**Instrumentation/Procedure**

Data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews conducted in person over a one month period. Interviews included questions such as: “Describe your background training in counseling?” “Describe how you keep confidentiality as a priest and how you keep confidentiality as a counselor?” and “Describe a typical counseling session?” Questions were constructed by the researcher in attempt to elicit responses related to each of the four anticipated challenges and background information.

**Analysis**

The data analytical procedures used in this qualitative study included reorganizing all written notes into one of five categories: background information, knowledge of psychotherapeutic techniques, referral, trust and boundary issues, and support and supervision. Results were also organized in a spreadsheet format in order to provide comparison between interviews.

**Results**

**Knowledge of Psychotherapeutic Skills**

Most priests did describe a difference between therapy, pastoral counseling, and spiritual direction. Of the priests interviewed, three stated that they clarify what their limitations are in the beginning of a counseling session and state that they are not a therapist. As one participant described, “I definitely do not consider myself a therapist. I am not trained to be a therapist. I would even say I am barely trained to be a pastoral counselor.” However, four priests did label themselves as pastoral counselors, two labeled themselves as spiritual directors, and one priest would not consider himself to be any of the three types of counselors.
Confidentiality appears also to be a concern of each of the participants. While some were clear on the differences between confidentiality as a priest and confidentiality as a counselor, others seemed unsure. As one participant said, “I don’t know exactly what the laws of public confidentiality are relative to a person who comes to me. I don’t think it’s quite as impenetrable as the seal of confession, but it certainly is pretty substantial.” Some priests also seemed unclear about what exactly to report to authorities. Four of the priests interviewed stated that they were mandated reporters of child abuse; others were unclear. Three initially stated that there was not a difference between confidentiality within counseling and confession. Of these three, two went on to describe circumstances when they would breach confidentiality within counseling such as child abuse and homicidal/suicidal thoughts among the person they are counseling. However, all eight priests agreed that they are not to break the seal of confession under any circumstances.

All participants agreed that certain skills that they possessed did help them within their counseling. Active listening was ranked high as an important asset to counseling interactions. Other skills included communication skills, empathy/compassion, knowing when to be assertive, helping people to take responsibility for their own feelings, knowing referral resources, and self-knowledge. One individual believed that knowledge of theoretical frameworks was important to his counseling. One priest described the method he employs by saying: “For me, it’s more of a conversational thing. Again, I’m probably not trained enough to employ some kind of clear method. It’s mostly listening. I’m a pretty good listener.” Another participant acknowledged his own lack of training on specific issues by saying the following:
I guess some of the skills that I don’t know if I possess…would be some of the academic skills in terms of following a specific issue, knowing where it goes, what the points of healing or resolve are…just knowing some of those things.

Of those interviewed, four participants agreed that seminary training was inadequate preparation for the counseling they were currently doing, one believed that his seminary training was adequate, and three seemed unsure. Those who claimed that seminary training was inadequate agreed that there was a need for further hands-on training and more of an emphasis on the priest as an individual. Those who were unsure felt as though their training was adequate for the purposes of what they do, even though they admit this training was limited. As one participant stated, “I think I’m fine because I’m not looking to be a full-time counselor. I’m fortunate living where I do; I have good resources.” Another was a bit more ambiguous, saying, “Do I think I was adequately prepared? I guess I think I’m doing all right. Could I have had better or fuller preparation? Absolutely.”

Trust and Boundary Issues

Some priests expressed that they were aware of the “Catholic guilt” that one may experience when coming to a priest counselor. That is, the Catholic Church represents a large body of law in which some behaviors are acceptable and others are not. One priest believed that this body of teaching must be put aside for the purposes of counseling. However, another said that, if he sees a person in counseling, he would not be able to validate any relations outside of marriage that a person may be having if he sees him or her in counseling. Clearly, there are conflicting opinions on how to deal with this issue.
One individual described boundaries as being “pretty lax” within the Catholic Church. He acknowledged the fact that priests and bishops practicing thirty years ago did the best they could with the education they had and “traveled by the lights that they had.” Clergymen at that time agreed with the assumption that individuals who were suffering from this type of mental illness could get a small amount of treatment, pray, and “everybody’s fine.” In more recent years, he believes that clergymen are realizing that this type of mental illness does not simply go away and further attention must be paid to the way priests counsel each other because of it. While this participant trusts that the way priests counsel has changed significantly in the last thirty years, he also thinks that many lessons are yet to be learned. He notes that a large amount of language within the church is about family, but that “even families have boundaries.” He believes that a change in the understanding of these boundaries will lead to a change in the way priests counsel, behave, and address each other.

**Supervision and Support**

It is clear that there is no formal opportunity for addressing counseling concerns and issues within the sampled diocese. While there is no formal gathering, seven priests felt as though they were comfortable with going to other priests or mental health professionals to express concerns about a particular counseling experience in general terms. However, three participants did express an interest in having some kind of gathering to discuss counseling issues.

**Referral**

All eight participants have provided referrals to other mental health professionals for counseled individuals as needed. Seven priests stated that they give referrals often,
and one stated that he gave referrals only on occasion for issues such as substance abuse. Four priests interviewed agreed that religion cannot solve all psychological problems. Issues such as substance abuse and significant mental illness were described as grounds for referral. One priest described what he perceived to be the outcome of his counseling sessions: “It’s almost like a triage…where you assess what they need. Most of the time I don’t find couples coming back. I’m presuming they’re going on. When I was younger I’d see people more. Now I really try to encourage them much stronger [to seek counseling elsewhere] . . . maybe because I’m more aware of my limitations and I’m more aware of the strengths that counselors can bring.” Of those interviewed, six priests expressed having some sort of personal relationship with the mental health professionals to whom he is referring.

Differences in Counseling Practice Related to Background Training and Years of Experience

Of the 8 priests interviewed, three can be considered to have had more extensive background training than the others. Two of the three priests with extensive education were certain about their duty to breach confidentiality if the counseled person was perceived to be a threat to himself or others. One of the three also acknowledged a difficulty that may be present due to his role as a counselor and a priest. He expressed the challenge faced by this dual relationship by saying, “I think one of the profound differences between a priest as a counselor…versus a counselor, is…a counselor is [almost never] going to be there the next day or the next week at the dinner table.” The three had a clearer understanding of mandated reporting and confidentiality than the other five participants. These three individuals also seemed most comfortable with referral,
although there did not appear to be a difference in the frequency of referral between those who had more education and those who did not; all usually referred after 2-3 sessions.

These three participants also provided definite answers to the question posed to them regarding whether or not seminary had adequately prepared them for the counseling that they were currently providing. Each agreed that seminary education was inadequate for him to feel comfortable counseling others. Consequently, each chose to pursue further education in counseling.

Discussion

A number of parallels can be drawn between these results and that of former research, such as common counseling skills used by priests, lack of background training, and anticipated challenges related to lack of supervision and boundary issues (see Lount & Hargie, 1997, Domino, 1990, and O’Kane & Millar, 2002). However, differences can also be found related to the level of difficulty with referral that priest counselors experience (see McMinn et. al. and Weaver et. al., 1997). All of these similarities and differences provide an outlook of priests as counselors who do experience and acknowledge challenges, but seem aware of theses difficulties and make every attempt to act in a way that is best for the counseled person.

The most obvious and expected similarity between this and previous research was in regard to types of problems seen and skills used in counseling. Likewise, priests sampled for this study agreed with the goals of counseling and idea of how change occurs within the counseled person in similar ways as those sampled by Benes et. al. (2000).

One unique finding provided by this study is the regularity in which these referrals were actually made. Unlike past research (see Plante, 1999), priests within this
sample seemed fully aware of the importance of referring their counseled people to other more fully trained professionals. Interestingly, it seems that priests with increased education and greater years of experience were even more aware of their own limitations as counselors than those who had been practicing as a priest for fewer years. This suggests that, despite further counseling education, priests are aware that the time and energy that must be devoted to being a fully functioning and effective counselor may simply not be available or reasonable for busy diocesan priests.

With this in mind, perhaps the focus of future research should be more on the assessment of referral skills for priest counselors than extensive counseling education. Based on the unique findings related to referral in this study, it seems that there is a need for more of a focus on refinement of referral skills, education on issues such as improving recognition of symptoms for those who need to be referred, and to whom to refer. This may be more practical than comprehensive counseling education. It is obvious that priests have a number of duties within the church. It simply may not be feasible to focus only on one aspect of the ministry by providing training for priests to be professional therapists, especially in light of the current priest shortage (Address, 2001).

While these themes seemed to emerge from this sample, further research must be conducted to provide more support for the importance of increased referral education. Due to the small, somewhat homogeneous sample and the sampling technique used, generalizability for this study is limited. Another limitation of this study is the lack of frequencies related to actual occurrences of referral by priests. However, suggestions provided here can be supported with further assessment of current referral skills and measures of the frequencies of referral within a larger sample of priests. Referral
education currently being provided within the seminary education should also be assessed. Perhaps other denominations of clergy counselors can also be examined in order to ascertain how other religions are dealing with this challenging issue.

This study represents a first step toward a better understanding of how Catholic priests perceive their counseling experiences. By comprehending which challenges are being faced and which techniques seem to be effective, a clearer picture of counseling within the Catholic Church can be portrayed. With further understanding of these issues, the church may choose to change how they counsel and consequently make Catholic priests a prime example of how counseled people can benefit from the use of spirituality within counseling.
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St. Terese of Lisieux: a Taste of Heaven on Earth

by

Sarah Guarnere
“Upon my death I will let fall a shower of roses; I wish to spend my heaven in doing good upon the earth.” This is the famous promise made by St Thérèse which, she fulfilled. Reading these words from my daily prayer book, this well known quotation is part of what initially intrigued me about the life of this heroic saint.

Francoise-Marie Therese was born January 2, 1873 in Normandy, France. She was the youngest of nine children, though only five of them (only daughters) survived past infancy. She had loving parents, Louis and Zelie Martin, both of whom are awaiting canonization now. In the early years, Louis owned a watch business, while her mother owned a lace business.

When Thérèse was only four years of age, her mother died of breast cancer. After her death, Louis sold his watch business to take over the lace business because it was more profitable. Zelie’s death was devastating to the family, especially Thérèse at such a young age. In her autobiography, Thérèse describes how her personality changed after her mother's death. Until her death she displayed excitement like a child, while following Zelie’s death she became withdrawn and shy. Though Thérèse developed a very serious attitude, she did not become depressed.

After her mother’s death, the Martin family moved to Lisieux where they would be near their aunt, Madame Guérin. Despite being close to their aunt, the older Martin sisters primarily raised Thérèse. Pauline taught her the importance of religion, while Marie was in charge of running the household. Although, Thérèse was at a loss again when five years later, Pauline entered the convent. Shortly after Pauline’s admittance, Thérèse became very ill with a high fever; people thought she was dying. Through her
sufferings, she eventually felt God’s consolation through Mary. According to Thérèse, the Blessed Virgin smiled at her and she was healed!

Another significant moment in Thérèse’s life occurred on Christmas day, 1886. Thérèse was an overly sensitive individual who would cry very easily. On numerous occasions, she asked God to heal her from this weakness of hers. Her prayer was answered Dec. 25, 1886. She describes this as her conversion experience. In further detail she explains, “By becoming weak and little, for love of me, He made me strong and brave; he put His own weapons into my hands so that I went from strength to strength, beginning, if I may say so, ‘to run as a giant (Bulfinch 268).’” With her conversion experience, she felt that God was preparing her to live out her vocation better.

By 1886, all of Thérèse’s sisters had entered the convent except Celine. Shortly after her conversion, she expressed to her father her desire to enter the convent also. At first her father expressed some hesitation. In the video about Thérèse’s life, she tries to set the stage by asking him how he felt when her sisters entered the convent. He said that it was an honor. Then when she asks him he says, “are you bored with me?” Thérèse answered “No, I’m in love with Christ.” After a discussion, her father agreed to help her with the process. Though since she was only fifteen, there was no assurance that she would be admitted. This was a very long process, which included St Thérèse going before Pope Leo XIII in Rome to ask for permission. The pope’s response was “You shall enter if it be God’s will.” At the end of 1888, God’s will was done; Thérèse was granted permission to enter by the bishop. The majority of her life in the convent was focused on prayer and suffering. Thérèse preferred offering small daily sacrifices instead of performing great deeds.
In 1896 she became ill; she began coughing up a lot of blood. She endured it as a cross, refusing to tell anyone. Though because it grew so serious, people inevitably found out. It was at this time, that her sister Pauline ordered her to write down her memories of life, which later became known as *The Story of a Soul*. In 1897, she died of tuberculosis at the age of 24. Before she died she commented, “I will return. My heaven will be spent on earth.”

Thérèse’s most famous work by far is her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*. Thérèse provided a lot of insight to spirituality. Many times she used flowers as imagery. For instance, one question she struggled with during her life, then answered in her autobiography, dealt with why everyone is not given the same amount of gifts and talents. She writes:

> For a long time I had been asking myself why souls did not all receive the same amount of grace. Jesus deigned to instruct me about this mystery. Before my eyes He placed the book of nature and I understood that all the flowers created by Him are beautiful . . . that, if all the little flowers wanted to be roses, nature would lose her springtime garb. This is true of the world of souls, the Lord’s living garden. Perfection consists in doing His will.

( *Story of a Soul*)

In another section of her autobiography, she discussed her mental turmoil over her desire to become a martyr. She stated that the twelfth and thirteenth chapters of the first epistle to the Corinthians provided some insight. Here is the biblical equivalence to the previous
imagery of the flowers and the world of souls. Not everyone can be an apostle, prophet or teacher but a variety of members make up the church. For instance, 1 Corinthians 12:14-15 states: “For the body itself is not made up of only one part, but of many parts. If the foot were to say because I am not a hand, I don’t belong to the body, that would not keep it from being a part of the body.” Many parts to the one body are needed for it to function properly. Therefore, if all souls were roses or daises, we would not have a complete body.

Thérèse is also quite well known for her work, An Act of Oblation to Merciful Love. Here, she describes how important it is for her to Love God and live her life accordingly. “In order to live in one single act of perfect Love, I offer myself as a victim of holocaust to your merciful love” (Act of Oblation 2). She uses a very poignant comparison: herself as victim of the holocaust. It is evident that words can’t describe the extent of her feelings. Therefore, she uses the closest images that the human mind might possibly understand. Thérèse is saying that she is willing to sacrifice anything, including her life and being torture to live God’s law of Love. Thérèse wrote this composition on June 9, 1895, Feast of the Most Holy Trinity. This was just two years before her death. On that day, Thérèse received a special grace at Mass, and felt that she should write about her experience. Though this is included in her Story of a Soul, the Act of Oblation to Merciful Love is a significant part of her autobiography.

The process of beatification began immediately after Thérèse’s death. Her promise of letting a shower of roses fall was confirmed; many miracles were attributed to her intercession. The Pope agreed to waive the 50 years usually needed in order to start the process. Therefore, in 1923 Pope Pius XI beatified her; two years later, he also
declared her a saint. In 1927, she was officially named the patroness of foreign missions (in conjunction with St Francis Xavier), and of the needs of Russia. Her connection with missions comes from her great love for them, though she was never a missionary because she lived in the cloistered Carmel convent once she entered. She prayed constantly in support of them, though. In 1997, Pope John Paul II officially declared her a Doctor of the Church. She is the third female Doctor of the Church.

Though Thérèse lived only reaching the age of 24, she has many themes in her life. Suffering is a prominent theme in her life. Thérèse first knew suffering at the young age of four when her mother died. This was only the beginning of what would become both spiritual and physical suffering. Thérèse longed to enter the convent at an early age though she was denied many times. How her soul was tossed! She also experienced a significant amount of physical pain. She was sick on many accounts, including coughing up blood sometimes.

Despite these circumstances, she refused to see a doctor. It was only until the very end of her life, when her sickness severely worsened, that she permitted a doctor to examine her. Thérèse didn’t like to attract attention to her condition. Despite her immense pain, she maintained a pleasant disposition. Because of this, people sometimes thought that she was faking being sick.

Her numerous sufferings caused her to offer many sacrifices to God. She willfully offered the pain up to God, instead of dwelling on the pain that her body experienced. She believed that by offering up her sufferings as sacrifices to God, she would be closer to sanctity. In an excerpt from *Prayers and Meditations of Therese of Lisieux*, she describes sanctity by saying, “Sanctity lies not in saying beautiful things, or
even in thinking them, or feeling them; it lies in truly being willing to suffer. I suffer much but do I suffer well? That is the important thing” (catholic-forum.com). In this way, Thérèse believed that suffering brought us closer to God.

Love is also a theme that embodied her whole life; it was seen in every aspect of her life; as a child, through her sufferings, and the end of her life. For instance, according to her autobiography, she says “From the age of three years, I have refused nothing to the good God” (Combes 7). Though, before entering Carmel, she worried about her vocation. Desperately seeking to do the will of God, she had many questions that were left unanswered. Through God’s help, eight years after she entered the convent, she was able to discern her vocation. She describes it in the following way:

I feel in me the vocation of the Priest. I have the vocation of an Apostle. Martyrdom was the dream of my youth and this dream has grown with me. Considering the mystical body of the Church, I desired to see myself in them all. Charity gave me the key to now understand that the Church had a Heart and that this Heart was burning with love. I understood that Love comprised all vocations, that Love was everything; it embraced all times and places . . . in a way it was eternal! Then in the excess of my delirious joy, I cried out: o Jesus, my Love . . . my vocation I have found it . . . my vocation is Love!

(catholic.org 3)
In this way, Thérèse understood that though she had deep desires to become a priest and a martyr, neither was directly what God had in mind for her. She wanted to be a priest to serve God wholeheartedly, but she realized that it didn’t take a priest to serve God intensely, with all your heart. In a similar way, she wrote how she wanted to be a martyr (where she would die for her faith), but God knew the desires of her heart better than she. Jean Lafrance makes an excellent point in analyzing these words Thérèse spoke, within his book, *My Vocation is Love*: “Her role was not to evangelize, nor teach, nor undergo martyrdom, but to interiorize Love in the heart of the Church in order to sanctify it from within, just as the heart propels the blood throughout the whole body” (Lafrance 170). God gave her a specific role in His plan: a simple yet profound vocation, love. She interiorized love in ways such as her sufferings that others could not visibly see at the time. In effect, she had a “behind the scenes” role in the Church, yet a just as important if not more essential vocation.

So the question remains: how did she love? She, herself explains the details, “Well, the little child will throw flowers . . . I have no other means of showing my love but by throwing flowers, that is I will not let one little sacrifice escape, not one look, not one word, I will profit from all the little things and do them out of love” (Lafrance 172). In this way, she showed her love through the eyes of a child in every present moment. It was the “little things,” the “simple things” that she emphasized and concentrated on. She realized that she was, in effect, a little child who could offer a lot of little sacrifices, but who depended solely on her Father. She felt she was so little that she told God, “I feel that if it were possible for you to find a soul weaker than mine, littler than mine, you
would be pleased to grant it still greater graces, if it abandoned itself with absolute
certainty to your infinite mercy” (Lafrance 172).

Thus, her “Little Way” came about. It was a lifestyle that was based on trust and
total abandonment to God. Her thoughts are in accordance with the teachings in the
Bible regarding child-like faith. Matthew 18:2 says, “Amen, I say to you, unless you are
like a child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” Another reference is in Proverbs
9:4, where it says, “Whosoever is a little one, let him come to Me.” Thérèse certainly
lived the essence of these verses.

Is Thérèse’s vocation of love so unlike our own vocation? I recall God’s two
greatest commandments, both embody love. Jesus explains further in Matthew 22:37-40:
“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
This is the greatest commandment. The second is like it: Love your neighbor as you love
yourself. The whole Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets depend on these
two.” What sets Thérèse so apart from others? She responded to her vocation with her
whole mind, heart, body and soul.

Prayer is also a major theme seen all throughout her life. Thérèse describes prayer
best when she says: “For me, prayer is an uplifting of the heart, a simple glance directed
towards heaven, it is a cry of gratitude and of love in the midst of trial as well as joy, it is
something great, supernatural, which expands my soul and unites me to Jesus” (Lafrance
104). For Thérèse, prayer came directly from the heart. She noted that though written
prayers are definitely worthy of merit, she preferred to talk to God through her heart. She
told God that she simply would not be able to pray all the beautiful prayers that she
would find if she searched for them. She again compared herself to a child by saying, “I
do like children who do not know how to read” (*Story of a Soul*).

The most significant attribute I learned from St. Thérèse is how to trust in God.
Before reading about St Thérèse, I never knew what trust *truly* meant. I would say the
words, but not truly mean it from my heart. Or, I would trust God *partly*. In addition to
praying to St Thérèse, there is a prayer not written by her, but reminds me so much of her
idea of being a child, trusting to rely on her father. It says:

Dear Jesus, teach me to trust only in the power of You, Your Father,

and the Holy Spirit. I surrender my will to You. In this surrender I

accept that Your grace controls the future. I understand that You

love me and want only my good-my salvation. I resolve to live in

the present and await whatever You may plan for me in the future.

I will trust in Your plans and Divine Will for me. Amen.

(Sweeney-Kyle 18)

Basically, it says Jesus, I am your servant and I am listening to You. Help me do Your
will; I trust in You always. It is acknowledging that God is in charge and surrendering
yourself to Him. That is how St Thérèse lived her whole life. She acknowledged that he
is in charge and trusted in Him like a child needing his Daddy. I heard somebody call
their journey in life, “the Jesus trust walk.” I believe this is what Thérèse did, and what
I try to do. It is *not* knowing, but having *faith* that God will direct you on your journey.
I also admire how she is one of the three female Doctors of the Church. Thérèse herself writes that she didn’t find any orders or start any mission; she says that she did no GREAT works. In the eyes of God, that didn’t matter because all of her little acts she did, she did them out of love for God. Though few people knew her during her lifetime, because she was a cloistered nun, this extraordinary person reached millions of people through her autobiography and canonization process.

One question I wonder is why God picked her to live in Normandy, France during the 1880s instead of an earlier point in history or possibly later? You may say why not? Sometimes I wonder why or how God decided for me to live at this point in history. I love my parents and sisters and would not consider switching, even if given the chance, but it would be neat to look at God’s plan through His eyes to see why He put us on Earth, when He did, and at the location that He created us at. God’s plan is probably so complex for my mind to even understand a parcel of it, but it does not keep me from thinking about it.

In thanksgiving for the many petitions that God has answered through the intercession of my patron saint, Thérèse of Lisieux, I write this poem in her honor.

The Rose

Crimson petals licking the interior of my nose;
What a scent—that sweet-smelling, heavenly perfume!
Who shall send such sanctity?
A little girl plucked from this world;
Elevated to her destiny
Love envelopes her soul
Love emancipates mine.

St. Thérèse intercede for us.


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The Meaning of Lent

by

Courtney Ren
For many of us the time of the year has come to participate in the celebration of Lent. For most Catholics, Lent means giving up something they enjoy, doing something good, and not eating meat on Fridays. Some see it as a waste and hate to make the sacrifice. But Lent is a special celebration. Ash Wednesday begins Lent. Ash Wednesday is significant because the placing of ashes on the forehead is a sign of humility before God; a symbol of mourning and sorrow at the death that sin brings into the world. It not only prefigures the mourning at the death of Jesus, but also places the worshipper in a position to realize the consequences of sin. The Sundays during the Lenten season commemorate special events in the life of Our Lord, such as his Transfiguration and his Triumphal Entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, which begins Holy Week. Holy week climaxes with Holy Thursday, on which Christ celebrated the first Mass, Good Friday, on which he was Crucified, and Holy Saturday—the last day of Lent—during which, Our Lord lay in the Tomb before his Resurrection on Easter Sunday, which is the first day after Lent.

Lent owes much of its spirit to the forty days Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his ministry. We say he was tempted there, but a more accurate translation may be "tested." In this place, Jesus was offered the opportunity to be the wrong kind of messiah. He rejected each possibility. The defeat of Satan during this testing hinted at the final defeat of evil through the Cross and Resurrection (http://www.rushman.org/lent1.html).

Lent is a season of intense prayer, fasting, and concern for those in need. It offers all Christians an opportunity to prepare for Easter by serious discernment about their lives, with particular attention to the word of God, which enlightens the daily journey of all who believe (Catholic.org). This is the season that reminds us of the great sacrifice
that Christ made for each one of us. Centuries ago Jesus Christ went through an agony, a scourging, a crowning and a crucifixion. The tragedy of Good Friday led to the triumph of Easter Sunday. This is why Fridays are days of abstinence. Jesus died for our sins on Friday, making it an especially appropriate day of mourning our by denying ourselves something we enjoy. The acts of self-denial, the acts of sacrifice we make during this season help us identify with the sacrifices of Christ. Lent allows us to unite our sacrifice with that of Christ and our pain with his.

But how does giving up meat on Fridays and sacrificing other worldly possessions that we think we need connect us to Jesus sacrifices and pain? The desert experience is about deprivation. Most of us try our whole life not to be deprived, but when we are, we discover that we are not all-powerful. Doing without can strip away some of the illusions and give us a glimpse of truth. During Lent, we use abstinence from meat and acts of penance as metaphors. In a very small way, they model the rejection of illusions about what we need, who we are, and who God is. In this life, we try to make some progress in discarding our "disordered attachments." At death, we will no longer have a choice. We cannot enter Heaven burdened with a thousand foolish attachments. When we stand in judgment before God, we will have no illusions about our sanctity or goodness. All will be laid bare, and there will be no more hypocrisy, lies, or illusions. It is far better to begin discarding our foolish attachments in this life, and Lent is a good time to begin this work. Lent allows us to get rid of meaningless things that we have become attached to. We learn that worldly possessions are not what are important. In the end it is the person that has to stand before God and be judged, not their possessions. By denying ourselves something we enjoy, we discipline our will so that we are not slaves to our pleasures. By
disciplining the will to refuse pleasures when they are not sinful, a habit is developed, which allows the will to refuse pleasures when they are sinful. There are few better ways to keep our priorities straight, rather than periodically denying ourselves things of lesser priority to show us that they are not necessary and focus our attention on what is necessary (http://www.cin.org/users/james/files/lent.htm). We are made in God’s image and reducing our desires and needs with the help of grace will help us become more like God. As Father James Moroney stated, “By letting go of the food and pleasures we do not really need, we participate in Christ's self-emptying in becoming man and in dying upon the cross. . . . We too must empty ourselves of the non-essentials, so that we might cling to the only One we truly need, Christ Jesus, and Him crucified” (http://usccb.org/comm/archives/2002/02-014.htm).

Therefore, during Lent we should not think that the sacrifices that we are making are useless and unneeded, but instead we should look at these sacrifices as a way to become closer to God. Lent is a special time of year that allows us to place God first and worldly possessions second. It is a time to teach us that God is the most important, and these small sacrifices are nothing compared to the sacrifice that Jesus made. Through Lent we become closer to God, and hopefully, more humble and God-like in our everyday lives.
“Leveiya”:
The process of the Jewish Funeral Service

by

Jennifer Hitchcock
Introduction

I have been interested in religion for most of my life. Attending a private Catholic elementary school, high school, and now a college in the Catholic tradition has helped to fuel this interest. I am a Roman Catholic, so naturally I know a great deal about my own religion, but the religions that I like to learn about the most are those other than my own. I find the many different religions and the different aspects within the religions fascinating.

One of the religions that I am most interested in, other than my own, is Judaism. Since Christianity arose from Judaism I do know a good deal about its history and some of the beliefs. I also have many friends who are Jewish, and they have explained numerous aspects of the religion to me. The main ideas focusing on their rites of passage, exactly like they were named in our book: circumcision, Bar (Bas) Mitzvah, marriage, and burial. (Monk, 38)

Unfortunately, a person very close to me died in the not so distant past, and she was Jewish. I attended the funeral service, but knew little of what was going on, or what different items symbolized or meant. I chose to write this paper on Jewish funerals, preparing for them, the actual service, and what happens after the person is buried, because I found it very interesting to observe what was going on around me, but I had no idea what anything meant. Therefore, this paper will help me further my knowledge of Judaism and one of its rites of passage, and it will also help me to answer many of the questions that I have about the Jewish funeral.
Directly following death

Once a Jewish person dies, there are many rituals that must be taken care of in order to give the deceased the respect he or she deserves. When a person dies, someone close to the deceased, whether it be a relative or close friend, must close the eyes and mouth of the deceased and pull a sheet over his or her head. All of the mirrors in the house should be covered to avoid personal vanity in times of tragedy and also to lessen the over-concern that many place on appearance. Another reason for the mirrors to be covered is to take emphasis away from the beauty of a person’s flesh at a time when another person’s body has begun the process of decay in the same house. (Habenstein, 194; Lamm, 4)

From the moment a person dies until the burial the deceased can not be left alone. A “shomer,” or watcher, must be at his or her side at all times. This shomer is to sit with the deceased and recite portions of the Book of Palms. But, while in the room with the deceased, there may be no eating, drinking or smoking in his or her presence. (Lamm, 5)

Finally the rabbi should be called so that he can notify the “Chevra Kadisha,” or Burial Society, to take care of the remains. The funeral director should also be called to arrange for the removal of the body. (Lamm, 5)

Preparing the Body

The preparation of the body of the deceased is a religious ritual called “Taharah,” or purification, that is performed by the Chevra Kadisha. All Jews are to be buried in the same type of garment, whether they are rich or poor, it doesn’t matter, because they are all equal in the eyes of God. The deceased person is to be dressed in something
completely clean and white, yet it must be simple and handmade, symbolizing purity, simplicity and dignity. (Prothero)

The body is placed in a coffin that must be made completely of wood. This coffin does not need to be ornately decorated, simplicity is actually better when it comes to this. The interior of the coffin may be lined, bedded and pillowed, or just left bare. Earth from the Holy Land is often buried with the deceased. (Prothero; Lamm, 16)

**The Funeral Service**

According to Jewish law, the deceased must be buried within twenty-four hours following his or her death. There are of course exceptions to this, such as if very close relatives (children or parents) have to come from far distances, or if the “leveiya” or funeral is to occur on a major Jewish holiday it will be postponed until the second day of the feast. This is because Jewish law forbids Jews to bury their dead on the first day of a holiday. (Lamm, 19)

There are three different places where Jewish funerals are normally held: the home of the deceased, the cemetery, and the funeral chapel in the funeral home (the first two dating back much further than the third). The synagogue is sometimes used as well, but this is rare. (Lamm, 37)

The service itself is a very simple and brief service for the honor and dignity of the deceased. A eulogy is given, usually by the rabbi that highlights the worthy values that he or she lived by, the good deeds that were performed, and the noble aspects of his or her character. Also during the service there is a reading that is selected from the book
of Psalms that relates to the life of the deceased and a Memorial Prayer asking that God take care of his or her soul. (Lamm, 45)

**Burial**

All Jews must be buried. God said to Adam “For dust thou are and to dust shalt thou return” and this is taken very seriously in Judaism. Cremation of a Jewish person is never permitted; they must be bodily in the earth. In the case of mausoleums the deceased must be buried in the ground, the casket can not be left above the earth. It is acceptable for the deceased to be buried in the ground and for the mausoleum to be built around that plot of land, but the buried person cannot be above the ground. (Habenstein, 193; Bowman, 119, 167)

Family or friends of the Jewish faith should comprise the pallbearers that carry the casket and deposit it in the grave. There is a procession to the burial site in which several pauses are made; seven pauses are used in most communities. These pauses are used for a person in the procession to reflect on his or her own self. All of the people in this procession, except the rabbi, walk behind the casket and Psalm 91 is recited. (Lamm, 60)

Immediately before (or in some cases immediately following) the lowering of the casket, the “tzidduk ha’din,” or justification of the divine decree, is recited. The casket is then lowered into the ground and the grave is filled. The Burial Kaddish, a prayer that tells of the hope that there is a future for the deceased is recited after the grave is filled with earth. (Lamm, 63-64)


**Shiva and Sheloshim**

Shiva is the process of mourning that begins directly after the burial, when the casket is completely covered. The mourners walk between two lines of friends and family and are comforted by them. They then go directly to the home, where shiva is to be observed; there, they remove their shoes and sit on a low bench or stool. This marks the first of the seven days of shiva. Shiva ends on the morning of the seventh day after burial. The people present with the mourners offer their condolences, and the mourners come out of their week of mourning. (Lamm, 88)

Shiva is to be observed in the house of the deceased because evidence of his or her life should be present. Mourners can commute from their own home to the house of the shiva, or they can sit shiva in their own home. The “sitting” part of shiva comes from the idea of being close to the earth. It is recommended that the mourner sit on a low stool, or even on the ground on a mat or pillows. The main regulations that must be upheld by the mourners during shiva are that they must sit on a low stool; they should remain indoors (at least until it is night and dark out); they must abstain from marital relation; they may not work; and they also may not study the Torah. There are other aspects of shiva that also apply to the period of mourning called sheloshim. These aspects are the prohibition of forms of vanity such as haircutting, shaving, nail cutting, bathing (for pleasure), and wearing new clothes, getting married, and attending parties. (Lamm, 145)

Sheloshim is the thirty day period of mourning that starts from the date when the deceased is buried. And it ends the morning of the thirtieth day after the burial. It is
basically an extension of the shiva, but not to the same extent of mourning that is expressed during the shiva.

**Conclusion**

Of course these observances and rituals of a Jewish burial are somewhat flexible and not always carried out this exact way. However, these are the general and most commonly used rites and ideas that are used for a Jewish funeral and burial.

Some of the very Orthodox Jews adhere strictly to the exact ways of the past and have in no way conformed to the present American society in regards to funerals. For these types of funerals you will see no or very little difference in the funerals of today and the very first funerals in Judaism. While other less Orthodox Jews have adopted some aspects of current culture and different American ways.

I learned so much in writing this paper about the rituals and observances held during a Jewish funeral. I never knew that so much went into the preparation process, and how long the mourning period was. As I said in the introduction, while attending a Jewish funeral I was unaware of what was occurring around me, but now I know what happened and the reasons for each action that took place. In writing this paper I expanded my knowledge of the Jewish religion and one of its rites of passage through life, the final rite of passage, but an obviously important one.
Bibliography


Comparison of Church Services

by

Jodi Rowland
After visiting three church services, Episcopal, Eastern Catholic, and Roman Catholic, and comparing these to my experiences in Protestantism, predominately Presbyterianism, I found many similarities among the obvious differences. First, I will discuss each church service individually. Then, I will compare those services with each other and my prior experiences.

First, I visited Christ Church, an Episcopalian service, on East Avenue. Since I have not attended an Episcopal service prior to September 21st, I did not know what to expect. When entering the church, I noticed the use of images. From the beauty of the architecture to the statues and decorative altar and vestments, I was in awe of the church. Before the service began, I noticed that the choir was situated behind the congregation. Throughout the service, the priest, deacon, and lector faced the congregation, including us in the service. From these initial observations, it is evident that the Episcopal Church relies on signs and images to express a kataphatic event (God refracted through something tangible, like a sign or symbol). Thus, the congregation visually participates in the service and God through these images.

During intercession, I became aware of Christ Church’s sense of community, which reaches beyond the congregation itself. Starting with the congregation, the prayers were extended to the local community, national, and international level—political and spiritual domains. In fact, much time was devoted to this sense of communion, not just in our midst, but in union with other Episcopalians and to the world.

Another element of the service at Christ Church that I noticed was communion. The Eucharist shows that the Episcopal Church participates in an apophatic event (recognizing that form is not completely God—God is formless—and is spiritually
Beyond us. When taking the Eucharist, the congregation (all who have been baptized), are invited to the altar, where they stand or kneel behind the communion railing. This promotes a sense of community, which ties back to intercession. Thus, Episcopalians, at least at Christ Church, have a strong sense of community.

By observing this service, I found that Christ Church, as a representative for Episcopalians, is connected spiritually with each other and God, using sign, symbol, and sacrament. In addition, there was an emphasis placed on the Word of God—through prayer, song, and scripture. (The scripture readings were, Wisdom 1:16-2:1, 12-22 and Mark 9:30-37.) These readings, along with the prayer, song, and sermon show the importance Episcopalians place on the Word in coordination with sacrament. Therefore, the congregation encounters God through two means—visual and auditory—which allows each member to actively participate in the service.

Moving forward, the next service I visited, on September 28th, was St. Josaphat’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, which is Eastern Catholic. Having never attended an Eastern Catholic or Orthodox service, I did not know what to expect. Upon entering the church, I immediately noticed the iconography. On the two side walls and the wall behind the altar were large icons, depicting various scenes—from Jesus to the Saints. In addition, there were gold doors in front of the altar, only opened to the congregation during the service. Even then, the altar was not completely visible. All of these images demonstrate the idea of God refracted through sign or symbol. The message from the icons, the nature of the altar and the doors, is a kataphatic event, allowing the congregation to witness God in some form of tangible means.
During the service, on many occasions, the deacon shook incense toward the altar and the congregation, bells jingling as he did this. This was one of the only moments where the service was directed toward the congregation. For the most part, the priest, deacon, and lector faced the altar. This shows reverence toward God; however, the congregation watches what is happening, and cannot fully participate in all of the service. I was able to observe part of the consecration, but not all.

The prayers of intercession showed communion with the church community, not only locally, but globally as well. St. Josaphat’s is in communion with the Pope. Thus, reference was made to him during intercession and throughout the service.

Although I am unsure of what scriptures were read, I do know that the congregation used the Divine Liturgy of John Chrysostom. This furthers the church’s connection with the Communion of the Faithful (Catholic understanding of past, present, and future members of the Church) in that Chrysostom is venerated by both the Latin and Eastern rites. Therefore, there is a strong sense of communion with the Church.

For the Eucharist, the priest consecrated the bread and wine, and then mixed them together. Those participating in the Eucharist, only Catholics were allowed, received communion from the same chalice and spoon. Receiving communion in this fashion, demonstrates yet another sense of community; the congregation drinks and eats from the same cup and spoon—all are equal. This sacrament illustrates an apophatic event, experiencing God spiritually and recognizing that God is beyond our senses.

Observing this church service, I noticed the sense of community found within the Catholic Church. Along with this, St. Josaphat’s community experiences God through
sacrament (sign plus symbol) and scripture, on a form and a formless platform, which facilitates a tangible vision of God that is symbolic of God’s transcendence.

The last service I attended was St. John of Rochester, in Perinton, which is Roman Catholic. Since I am a member of RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults) at St. John of Rochester, I have been dismissed before the Eucharist. However, having past experience in attending Roman Catholic services, I am aware of the process of events.

First, there is an emphasis on sign and symbol—the crucifix, the Stations of the Cross on the back wall, a baptismal font—which presents a kataphatic event. Thus, one experiences mass and God through visual orientation. The priest, deacon, lector, and choir face the congregation, inviting them to join in the service. Through the intercession, there is a demonstration of unity with the congregation and the Church.

Since, there are three scripture readings, depending on the day, there is an importance placed on the Word. In addition, since St. John’s uses the Roman Catholic Lectionary, this demonstrates a further notion of community within the Church. Thus, image and Word are important in the participation of the mass and the experience of God.

Besides the images, scripture readings, homily, and song, there is a major emphasis placed on the Eucharist. This is the main way that Roman Catholics experience mass—understanding that the transcendence of God mystically transforms into bread and wine. The experience elevates the congregation from static to active participation.

After observing a Roman Catholic mass at St. John of Rochester, I noticed that the images, scripture, and Word are important to mass. However, the Eucharist is vital. This shows that Catholics are in communion with each other—extending beyond St.
John’s to the Communion of the Faithful—and with God. Through different forms, or the formless, Roman Catholics participate in mass and experience God.

Looking at these three services, it is easy to find similarities. However, first I would like to view a few startling differences. One, the Episcopalians have women deacons and priests; the others do not. Two, the Episcopalian and Eastern Catholic priests are allowed to be married. For the Eastern Catholic priests, they may not marry in the United States. However, they may marry in another country, and then, move to the U.S. Three, Eastern and Roman Catholics require that one be Catholic in order to partake in the Eucharist, whereas the Episcopalians (at Christ Church) welcome all who have been baptized.

Comparing the three services, I realized that the basic foundations of belief were the same. In addition, the sense of community, although experienced on different levels, was present in all. Experiencing God in different means—visually and through the Word—was apparent in all three. Not previously mentioned, these churches are institutionalized—there is a hierarchy: laity, deacon, priest, bishop, archbishop or pope.

Moving on, when I look back to my experience with Protestantism (Presbyterianism), I am aware of the emphasis placed, almost solely, on the Word. Although the Presbyterian church I used to attend in Geneseo had some images, such as the crucifix, there was never a real emphasis placed on them in coordination with the service. In addition, we had communion once a month, and it was considered symbolic. There was no consecration, in a Catholic or Episcopal sense, of bread and wine.

On the other side, in comparison with the other services, there was a strong commitment to community shown at the Presbyterian services. In fact, I think that there
was an even stronger sense of the local community, but not nationally or internationally. Before attending any service other than mainline Protestant, I thought that the sermon and scripture readings were the focus of church. However, after attending Roman Catholic services, followed by the Episcopal and Eastern Catholic services, I became aware of the sacramental world view. Church became more than a chance to hear the Word of God; it became the chance to see God in some sort of form—image or symbol—and recognize God’s transcendence.

After experiencing these various services, I found that there are more similarities than differences within these denominations. Putting aside some controversial issues, like Roman Catholic priests being married or ordaining women within the Catholic rites, the basic foundation of Christian faith is fundamentally the same. I feel that there could be positive outcomes in advances toward an ecumenical movement.