

The Passionists

COMPASSION

Fall 2008

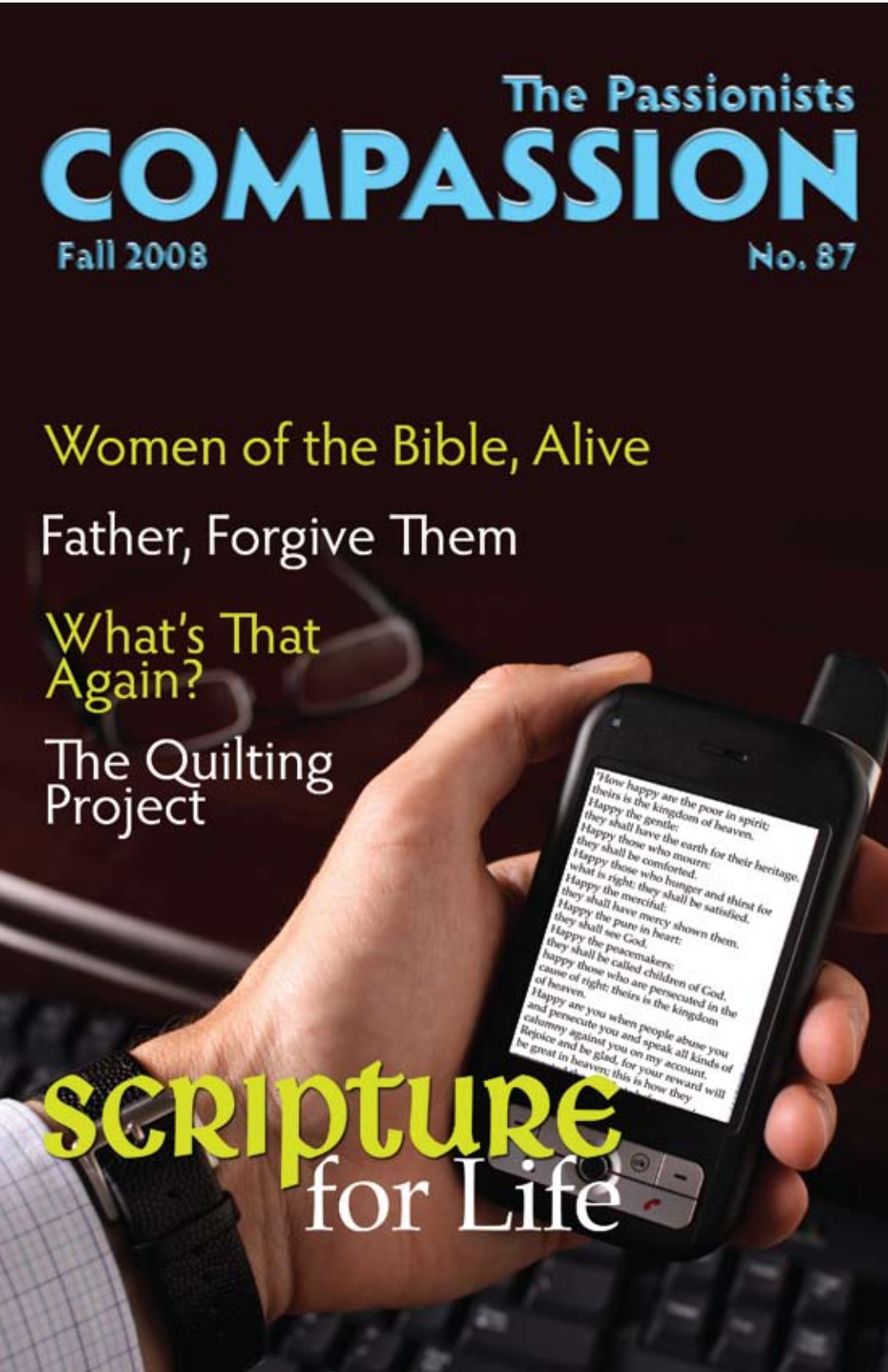
No. 87

Women of the Bible, Alive

Father, Forgive Them

What's That
Again?

The Quilting
Project



How happy are the poor in spirit;
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Happy the gentle;
they shall have the earth for their heritage.
Happy those who mourn;
they shall be comforted.
Happy those who hunger and thirst for
what is right; they shall be satisfied.
Happy the merciful;
they shall have mercy shown them.
Happy the pure in heart;
they shall see God.
Happy the peacemakers;
they shall be called children of God.
Happy those who are persecuted in the
cause of right; theirs is the kingdom
of heaven.
Happy are you when people abuse you
and persecute you and speak all kinds of
calumny against you and speak all kinds of
rejoice and be glad, for your reward will
be great in heaven; this is how they

Scripture
for Life



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Editor:

Paul Zilonka, C.P.

Co-Editors:

Mary Ann Strain,
C.P.

Kevin Dance, C.P.

Art/Layout:

Suzanne Thomas

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James Fitzgerald

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www.cptryon.org

pzilonka@cpprov.org

Photo & Graphics:

Sr. Mary Ann
Strain, C.P., cover

Compassion

526 Monastery Pl..

Union City, NJ

07087

Editor's Corner

God's Living Word

The Bishops' Synod on "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church" meets in Rome October 5-26, 2008. This occasion invites all of us to reflect on the way sacred scripture forms us as individuals, and as communities of believers throughout the world.

"The word of God is living and active" (Hebrews 4:12). In this issue, we meet some people in whom sacred scripture lives so persuasively that it has led them to extraordinary actions with inestimable benefit to all who hear of them.

Some parishioners in Baltimore, Maryland were invited to give the breath of life to some biblical women who usually remain silent in the stories of salvation. In doing so, these modern disciples of Jesus experienced deeper communion with the God who first inspired those stories.

Meditation on Jesus' own words and his example of forgiveness from the cross brought powerful healing to a Jamaican man whose wife suffered a violent death in a Kingston churchyard. His testimony encourages us to believe in our loving God who can cure our heart's deepest wounds.

A Dominican Sister-preacher helps us experience how insight into the socio-historical background of first century Galilee can dramatically increase the impact of Jesus' parables on us by catching us off guard in ways we least expect.

Biblical scenes inspired individual artists to paint a scene or compose music. We learn from a quilting program how the more communitarian experience of stitching biblical symbols together can deepen the spiritual relationship of a whole group of individuals at the same time.

God's word is truly alive in our day!

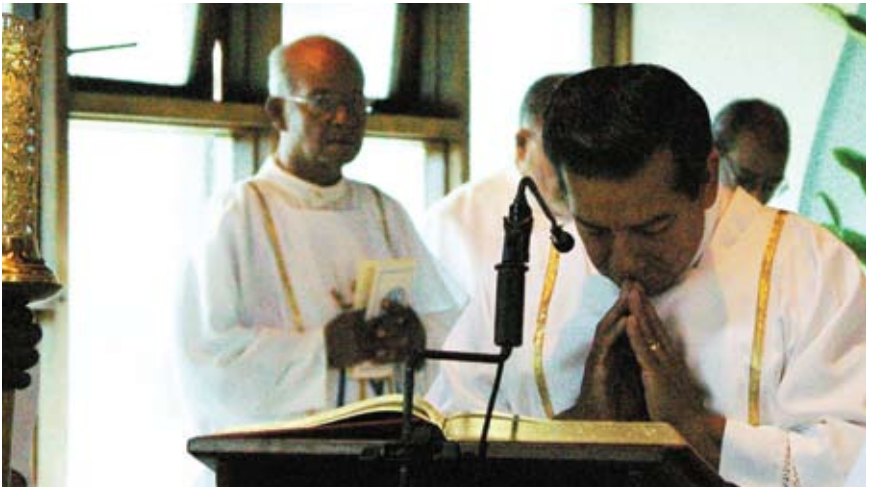
Paul Zilonka, C.P.

Scripture for Life

By Paul Zilonka, C.P.

Each time we celebrate the Eucharist, we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread.” This familiar petition from the Lord’s Prayer is appropriate just before we receive the sacrament of Christ’s body and blood, the bread of life, which surpasses all earthly food. But that prayerful yearning for daily bread would also be just as suitable earlier in the Mass as we listen to the sacred scriptures which the lectionary prescribes for this particular day.

In the closing days of Vatican II, more than two thousand bishops approved the Constitution on Divine Revelation (*Dei Verbum*) on November 18, 1965. Though two years had passed since the promulgation of the Constitution on Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*), these documents are linked together by the richly evocative biblical metaphor of “the bread of life.” Towards the end of *Dei Verbum* we read, “The church has always venerated the divine scriptures as it has venerated the Body of the Lord, in that it never ceases, above all in the sacred liturgy, to partake of *the bread of life* and to offer it to the faithful from *the one table* of the word of God and the Body of Christ.” (DV 21). (italics added)



The celebration of the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, which is our contemporary form of the Mass, clearly reflects an ancient tradition dating to the origins of our church.



When Jesus grew up as a child in Nazareth, local synagogues in Galilee may have followed a lectionary style with a weekly reading of successive selections from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

This sentence vividly reminds us how the church always reads its sacred scriptures with *a sense of community* in mind. While there is no doubt that God speaks to us as individuals when we meditatively read the stories and admonitions of the Bible privately, the early church was born with a Bible in its cradle.

The proclamation of the scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments within the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy is one way many Catholics across the world regularly hear the word of God. Regrettably, the greater multitude rarely has an opportunity with any frequency. Sacred scripture also plays an important part in the celebration of each of the sacraments of the church, in the Liturgy of the Hours, and in other Services of the Word creatively drawn

up for specific occasions. However, the Eucharistic context for experiencing the Bible has its roots in the earliest days of the Christian community.

By the time of Jesus' birth, the Hebrew scriptures had already become an organized collection of Mosaic law, prophets, and other inspirational writings. When Jesus grew up as a child in Nazareth, local synagogues in Galilee may have followed a lectionary style with a weekly reading of successive selections from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These first five books were collectively inscribed on the scroll known as *Torah* ("tradition"). A second complementary passage followed. It was drawn from the biblical texts associated with the "former and later prophets." This broad selection of scriptures included both the oracles of and stories about some people who claimed to speak to the community of believers with the authority of God over a period of several hundred years after the establishment of David's kingdom about 1000 B.C.

The Gospels frequently mention how Jesus participated in synagogue worship. Indeed, in the Gospel according to Luke (4:16-21), Jesus proclaims a Spirit-filled passage from Isaiah 61 and then claims to the amazement of all that "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." This same sense of fulfillment explicitly reverberates through most of the New Testament documents which frequently say that something related to Jesus happened in order that "the scriptures might be fulfilled" (Matthew 1:22; Luke 24:44; John 19:36; Acts 13:27).

This biblical treasure was both a divinely inspired inheritance and a "written partner" with which Paul the Apostle dialogued in his preaching and writing. Made firm by his experience of the risen Lord, Paul ingeniously showed how the Hebrew scriptures proclaimed that, through faith in Christ, the Gentiles to whom he was sent could now share in the promise of salvation first given to Israel.

Other followers of Jesus brought together collections of the words and deeds of Jesus in the four Gospels. Paul and the evangelists used a variety of literary forms of their own time, such as parables, discourses, lists of virtues, or pastoral emendations to apply a teaching of Jesus to a new development in the rapidly changing

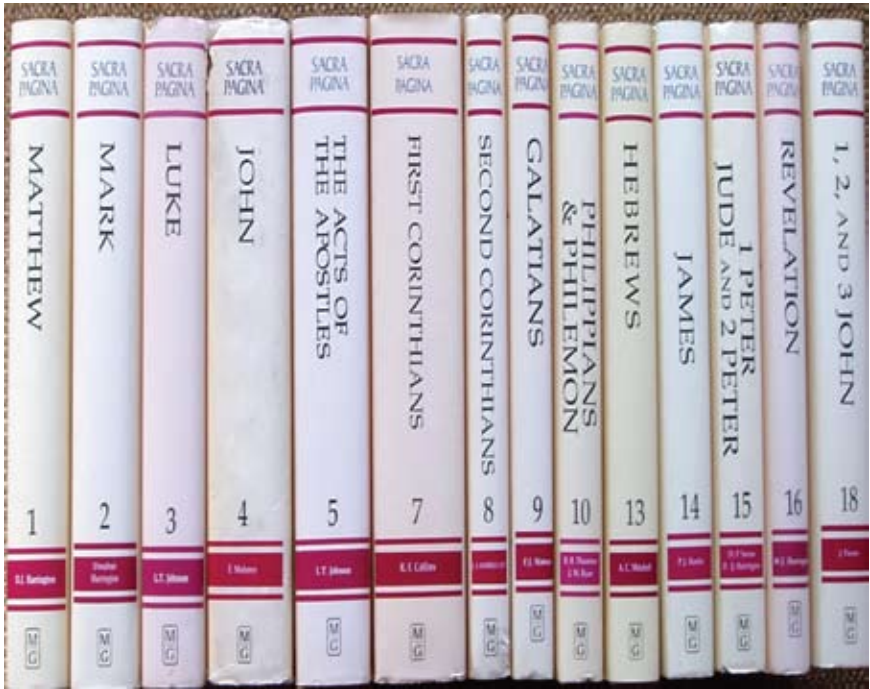
church. But even while recounting the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth in what appear to be simple straightforward stories, the evangelists never forgot his saving death and glorious resurrection. Easter's glory was always the lens of faith through which they recalled the words and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth.

The early Christian communities of Jews and Gentiles eventually joined their celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:18, 20) with aspects of the synagogue service which focused on the proclamation of the scriptures of the Law and the Prophets, to which the continuous reading of a Gospel was now added. Paul's pastoral letters were meant to be read at the public assembly of the believers ("the church in your house" Philemon 1:2). This integral celebration of the liturgy of the Word and the liturgy of the Eucharist, which is our contemporary form of the Mass, clearly reflects this most ancient tradition dating to the origins of our church.

The final chapter of *Dei Verbum* was entitled "Sacred Scripture in the Life of the Church." This title clearly affirms that scripture is, first of all, a treasure of the whole faith community, rather than simply a personal possession. Hopefully, we all have a copy of the Bible for ourselves so that we can meditatively read it whenever we wish, alone or with others, in prayer, faith-sharing, or perhaps discussion of some interesting background which deepens our understanding of the richness of the text, especially those passages which may at times seem obscure.

The fact that no new books have been added to the New Testament for about nineteen hundred years almost guarantees that some of the ancient images and outdated associations mentioned in its pages will become even more remote to future generations. Newer translations alone cannot overcome this chronological gap. That is why serious research of the original context of a passage, as well as preaching thoroughly grounded on the biblical text as understood within the faith community today, both play an important role in helping the members of the church to be nourished by scripture, the bread of life.

“...Such is the force and power of the word of God that it is the church’s support and strength, imparting robustness to the faith of its daughters and sons and providing food for their souls. It is a pure and unfailing fount of spiritual life.” (DV 21) How can we better enable scripture to nourish our spiritual growth? Everyone has a part to play. We need excellent preparation for those who proclaim the scriptures publicly in worship. Those who preach must give prayerful attention to the Lord as they diligently compose insightful homilies attuned to our own challenges as Christ’s disciples.



Finally, all of us can learn from the temptation story at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry the solution to the real hunger we have in life. “The tempter approached and said to him: ‘If you are the Son of God, command that these stones become loaves of bread.’ He said in reply, ‘It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” (Matthew 4:3-4) ✠

Fr. Xavier Vitacolonna, C.P., pastor of St. Joseph's Monastery Church, introduced me to the Passionist Community in Baltimore. In 1989, he hired me to be their Director of Religious Education. Eight years later, Fr. Xavier sent me information about a group of women who gave a one-time-only presentation of stories of Bible women. Little did I realize then what would develop from his thoughtful gesture.

Power of a story

For more than thirty years, I had taught in both Protestant and Catholic religious education programs for children, teens, and adults. During that time I had discovered the power of a story to show the faithfulness and love of God in our lives. I instantly loved this idea of women dressed in period costumes, each standing up, telling her story as a Bible woman, giving that woman's own personal witness.

In 1998 I began to explore and research the stories of some of the women found in the Old and the New Testaments. Being faithful to the biblical text was important to me. At first, I wrote eight stories. They seemed like my "babies." I knew I had to start getting feedback on them, but no one wants her "babies" criticized. I decided to first send my stories to my son, a choreographer in New York. He sent them back full of red ink. "Mom," he wrote, "you've given me too many facts. I need to know what these women are feeling."

My next critique came from my most sensitive friend. She called me with an invitation for a week's vacation in Acapulco, Mexico. I accepted. As we sat by the pool, I read her my precious stories and she explained what she thought each woman was feeling. Back home at the computer, I began to craft each story, to put myself in the place of each woman and ask her questions: What were you feeling? What made you angry or desperate or lonely? As I wrote, the stories began to unfold. The women in the stories started to come alive to me through the power of the Holy Spirit. After nine months of critiques and many revisions, I pronounced the eight precious stories complete.

The big test followed. How would they measure up to the scrutiny of contemporary scripture study? Fr. Paul Zilonka, C.P., scripture scholar at St. Mary's Sulpician Seminary in Baltimore, reviewed the text. Because I had attentively allowed the details of the original story to guide my expanded creative monologues for the characters, only a few changes were necessary. (*"Thank you, Lord!"*)



For almost ten years, a versatile 15-member cast has been presenting *Women of* women in both Old and New Testaments. To date, 300 performances in six states. of Bethany, Ellen Nibali as Hannah, Susan Corcoran as Mary Magdalene, Rebecca

Then something wonderful

Now to cast my characters. I invited many women I knew to join together to form a traveling troupe of storytellers. Most refused, even those I had in mind when I was writing the stories. As I reluctantly accepted their no's, I gave the casting over to the Lord. There were many who actually said, "Yes, I'll try." All summer long we worked



the Bible, Alive, an hour-long production featuring first-person accounts of
Dressed for their roles l-r: Rosemary Roenick as Ruth, Gloria Rink as Martha
Quinn as the Woman at the Well, Judy Coleman as Deborah

on costumes and memorizing. Then, in the fall of 1999, Fr. Gregory Paul, C.P., welcomed our first presentation at St. Joseph's. We were so nervous. Any slight distraction and we'd forget our lines. But it was a start. *Women of the Bible, Alive* was a reality!

After about six months of presentations, something wonderful happened. Each woman began to bring her own personality and individual touch to the story she was telling. She was no longer just repeating words. It was exciting to see she had become the woman whose story she was telling.

Fr. William Murphy, C.P., pastor of St. Joseph's Monastery parish since 2000, has been a great supporter of this ministry. He has asked us back again and again to tell more stories to the church community. Fr. Alban Harmon, C.P. has been our photographer and always has a smile and a hug for us.

We have twenty stories in our repertory now, and fifteen flexible and experienced story-tellers to help bring alive the women of the Old and New Testaments. We spread the Good News of Jesus Christ, six stories at a time in a one-hour presentation, ending with prayer. *Women of the Bible, Alive* also offers presentations for children and teens. We offer retreats and Bible-time meals with storytelling. The Blessed Virgin Mary comes and prays the Rosary with groups of any age. She tells her stories one mystery at a time.

Tenth Anniversary soon

Soon *Women of the Bible, Alive* will be celebrating its tenth year since one small idea started to develop and flourish. We have three hundred presentations under our collective belts, half of them for Roman Catholic groups, the other half for Protestant groups. Our traveling troupe, so far, has visited six states. No matter where we go, we feel welcomed and comfortable. God's people are always generous.

Speaking of generosity: Our traveling troupe agreed from the start to be non-profit. We do ask for a stipend, which can be whatever the sponsoring group can afford. Much of the offering goes to women and children's charities. To date, we've sent \$27,000 to the needy all over the world. One charity we annually support is the work of Fr. Rick Frechette, C.P. (once stationed at Baltimore's St. Joseph Monastery) and his mission to children in Haiti.



Twenty stories in their repertory, and six stories an hour.

In Old Testament roles l-r top: Susan Corcoran as Hannah, Gloria Rink as Bathsheba, Rebecca Quinn as Rahab, Peggy Beverungen as Naomi.

Lower row: Rosemary Roenig as Queen Esther, Judy Coleman as Deborah, Twana Keene as Hagar, Bonnie Williams as Sarah.

Women of the Bible, Alive has meant so much in the lives of the women of this ministry. Some of their comments: Susan Corcoran, with our group for nine seasons: "We're called to preach the Gospel. I believe that *Women of the Bible, Alive* is helping me to fulfill my mission to God." Judy Coleman, with us for six years: "I'm inspired to be a stronger woman of God through our performances and the interactions with the people we meet." Dareen McGloin, a nine-year veteran: "Acting and telling the stories of Bible women has given me such freedom. I feel a deep sisterhood with the other members of our cast. I see women being empowered, and those less fortunate being helped by our charitable donations."

It's important to us that our audiences find time to meditate on the stories we tell. Therefore, we always provide the Bible references for all twenty stories. We encourage our audiences to read the stories themselves, as well as to think about their own story of God's glory in their lives. We all have a story. ✠

The women of *Women of the Bible, Alive* are always delighted by the many ways God demonstrates his presence and care in this ministry. We want to especially thank the Passionist Community for their prayers and encouragement through the years.

(Gloria Rink is Founder & Director of Women of the Bible, Alive. More information about this powerful biblical ministry can be found at www.womenofthebiblealive.com)

“Father, Forgive Them”

by Peter Mais

After my wife’s murder near the chapel by the Pastoral Centre in March last year and before her funeral I sought the seclusion of a cottage in the Blue Mountains where I reflected and wept.

I realized that the tragedy was not an event to be considered in a vacuum. I reflected that Jesus was as present with her in that garden near the chapel as he was present during his own agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Once this thought seized upon me I was led to reflect on Jesus’ own passion and death which brought me to meditate on his own words: “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”

As we forgive

I was able to place Jesus’ forgiving words in the context of the torment which he was undergoing: He was covered with the spittle of his persecutors, crowned with thorns, stripped of his earthly garments, fed with gall and given vinegar to drink, had been stabbed with a lance and was now nailed to a cross. Yet he pleaded with the Father, seeking forgiveness for his tormentors, among whom we are, since we inflict pain on his mystical body whenever we sin. He sought justification for them and for us even now in these words: “For they know not what they do.”

And so I realized that Christ places a high premium on forgiveness. He taught us to pray to the Father and centered in his prayer we find: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” St. Paul continued the same theme in his letter



Vilma Mais and her husband were married thirty-seven years and deeply involved in the life and mission of the Jamaican religious community, the Missionaries of the Poor. Vilma started the prison ministry of Stella Maris Church contributing weekly to the spiritual uplifting of inmates at two large penal institutions, and acting as a link with families on many occasions. After spending an hour in Eucharistic adoration at the Stella Maris chapel one afternoon, she stopped next door at the church office for some business related to the prison ministry. As she walked through the chapel garden, an assailant stabbed her many times, and fled with her Bible and handbag. A poem she had written as a song a few weeks before her death now graces a stone monument in the chapel garden. "So here I come to you my Lord, Just to see your smiling face, You are all I need to be, So take me now, Oh Lord."

to the Ephesians: "Be kind to one another, compassionate, forgiving one another as God has forgiven you in Christ." (4:32). It then became clear to me that forgiving others is the imperative condition to God forgiving us. If we want God to forgive us completely, we must completely forgive those who cause us harm. "From this day you will be with me in Paradise" he promised the good thief. If we want to enter Paradise immediately at death, we must neither attach a price nor place a qualification on forgiveness.

Armed through the Spirit with these thoughts I found it possible to pray for forgiveness and mercy for Vilma's murderer and I publicly extended the palm of forgiveness to him in a tribute which was read for me at the funeral. I continue to pray for him and his family daily.

Many people have disagreed with me on this and on positions which I have since taken, one of which is that I refuse to participate in a crime-stop-program by which I would be required to offer a bounty for the capture of the murderer. One argument advanced is that forgiveness is best offered when you confront the perpetrator. The best example of this, some people said, is

Pope John Paul II, who visited in his prison cell the person who stabbed him and there confronted and forgave him.

For starters I am not of the spiritual caliber of Pope John Paul. On the other hand the good Pope never offered a bounty for the capture of his attacker. I believe that Vilma's murderer suffers not only bitter remorse but he and his family suffer the consequences of this crime even without his being incarcerated. I do not believe that God intended that I impose the condition that I must first confront the perpetrator in order to forgive him and pray for him and his family. My closure is the certain knowledge that Vilma is in Heaven with the Lord she loved so dearly, praising him and at the same time praying for all of us.

Reversing a desire

It is never easy to forgive. There is a part of us that cries out for satisfaction. Some call it justice, some retribution. It is a human



desire, which we inherited from Adam who fell from grace by a tree and with him the whole human race. This is not the way of God. On the contrary, he sent his Son to reverse that

unholy human desire by means of the wood of the cross so that, as a great saint once pointed out, "the disobedience caused by one tree can be blotted out by the obedience of the other tree."

I believe that if we ask for and expect to receive God's unconditional forgiveness we must offer it in return. God gives it freely through love; we should offer the olive branch freely in joy and in gratitude to God. It is what God wants; it is his way. Let us pray for each other for the grace to constantly sustain this holy attitude towards forgiving each other and forgiving those who have and will harm us. ✠



What's That Again?

by Sr. Honora Werner, O.P.

Parables are stories that teach. Well, so are fables, legends and myths. What's distinct about parables? Parables turn our worldview upside down. Parables make us question the truthfulness of our working assumptions. Parables play "Gotcha!"

Jesus' parables do just that, but our problem is that we read and hear them centuries later, and in a culture very different from first-century Galilee. The people who first heard these parables from Jesus' lips had an advantage we lack. Twenty centuries later, we need help in order to feel their dramatic effect. Let's look at some of Jesus' parables to understand what they might say to us today.

Among the most favorite of stories told by Jesus are three we find alongside each other in Luke 15. All three are lightly linked together because they tell of something precious that has been lost. We can all relate to losing things of value. But the images of God portrayed by Jesus in these parables may be less familiar to us.

Ninety-nine sheep

First, there is that shepherd who, discovering one sheep missing from the flock, goes off in search of the lost one. (Luke 15:4-7) But wait! He leaves the ninety-nine alone in the wilderness! What kind of shepherd would do a thing like that? He sounds terribly reckless, doesn't he? Rather like a person who discovers a dollar missing from her wallet – and who leaves her wallet containing \$99 on the counter in the store and goes out into the mall in search of the one dollar she lost. Surely no one we know would do that.

But Jesus goes on to say there is greater joy over the one who is found than over the ninety-nine who were not lost. What a crazy response! But wait, Jesus is talking to religious leaders who identify themselves as people who do not stray. Jesus knows better. His story says "Gotcha!" because we all need "finding." The image of God is that of a shepherd who cares and risks the search for anyone who strays!

Jesus tells a second story, this time, about a woman who lost a coin. (Luke 15:8-10). She has nine others, but the ten coins may well

be her dowry, her “social security” in case she is ever widowed. So, diligently she searches and finds that lost one. Like the shepherd who finds his lost sheep, the woman invites her friends and neighbors to rejoice that she found the coin. But is Jesus really imaging God as a woman? Women in those times were considered unreliable witnesses, persons in need of male protection from womb to tomb, certainly not as god-like as their brothers. Oh, Jesus, you’ve done it again! Gotcha!

The two sons

Then comes what is, perhaps, the most famous of the Lucan triad: the father who loses two sons (Luke 15: 11-32). One rebels openly and behaves scandalously in a foreign country. Then, full of fear for his own future, he comes back home at least to be fed and housed. But the loving father has been on the lookout for this fellow, runs to meet him, and welcomes him home with open arms and a huge party.



The other son’s rebellion is quieter, but just as real. His years of “obedience” were spent unwillingly. His resentment boils over to the point that he cannot call the younger man “brother” – only “that son of yours” and he cannot join in a family celebration. Yet his father stays with him, pleading for his return, declaring his love for him even as the elder son storms around in such disrespect.

To people in that ancient world with expectations that a family patriarch behave regally, powerfully, demanding reverence, deference, and obeisance, this father’s behavior would be shocking. And to image Almighty God in this way? No. God would surely punish severely the younger son, and those who heard the story from Jesus, themselves the “older sons” would be...oh dear. We are squirming in self-recognition. Note, too, Jesus does not tell us that

the younger son remained at home, faithful to his family's honor, nor that the older son ever joined the celebration. We can see ourselves in either or both sons, and then see our God as outrageously loving and forgiving.

The last ones hired

The parable of the vineyard workers is another one that makes us all uneasy each time we hear it (Matthew 20:1-15). The owner of a vineyard hires workers early in the day and after agreeing about their customary daily wage, sends them off to work. He goes out several more times throughout the day. When he finds more workers, he promises to give them a just wage. Finally when the heat of the day is past and with the sun heading towards the horizon, he hires the ones still available. But surprisingly, as he doles out the wages beginning with the last hired, he gives everyone the same amount, a full day's pay! It is not surprising that we might feel irritated when we hear that. We might well agree with those hired first who complain, "Not fair, not fair." The owner's generosity offends our sense of justice.

But think for a moment. Who were the first hired? Most likely, the most able, the ones who met the owner's expectations for a day's worth of endurance on the sun-drenched hillsides. And the last hired? For whatever reason, their services were not sought today. Perhaps, they were not considered able-bodied enough. In this story we hear of a God who does not judge or reward people according to merely human standards of excellence. Rather, God gives all a chance, and rewards people according to divine standards of judgment! Our American "bootstrap" mentality about success and reward does not compute when one has no bootstraps... and God seems to understand!



The sower

What about that sower (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23) who scattered seed on good soil, on rocky soil, on thin soil and amid thorns? Is he blind? Is he careless? Or again, is he—according to Matthew, an

image for God—fully aware of what’s happening and allowing for the seed to touch unlikely places? Perhaps God is more hopeful than we are. Or perhaps being fertile soil is a challenge to hearers. Think about how soil is made fertile: rain (tears), humus (difficulties), plowing (being broken), and so on. Either way, Jesus challenges our images both of “the good” human life and of God.

“Good Al-Qaeda member”

Finally, we hear one of the most popular parables of Jesus when a scholar of the Mosaic Law asks Jesus to define the meaning of one’s “neighbor” whom the faithful Jew should love as oneself (Luke 10:25-37). People who help strangers in need, and even hospitals, bear the name of “Good Samaritan.” But for Jesus’ hearers calling a Samaritan ‘good’ would be tantamount to our saying a “good Al-Qaeda member.” Jesus’ compatriots hated the Samaritans, so for him to make a Samaritan the hero of his story (over the official religious personnel, a Levite and a priest!!!) was outrageous. After creatively forcing the lawyer to admit that the Samaritan alone had demonstrated genuine neighborliness, Jesus went on to say, “Go and do likewise.” That means, go and treat your “enemy” with the same generosity and compassion as this Samaritan did.

Hearing the parables anew with “first-century ears” sometimes makes them less lovely, but may make them more effective in our lives today. Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it! ✕



(Sr. Honora Werner, O.P. is a member of the Dominican Sisters of Caldwell NJ. In addition to her responsibilities on the Province Team, she has served the American church for decades in the Dominican ministry of preaching, and a variety of educational endeavors from early childhood to major seminary.)

The Quilting Project

Sr. Carolyn Stoe, S.S.N.D.

Sr. Carol Datz, S.S.N.D., was a pastoral minister at St. Patrick's Parish in the town of Victor, New York in the early 90's. One of the duties that fell to her was a request to guide a group of adults seeking greater spirituality. This was a familiar scenario after Vatican II as larger numbers of educated Catholics of all ages sought to build upon the faith of their youth to deal with a multitude of contemporary questions not found in the long-revered Third Edition of the Baltimore Catechism.

Since the inquiring parishioners were women, and since few women are mentioned in the Sunday lectionary, Sr. Carol suggested building the sessions around this particular aspect of scripture. The women enthusiastically embraced the idea.



RUTH
GLEANED
IN THE
FIELDS
OF
BOAZ

For a trusty guide in this project, Sr. Carol turned to a source entitled *Quilt Patterns: Women of the Bible*. The women included were Eve, Miriam, Sarah, Deborah, Ruth, Esther, Mary, Elizabeth, Mary and Martha, Lydia, Dorcas, and Priscilla. This popular book by Suzanne Schaffhausen and Judy Rehemel is no longer available from Augsburg Fortress Press. However, a diligent book enthusiast may locate a copy still available in cyber world, the new universe where nothing seems to go away forever!

Sr. Carol packaged material with directions from the authors' designed symbolic patterns associated with some scriptural details in each woman's story. Session after session, a member of the group would prepare the stitched symbol of the woman studied at that meeting. As they stitched each new piece to the growing banners, the whole group became "stitched together" in a lasting friendship.



Sr. Carol Datz, S.S.N.D. enabled the group to discover the importance of faith stories from the past as they worked and reflected together.

Sr. Carol used her native talent in quilting and creative prayer experiences with approximately twenty-five women who gathered in morning or evening groups. In each session, she would offer important background information on one of the twelve biblical women chosen for the project. As the weeks passed, the women grew in faith by their reflection on the stories of these biblical women. Through conversation, they shared how these stories related to their present lives. They learned that sharing faith with others forms a deeper faith. Faith stories from the past have something important to say to the way we live today.

After months of study and stitching, the banners were complete, but the party was just beginning. The quilters along with other parishioners joined together to celebrate on a Sunday afternoon in St. Patrick's parish center. Following a meaningful concluding presentation by a guest speaker, everyone shared in Jewish biblical refreshments in order to remember these great women of the Bible fittingly.

This group of parishioners learned how the church today is fed through the biblical stories from the past. The sharing of God's Word in this way fostered more interest in both the Old and New Testaments, as it built trust and a spirit of community among the participants. This project also inspired the group to continue on and seek more knowledge about saintly women of the church from biblical times to our own day.✠

Sr. Carolyn Stoe, S.S.N.D. ministers as Director of Religious Education at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Stratford, CT.

Bread on the Waters

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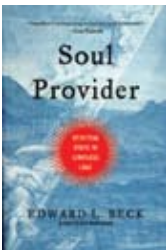
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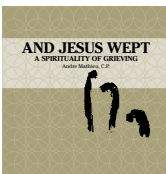


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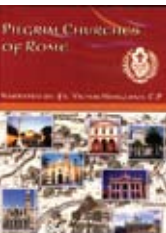
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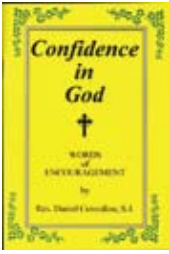
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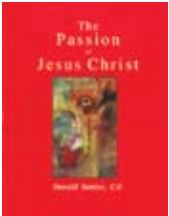
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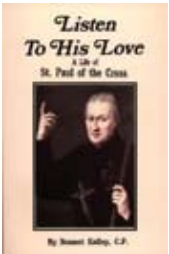
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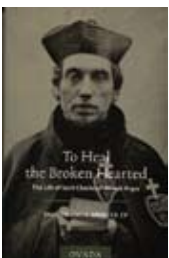
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