THE FEAST OF THE PRESENTATION OF THE LORD

From Father Robert

When dealing with children or even with adults, it's good to keep things fair. We do not want to favor one over the other, for such is the breeding ground of jealousy and resentment. It is important to make sure that there is an even or equitable distribution.

Today's gospel is from Luke, who gives us more stories about women than any other gospel. In fact, often throughout the Gospel of Luke there is a story of a man paired with a story of a woman. And, in fact, we see this pairing today with Simeon and Anna.

We hear the longer version of the gospel to include the story of Anna. There are so few stories of women in the gospels that it does not seem right to read only a portion of the story, in effect clipping out Anna, shortening it so that we hear only about Simeon rather than Simeon and Anna. Joseph and Mary are fulfilling the obligations of Mosaic Law, the precepts of their faith. Both Simeon and Anna are in the temple, and each encounters the child Jesus – Simeon having been there at the prompting of the Holy Spirit, and Anna because she never left the temple. Both are prophets, though Luke properly uses the feminine form, “prophetess,” of Anna. Not only does Anna give thanks to God, but she also speaks about the child to those in her midst.

Luke sets the story in Jerusalem, in the temple, where Zechariah, the priest and father of John the Baptist, first learned that his wife, Elizabeth, would have a son. Jerusalem will also be the location where the gospel ends. Luke is geographically bookending his story as it were.

After Joseph and Mary leave the temple, having fulfilled the precepts of the law, they return to their home in Nazareth, and we never hear of Simeon and Anna again. Their respective prophecies continue themes from Luke that were sounded by Elizabeth and by Mary herself. Jesus is destined to be the rise and fall of many. The hungry will be filled and the rich will be sent empty away.

The gospel story for the Presentation of the Lord is “rich” with theological significance and meaning. Luke gives us not only the perfunctory fulfillment of Mosaic Law, but also those actions accompanied by a prophet and by a prophetess. We do well to read the story to include both Simeon and Anna, and not snub the significant role of a woman to save a few minutes during our liturgy.
Living The Paschal Mystery
It should not to be said that women figure prominently in some of the most remembered stories about Jesus, including His birth, death, and resurrection. And here today we have the story of His presentation, accompanied by the presence of Simeon and Anna. Many other stories about Jesus feature men so prominently that it seems only right to read today’s gospel in its entirety. In so doing, we are reminded of something we know well: women speak the powerful words of God just as men do. In the Old Testament and in the New, women were prophets (prophetesses). When given the opportunity, let us feature this, too often neglected, aspect of our rich faith. And in our own world, in our own day and age, let’s listen attentively to the prophetess in our own midst. Luke gives equal voice to the women. We would do well to follow his example.

- The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord is a traditional time to have candles blessed that will be used in the home throughout the coming year. On what occasions do you and your family light candles? How does the symbolism of the candle remind you of Jesus’ presence?

- Through the words of the prophet Malachi, God describes His messenger by saying, “He is like the refiner’s fire.” When was a time in your life when you felt like you experienced this refining fire of God?

- The Letter to the Hebrews reminds us that Jesus is able to help us in times of testing, “because He Himself was tested through what He suffered.” In your life of faith, how do you ask for Jesus’ help when facing temptation?

- In Simeon and Anna we find models of faith, patience, and prophecy. How are you being called in this moment in your life to exercise the spiritual gifts of Simeon and Anna?

The Floral Arrangement at the Altar this weekend is placed to the Glory of God and In Loving Memory of Agnes J. Rien, the mother of Father Robert, John, and Doug. She would have celebrated her 101st birthday on February 5th.
About Liturgy: A Feast of Light

Occurring forty days after the Feast of the Nativity of the Lord, today’s feast is for some cultures, the true conclusion of the Christmas Season. It is also a traditional day for blessing candles. These are taken home by the faithful to be lit during times of prayer and are used for the blessing of throns on St. Blasé Day, February 3.

The Introductory Rites for today are different from what is used in the usual Sunday. The Roman Missal gives two options for the entrance rite. In the first option, the entire assembly begins outside the church or in another building. Candles are given to every person and lit. After the Sign of the Cross and Greeting, the Presider leads a blessing over the candles. Then the entire assembly processes to the church. Once all are gathered outside, the Glory to God is sung followed by the Opening Prayer.

In the second option, a representative group of the faithful gathers at the door of the church where the rest of the assembly can still be engaged in the rite. After the Sign of the Cross, Greeting, and Lighting, and the blessing of everyone’s candles, the procession begins as usual but concludes with the Glory to God and Opening Prayer, as in the first option. In both options, the Penitential Act is omitted. We will be using the second option in our liturgies.

The Burning of the Palms

Each year, we gather on the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, known as “Shrove Tuesday,” to burn the dried palm branches from last year’s celebration of Ash Wednesday. This year, the ritual burning of the palms will take place on Tuesday, February 25th, at 8:30 a.m. If you have never been a part of this annual ritual, I invite you to join us. It follows immediately after the Liturgy of the Word and Communion Service at 8:00 a.m. in the Gathering Plaza at the brazier.

A receptacle will be in the narthex beginning the weekend of February 16th to receive your dried palms.
The Season of Lent 2020

Welcome to our annual Journey Through Lent! The Ceremonial of Bishops reminds us that “the annual observance of Lent is the special season for the ascent to the holy mountain of Easter. Through its twofold theme of repentance and Baptism, the season of Lent disposes both the catechumens and the faithful to celebrate the Paschal Mystery” (249). While repentance is a well-known Lenten theme, many people are surprised to learn that Baptism is an integral part of the season as well, both for catechumens and the faithful.

Anyone who has ever attempted mountain climbing, or has even tried to walk up a steep hill knows that it is very hard work. The disciplines of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving that are part of our Lenten journey help us to build our spiritual muscles to ascend the mountain to Easter. This is no easy task for Christian disciples. But as the old cliché says, “no pain, no gain.”

There is an ancient tradition of chanting the Litany of the Saints at the beginning of the First Sunday of Lent, when the Church begins its ascent to the holy mountain. Both the Ceremonial of Bishops and Paschale solemnitatis recommend recovering this ancient practice. While this might seem like an odd custom, it is not without precedent, as the Litany of the Saints is also used during other important processions. At the Great Vigil of Easter, it is chanted as the Paschal Candle leads the Elect and their godparents to the saving waters of the Baptismal Font. The Litany of the Saints is chanted during conclaves as the cardinal electors process into the Sistine Chapel to elect a new pope. These important processional moments in the life of the Church remind us that we celebrate the heavenly liturgy every time we gather at the altar. They also remind us that we do not walk this journey alone. As we begin Lent, we invoke the intercession of the saints, women and men who took prayer, fasting, and almsgiving seriously, like so many other important aspects of our Christian life.

Many of the scripture readings throughout Lent speak of Jesus’ ascent. The Gospel for the First Sunday of Lent reminds us of the devil taking Jesus up a high mountain to tempt Him. On the Second Sunday of Lent, Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain where He is transfigured before them. Later in Lent, we are reminded that Jesus goes up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. It is there that He went to the Mount of Olives, where the crowds waved palm branches and branches of olive and shouted “Hosanna!” These “mountain” experiences helped prepare Jesus for His ultimate experience of going up, His being lifted up on the Cross on Calvary for the salvation of the whole world, as well as His Resurrection and later Ascension into heaven, where he sits at the right hand of the Father.

Like Jesus, we too are called to go up the mountain this Lent and Holy Week. The mountain, though, will not likely be a specific place but rather a particular experience of the Paschal Mystery, of Christ’s death and resurrection. The Lenten
disciplines of Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving help us to prepare our bodies and spirits for the ascent to Jerusalem to celebrate Easter. In this way, the Prayer Over The Gifts on Ash Wednesday remind us that what we do on the exterior helps to move our interior and vice versa: “As we solemnly offer the annual sacrifice for the beginning of Lent, we entreat You, O Lord, that, through works of penance and charity, we may turn away from harmful pleasures and , cleansed from our sins, may become worthy to celebrate the Passion of Your Son.” We are embodied beings who use our bodies to pray, fast, and give alms. St. Paul, in his Philippians hymn in the Second Reading on Palm Sunday reminds us that Jesus emptied Himself and took on the form of a slave. Our Lenten sacrifices allow us to empty ourselves so that we can be filled, once again, with the grace of the Paschal Mystery at Easter.

In doing so, they ritually accept their invitation to the Easter Sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Eucharist.

On the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent the scrutinies, three more stops on the way up the mountain are celebrated with the Elect in the presence of the worshipping community. The Rite for the Christian Initiation of Adults teaches us that “the scrutinies are meant to uncover, then heal all that is weak, defective, or sinful in the heart of the elect; to bring out, then strengthen all that is upright, strong, and good.” The Gospel passages of Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan Woman at the Well, His giving sight to the Man Born Blind, and the Raising of Lazarus on these three Sundays are all clearly baptismal in focus and point to the water, light, and new life that come from the Sacraments of Initiation.

The Chrism Mass, celebrated at the cathedral, is one of the last liturgies of the Lenten season and likewise one of the final stops on the way up the mountain. Standing at the threshold of the Great Three Days, the clergy and faithful of the Diocese gather around its bishop as he blessed the holy oils that will be used for Baptisms, Confirmations, the Ordinations of bishops and priests, dedications of churches, Anointing of the Sick, and the anointing of catechumens in the coming year. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy reminds us that this “preeminent manifestation of the Church is present in the full, active participation of all God’s holy people in these liturgical celebrations, especially in the same Eucharist, in a single prayer, at one
altar.” The Entrance Antiphon for the Chrism Mass points to that greater reality of the one great High Priest and of His sharing that priesthood with us in the reception of the sacraments: “Jesus Christ has made us into a kingdom, priests for His God and Father. To Him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.”

Lent is a joyful season, and while it may be serious, it is never sad. In the Gospel for Ash Wednesday, St. Matthew says, “When you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites. They neglect their appearance so that they may appear to others to be fasting.” Our fasting, as well as our praying and almsgiving, should be done to draw attention to Christ, not to ourselves. Preface I of Lent states: “For by your gracious gift each year, your faithful await the sacred paschal feasts with the joy of minds made pure, so that more eagerly intent on prayer and on the works of charity, and participating in the mysteries by which they have been reborn, they may be led to the fullness of grace that You bestow on Your daughters and son.” This is quite a contrast to some predisposed notions about Lent that make it seem like a six week extended Passiontide rather than a joyful season of conversion and turning anew toward the Gospel. While the Stations of the Cross and other devotions that emphasize the passion and death of Christ are appropriate during Lent, especially on Fridays, and as we move closer to the days of Holy Week, we must be sure to include opportunities that emphasize the two pillars of Lent, both repentance and baptism.

In his seminal work, *Great Lent*, Alexander Schmemman refers to lent as a time of “bright sadness,” which mentions a different form of sadness than most people are used to. He states, “As we make the first step into the ‘bright sadness’ of Lent, we see – far, far away – the destination. It is the joy of Easter, it is the entrance into the glory of the Kingdom. And it is this vision, the foretaste of Easter, that makes Lent’s sadness bright and our Lenten effort a ‘spiritual spring.’ The night may be dark and long, but all along the way a mysterious and radiant dawn shines on the horizon.” The lengthening of days, at least in the Northern Hemisphere, helps to emphasize this dawn on the horizon.

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Februrary 26, 2020
8:00 a.m. - Holy Eucharist and the Imposition of Ashes

12:00 Noon - Liturgy of the Word and Imposition of Ashes

5:30 p.m. - Liturgy of the Word and Imposition of Ashes

7:30 p.m. - Sung Evening Prayer and Imposition of Ashes
*The offering is designated for our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr, Pittsburgh*
First Sunday in Lent

Saturday, February 29, 2020
The Penitential Procession and Great Litany
4:00 p.m.

Sunday, March 1, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.
The Penitential Procession and Great Litany

Second Sunday in Lent

Saturday, March 7, 2020
4:00 p.m. Vigil Eucharist

Sunday, March 8, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist;
The Gospel of the Transfiguration

Third Sunday in Lent

Saturday, March 14, 2020
4:00 p.m. Vigil Eucharist

Sunday, March 15, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist;
The First Scrutiny at 10:00 a.m.; The Gospel of the Woman at the Well

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Saturday, March 21, 2020
4:00 p.m. Vigil Eucharist

Sunday, March 22, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist;
The Second Scrutiny at 10:00 a.m.; The Gospel of the Man Born Blind

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Saturday, March 28, 2020
4:00 p.m. Vigil Eucharist

Sunday, March 29, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Holy Eucharist;
The Third Scrutiny at 10:00 a.m.; The Gospel of the Raising of Lazarus
Triduum

Holy Thursday, April 9, 2020
8:00 a.m. - Sung Morning Prayer
7:30 p.m. - Evening Liturgy of the Last Supper Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Washing of Feet, Holy Eucharist, Procession To The Altar of Repose, Adoration until 10:00 p.m.

Good Friday, April 10, 2020
8:00 a.m. - Sung Morning Prayer
12:00 Noon - Ecumenical Worship, “The Seven Last Words”
3:00 p.m. - The Commemoration of the Lord’s Passion and Death Liturgy of the Word, The Passion According To St. John, Veneration of the Cross, Holy Communion
7:30 p.m. - Tenebrae Liturgy of the Word and Veneration of the Cross

Holy Saturday, April 11, 2020
8:00 a.m. - Sung Morning Prayer
7:30 p.m. - The Great Vigil of Easter Lighting of the New Fire, Liturgy of the Word, The Sacraments of Initiation, and Holy Eucharist

Palm Sunday and The Beginning of Holy Week

Saturday, April 4, 2020, 4:00 p.m.
Vigil Eucharist; Blessing of Palms, Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Reading of the Passion According To Matthew, and Holy Eucharist

Sunday, April 5, 2020, 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Holy Eucharist; Blessing of Palms, Procession Liturgy of the Word, Reading of the Passion According To Matthew, and Holy Eucharist

Monday, April 6, 2020, Monday of Holy Week; Holy Eucharist, 8:00 a.m.

Tuesday, April 7, 2020, Tuesday of Holy Week; Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion

Wednesday, April 8, 2020, Wednesday of Holy Week; Holy Eucharist, 8:00 a.m.
EASTER DAY – THE FEAST OF THE RESURRECTION

Sunday, April 12, 2020
8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.
Festive Choral Eucharist Procession, Liturgy of the Word, Renewal of Baptismal Promises and Sprinkling Rite, Holy Eucharist

The Weekdays of Lent

Monday – Wednesday – Friday
Holy Eucharist 8:00 a.m.

Tuesday – Thursday
Liturgy of the Word and Holy Communion 8:00 a.m.

Martyr, Pittsburg, as a part of our Lenten Almsgiving.

Following the supper, there will be a different Lenten service each week in the church at 7:30 p.m. The schedule is as follows:
Friday, February 28, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Clam Chowder; 7:30 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Friday, March 6, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Vegetable Soup; 7:30 p.m. Sung Evening Prayer

Friday, March 13, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Cream of Potato; 7:30 p.m. Liturgy of the Word and the Sacrament of Anointing

Friday, March 20, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Cream of Carrot; 7:30 p.m. Stations of the Cross

Friday, March 27, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
French Onion Soup; 7:30 p.m. Sung Evening Prayer

Friday, April 3, 2020 - 6:30 p.m.
Clam Chowder; 7:30 p.m. Communal Penance/Sacrament of Reconciliation

Lenten Soup Suppers

This year we will be having a simple soup and bread supper each of the Lenten Fridays at 6:30 p.m. A Free-will Offering will be received and all proceeds will be donated to our adopted parochial school of St. Peter

One of the important directions we have taken as a parish this year is to do even more regarding the Works of Justice. How does this apply to the Season of Lent? With regard to the threefold discipline of Prayer,
Fasting, and Almsgiving, we suggest the following:

**Prayer** – in place of “memorized” prayers, we invite you to pray for the trouble spots and painful places in the world, i.e. Iran, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Africa, for the healing of our government and its leaders as well as those of all the countries of the world, for the healing of our Church as an institution.

**Fasting** – not so much from food as from any ways of thinking, speaking, or acting that are negative, hostile, judgmental, negatively critical, and remembering that we are totally dependent upon God. We can be at one with the hungry of the world for dignity, respect, for forgiveness, and for love.

**Almsgiving** – in addition to our financial support for Catholic Education through our adopted parochial school of St. Peter Martyr, Pittsburg, are almsgiving this Lent can challenge us to be less material, less of a consumer, and more united with the holy ones who dedicate their lives to the needs of others.

Additionally, Ash Wednesday is a Day of Fasting and Abstinence for all between the ages of 13 and 59, which means only one full meal and two lesser meals that do not constitute a full meal and refraining from eating meat or meat by-products. All the Fridays of Lent are Days of Abstinence, refraining from eating meat or meat by-products. Good Friday is also a Day of Fast and Abstinence for all those aged 13 to 59 only one full meal and no meat or meat by-products.

Cardinal Cupich: Promoting human dignity is our baptismal call
Jan 25, 2020
by Cardinal Blase Cupich

Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich is pictured during the Synod of Bishops on young people, the faith and vocational discernment at the Vatican Oct. 18, 2018. (CNS/Paul Haring)

**Editor's note:** Cardinal Blase Cupich, the archbishop of Chicago, spoke Jan. 25 at this year's annual Catholic Social Ministry Gathering in Washington, which brings together Catholic activists from across the country. This year was the first time the Catholic Social Ministry Gathering was timed to coincide with the annual March for Life. Cupich spoke about the relationship between the universal call to holiness and the church's ministry promoting justice and human dignity. Here is the text of his speech as prepared for delivery.

Thank you for your warm welcome. My first words to you are filled with great appreciation, for I know I stand before leaders who are key to the Catholic social ministry in the U.S. You all share a deep faith in Jesus Christ that inspires you on a daily basis to respond with dedication and
personal sacrifice to the pressing domestic and global challenges of our day. The theme of your gathering, "Bearing Witness: Life and Justice for All," while a vision for the entire Church, is in reality a description of what you do each day.

You asked me to briefly speak on the connection between the work of promoting human dignity and justice for all and our baptismal call to holiness. Too often we begin such discussions about how we are to live our baptismal call by citing things that we are doing or should do, especially for the least in our midst. What I find unique in the teaching of Pope Francis is that he inverts the discussion. Instead of starting with what we are doing or should do, his attention is on what Christ is doing. He understands that the pursuit of a holy life is about encountering this Christ who is already active and present, and joining in his saving work of building the Kingdom of God. Christ is the one who takes the initiative, not us. And as the first pope to be a "son of the Second Vatican Council," Francis is particularly attentive to its insights as he invites the Church to pay attention to Christ's saving action in the world. This is what it means to read the signs of the times.

In Gaudium et Spes, the Council Fathers prophetically declared that something new is happening in our era: we are witnessing the "birth of a new humanism, where people are defined first of all by their responsibility to their brothers and sisters and to history" (Gaudium et Spes 55). This new appreciation of our relationships with one another as the place where God is at work opens up a new way of being Church and of understanding our baptismal call. It makes us more aware of the need for a consistent ethic as we promote human dignity and justice for all. It also helps us achieve a proper balance as the Church engages the world of politics and as we take up our ministry to the least in our midst. Let's take a look at each of these areas.

In this era of a new humanism, it is not surprising that the Council Fathers retrieved from our tradition the biblical vision of the Church as the People of God. In Lumen Gentium, they reminded us that God's plan from the beginning was to make us holy and save us "not as individuals, without a bond or link between one another, but to bring them together as one people" (Lumen Gentium 9). This teaching stands in stark contrast to the not-so-subtle message of so much American public discourse today — namely that what matters most is the individual person, choice, personal freedom. What the Council Fathers wanted to underscore was that it is in our relationship with one another as a human community that we are saved. This is where God works and manifests himself in bringing about the Kingdom of God.

This opens up a new way of being Church. Lucio Gera, an Argentinian theologian who has greatly influenced Pope Francis, writes that in the vision of the Council, "The Church takes place as intercommunion between human beings — not only as relationship of humans with God but as interrelationship of human beings among themselves. The relationship with the other is not simply something added to a Church already constituted by a relationship with God. The relationship with the other is also constitutive of the Church, that is, it is set within the very essence of being Church" (Escritos teológico-pastorales de Lucio Gera, 358, as cited in Pope Francis and the Theology of the People, Rafael Luciani, 4). Priority is given to fostering human relationships when we think of salvation history, which differs from a view of religion or religious practice simply in terms
of institutional belonging or increasing "market share." And as Pope Francis reminds us in *Evangelii Gaudium*, since "(B)eing Church means being God's people, in accordance with the great plan of his fatherly love ... (then) we are to be God's leaven in the midst of humanity ... proclaiming and bringing God's salvation into our world, which often goes astray and needs to be encouraged, given hope and strengthened on the way" (*Evangelii Gaudium* 114).

A pilgrim from Ghana asks others from his country to raise their hands during a World Youth Day catechesis session lead by Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich at the Parish of Our Mother of Perpetual Help in Panama City Jan. 25, 2019. (CNS/Chaz Muth)

Likewise, our Christian call to holiness is not about being called as an individual, but an invitation from God in which he brings people together and invites believers to a deeper level of human intercommunion and shared life. The proper task of a Christian, then, as the Council tells us, is to work with everyone in building a more human world (cf., *Gaudium et Spes* 55). This is about taking a stand toward reality in which neither our spiritual lives nor religion can be understood without social commitment. Nor can salvation be understood without the need to transform history. They are linked together. (See Rafael Luciani, *Pope Francis and the Theology of the People*, 3).

Such an approach also subverts any attempt to fragment our Catholic social teaching, pretending to offer so-called non-negotiables, which ends up reducing our moral tradition to a single set of issues. In *Gaudete et Exultate*, Pope Francis warns against such an "ideological error found in those who find suspect the social engagement of others, seeing it as superficial, worldly, secular, materialist, communist or populist. Or they relativize it, as if there are other more important matters, or the only thing that counts is one particular ethical issue or cause that they themselves defend." He goes on to say, "(O)ur defense of the innocent unborn, for example, needs to be clear, firm and passionate, for at stake is the dignity of a human life, which is always sacred and demands love for each person, regardless of his or her stage of development. Equally sacred, however, are the lives of the poor, those already born, the destitute, the abandoned and the underprivileged, the vulnerable infirm and elderly exposed to covert euthanasia, the victims of human trafficking, new forms of slavery, and every form of rejection" (*Gaudete et Exultate* 101).

What is needed is an integrated and consistent approach, with the priority being our attention to what Christ is doing, saving us by bringing us together, bringing about the Kingdom of God by creating a people. Absent this focus, we risk our call to holiness. "We cannot uphold an ideal of holiness," Francis observes, "that would ignore injustice in a world where some revel, spend with abandon and live only for the latest consumer goods, even as others look on from afar, living their entire lives in abject poverty" (*Gaudete et Exultate* 101). Likewise, he continues, "(W)e often hear it
said that ... the situation of migrants, for example, is a lesser issue. Some Catholics consider it a secondary issue compared to the 'grave' bioethical questions. That a politician looking for votes might say such a thing is understandable, but not a Christian, for whom the only proper attitude is to stand in the shoes of those brothers and sisters of ours who risk their lives to offer a future to their children" (Gaudete et Exultate 102).

Finally, being attentive to what Christ is doing in bringing about the salvation of the world has much to say about our ministry in promoting life and justice for all, especially the poor. The starting point must be a deep and loving respect for the poor, uniting with them, accompanying them, not to tell them what to do, but with an appreciation for the creative capacity to pursue the life God has always intended for them. This means recognizing that Christ is already at work in the lives of the poor. Those we serve are not objects of our charity. They don't exist to make ourselves feel better by offering our help. Rather, as Pope Francis often reminds us, we must see the poor for who they are: protagonists, subjects of their own history, but also worthy contributors to society, precisely because their unique experience has taught them what it means to belong to a people.

They teach us, Lucio Gera writes, that the "first condition of belonging to a people is the consciousness of needing others and this is, in the poor, a living and wounded consciousness. They are, therefore, more capable of being in solidarity — of giving to others and expecting from them — more capable of being a people...Hence, we lean toward designating as people the multitude of the poor." (L. Gera, "Pueblo, religión del pueblo e Iglesia" as cited in Pope Francis and the Theology of the People, Rafael Luciani, 16).

In the end, the more we appreciate the poor as subjects, as protagonists, never as instruments, they in turn can begin to evangelize us. Our relationship, then, becomes fully reciprocal.

In the end, the more we appreciate the poor as subjects, as protagonists,
never as instruments, they in turn can begin to evangelize us. Victor Fernandez elaborates on the unique contribution, the unique beauty of the poor, explaining: "We can find in the poor some profoundly Christian values: a spontaneous attention to the other, an ability to devote time to others and to go to another's aid without calculating time or sacrifice, while the more educated, with a more organized life, are unlikely to grant to others time, attention and sacrifice spontaneously with joy and disinterestedly." (El sensus politi: la legitimidad de una teologia desde el pueblo as cited in Pope Francis and the Theology of the People, Rafael Luciani, 14).

Similarly, Rafael Luciani, speaks about the "spontaneous moral wisdom" of the poor, which allows them to seek "a good greater than the immediate." He cites Rafael Tello's comment that, although (the poor) may "comply little or badly with some aspects of Christian morality due to the factors constraining them, nevertheless (they) have complied much more than the highly educated with other aspects of morality: first, (with) a spontaneous ... and firm trust in God and a spirit of deep adoration; ... a sense of solidarity that is also spontaneous, that does not need motivations to get it moving, as usually occurs with the more educated" (see Pope Francis and the Theology of the People, Rafael Luciani, 18).

We are all familiar with the criteria on which our discipleship will be judged as clearly stated in Matthew 25. Yet, that passage reminds us that when we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and shelter the homeless, we discover Christ in our midst, as the one who is already present and active, saving the least in our midst by uniting them to the point that he is, in fact, one with them. And so, must we be. Indeed, Christ speaks of these good works as so important that they are significantly determinative of our salvation. Consider what Jesus is saying: If we do not feed the hungry, give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, visit the imprisoned, then "what you did not do for one of these least ones, you did not do for me." If we do not help those in need, we have failed Christ, precisely because of the way persons are related — not only to one another, but also to God. If we do not understand this fundamental Gospel truth, then we do not understand the call to Christian holiness.

In sum, when we fail to make what Christ is doing the starting point as we take up the social ministry of the Church, we end up with a distorted view of the Church and our very call to holiness. So too, losing sight of Christ's saving action as our point of reference, risks fragmenting our approach to social justice by giving priority to one issue or a set of issues according to our standards or worse yet, our compromises with worldly powers.

Altar servers lead the opening procession at start of Mass Aug. 4, 2019, at St. Margaret Mary Church in Chicago. Chicago Cardinal Blase Cupich celebrated Mass for hundreds of
members of various Asian ethnic communities. (CNS/Chicago Catholic/Karen Callaway)

If we do not help those in need, we have failed Christ, precisely because of the way persons are related — not only to one another, but also to God.

All of this calls us to an act of faith that the Risen Lord is truly present in the world, but it also calls us to a vigilance that allows us to see his action in the lives of the poor. This past week, I visited the Art Institute of Chicago, which featured an exhibit of over 400 works of Andy Warhol. One of the last objects was Warhol’s version of Leonardo Da Vinci’s "Last Supper." He layered over it the colors of military camouflage, forcing the viewer to look for the otherwise familiar image of the Lord at table.

I leave you with that image, inviting you to keep your eyes fixed on Christ, as you join him in his saving work of building up the Kingdom of God, the People of God. May we continually discover him in the least among us. May the light of the Gospel help us see through whatever camouflages the needy from our sight, whatever impedes us from being evangelized from those on the margins. For it is in encountering the poor and the marginalized that we are mutually enriched, that we respond to the call to holiness as we take up the social ministry of the Church —because we know that whatever we do for the least of our sisters and brothers, we do for Christ. Thank you.

Laudato Si’ five years on: a continued call for courage
Jan 28, 2020
by Tomás Insua

Pope Francis greets 16-year-old Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg, with Tomás Insua by her side, during his general audience in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican April 17, 2019.
(CNS/Reuters/Yara Nardi)

This year, "Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home” turns five years old. The systems that support life continue to collapse all around us, and the fifth birthday of Laudato Si’ has occasioned a moment of reflection for many.

Where have we come in the last five years? Where is our faith calling us now?
Five years ago, the world was stunned by its first reading of Laudato Si’. Here was a document of unimaginable beauty. Here was a sense of life, a palpable hope for the healing of creation.

I first read Laudato Si’ with friends and colleagues from all around the world, and as we read we sent messages back and forth, sharing a sense of marvel. It’s hard to remember a document that created such wonder. I once counted all the exclamation points in the encyclical and found eighteen. Eighteen!

This document has a boundless enthusiasm for life that has brought many people back to the unfailing gift of joy that our faith offers
us. As *Laudato Si’* says, “Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise.” (12)

Colorful wildflowers frame the peak of Byron Glacier near Girdwood, Alaska, July 3, 2019. Pope Francis’ 2015 encyclical "Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home" was widely lauded for its scope on the moral and ethical response to protecting Earth’s environment for future generations. (CNS/The Compass/Sam Lucero)

But *Laudato Si’* is not only beautiful. It is also difficult. *Laudato Si’* is unflinching in its recognition that creation was entrusted to our care and that we have let selfishness and short-sightedness lead to its ruin.

*Laudato Si’* does not give us a false sense of comfort, but rather asks us to honestly look at the crisis we have created. This is the only way we’ll find the courage to solve it. As Pope Francis says, “Doomsday predictions can no longer be met with irony or disdain. . . . the present imbalance can only be reduced by our decisive action, here and now.” (LS 161)

So, what is the “decisive action” that we’ve taken since *Laudato Si’* was released? One outcome of *Laudato Si’* was the creation of Global Catholic Climate Movement, an organization that I co-founded with a global group of allies. In the five years since our founding, we’ve helped over 150 Catholic institutions divest from fossil fuels (becoming the single largest source of participation in the divestment movement), trained and certified nearly 1,500 *Laudato Si’* Animators to lead action in their communities, supported our 900 member organizations in hosting thousands of local events, and so much more.

But Global Catholic Climate Movement is only one member of a vibrant community. Countless diocesan commissions, parish committees, religious communities, and other groups have taken bold steps forward in the past five years.

As one example, Catholic Climate Covenant has developed a Catholic Energies program, which provides financing and expertise for Catholic institutions to get renewable energy or increase their energy efficiency. The program has begun the construction of Washington D.C.’s largest solar array, built for the Archdiocese of Washington.

Our brothers and sisters of all faith traditions are also hearing the call. Among the most helpful interfaith initiatives is *Living the Change*, a tool for people of faith to understand which lifestyle practices best protect creation. This platform and its associated commitment form make clear that sustainable lifestyles are an essential way to practice the core values that unite many faiths.

Within and beyond our Catholic tradition, we’re stepping forward in practical ways to protect the gift of God’s creation. We are united; we do not stand alone, but are working shoulder-to-shoulder to bring *Laudato Si’* to life.
And *Laudato Si*’ itself does not stand alone. *Laudato Si*’ is a reminder that caring for creation has been part of our faith since Genesis. Popes and bishops from all corners of the Earth have long taught its themes. *Laudato Si*’ is a milestone in a journey that began long ago and that will continue for ages to come. As Francis himself says, “These questions will not be dealt with once and for all, but reframed and enriched again and again.” (LS 16)

It is up to us to “reframe and enrich” creation care in our own communities. As we look ahead to the next five years, the demand to take urgent action will only grow. At this moment, fires consume Australia, where over one billion animals have died.

Some time in the coming years, climate chaos makes it extremely likely that a storm will devastate communities in the Philippines, that a drought will bring hunger and migration to sub-Saharan Africa, and that malaria will creep to ever-warmer land. We must accelerate our progress to meet the challenges of the years ahead. As Francis has told us, “Truly, much can be done!” (LS 180) Around the world, we are heeding his call.

[Tomás Insua is Executive Director of the Global Catholic Climate Movement.]

Caring for the Caregiver

Thank you for your interest in the forgotten in our community – caregivers! Our recent “Nourish for Caregivers” information session introduced you to this monthly faith-based support group for caregivers. There are support groups for almost every ailment and situation known, yet few for these 65 million U.S. caregivers, and certainly none that embrace the spiritual needs of caregivers like Nourish.

Nourish is being set up in a deanery to minimize costs and staffing needs. There are many ways to assist in this program that do not involve a lot of time. Parish reps from each deanery parish, when they meet, may choose to divide the workload equally, with a parish rep facilitating the group only one or two times year per parish. Some parish volunteers may be interested in supporting the promotional or logistical aspects of organizing the ministry. In any case, together we will begin to provide meaningful help to the caregiver-participants.

If you are willing to help organize and/or facilitate this ministry in your deanery OR KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD, please connect with us and let us know time and day options for an organizational meeting.

Please let us know your interests in this ministry by emailing/calling Sandy Heinisch (sandvnca@sbcglobal.net) or (925) 628-1503.

In the meantime, while you are deciding on your level of participation and awaiting our organizational meeting in your deanery, please join us in praying for family caregivers.
Frances Rojek, Mel Costanza, Maryann Peddicord, Estrella Rusk, Alicia Perez, Bev Iacona, and Paul Riosfki.
...to our St. Vincent de Paul volunteer who transported last week’s donations: Frank Zamora.
...to our faithful weekly bulletin assembly team: Dave Costanza (Lead), Carole Miller, Kathy Augusta and Vince Augusta.
...to our wonderful Parking Lot Security who keep watch over our vehicles during the weekend Liturgies: Don Benson, Steve Rojek and Dave Simpson.

Our thanks to all those who do so many things to help us and without whom so many things would do undone! Someone asked me last week who our janitorial service is and when I told them we didn’t have one, they were shocked! I let them know it is all done by parishioner volunteers, faithful parishioner volunteers who come early each Saturday morning to clean and prepare the church and parish hall and that there are many other parishioner volunteers who are actively involved in helping us. So, volunteers matter!

Once again, on behalf of all of us: thank you to those who clean the church each week: Mency Osborne, Angela Bueno, Jean Rogers, Alfred Madoshi, and Al Cosce.
...to those who clean and maintain the bathrooms in both the church and parish hall throughout the week: Steve Rojek, Mary Ewing, Patricia Britton, and Fr. Robert. ...to Dilcia Aparicio who does such an excellent job of washing, ironing, and caring for the Sacred Linens.
...to our Sacristans and Altar Guild who prepare the sanctuary for the celebration of Eucharist each week:
Peter Degl’Innocenti, Pam and Rich Confetti, Vincent Rodriguez, Harlan Young, Monika Kauer, Adora Pesapan, Nancy Santos and Rose Salamanca.
...to our counting teams who are here every week to count the weekly collections.
...to our volunteers who assisted in the parish office last week: