

Network News

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict

Abbot's Notes

Peace.

"God" has become a topic of interest for some of late. Some have wondered how God could let this or that happen to this or that person at this or that time. How can God allow such human suffering and pain?

We must be conscious that God is not who or what we think or believe he is or is nor—much less that God is a "he," "she," or even an "it".

We humans tend to give God human qualities and traits so we can get a better grasp of who or what God is. The more we do this, the more we lose our sense of God.

We get further lost in our beliefs. The more lost in our beliefs, the more we even fight for our belief as the true belief about God. Some are injured, some die—all in the name of (our) God.

God is not a thought. This we know. God is but our experience of God. How do we experience God? The eyes of another person, the feel of the sun, the rush of the air, the light from the lamp. A storm. A sunset.

To experience God, we must let go of our thoughts of God, our delusions. We must let go of our descriptions about God, our perceptions.

We even must let go of our stories about God, our allusions. These are all our creations though which we create God, our own God.

If our God does not agree with us, we get angry at God and may even lose faith in God. Of course, this is just our God and not God.

Interestingly enough, the more we let go of our creations of God we also let go of our creations of our own self—that itself we come to realize is but our own creation as well.

We then come to know God. We come to know our own self. Amen.

November, 2000

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Points of gentle consideration:

- Is not Beauty in the eye of the beholder?
- Is not our thought of God in the eye of the beholder?
- Is not the thought of our life in the eye of the beholder?
- Who beholds?

The Human Bible

His name is Bill. He has wild hair, wears a T-shirt with holes in it, jeans and no shoes. This has been his wardrobe for his entire four years of college. He is rather esoteric and very, very bright. He became a Christian while attending college. Across the street from

the campus is a well-dressed, very conservative church. They want to develop a ministry to the students, but are not sure how to go about it. One day Bill decides to go there. He walks in with no shoes, jeans, his T-shirt, and wild hair. The service has already started and so Bill starts

down the aisle looking for a seat. The church is completely packed and he can't find a seat. By now people are really looking a bit uncomfortable, but no one says anything. Bill gets closer and closer and closer to the pulpit and, when he realizes there are no

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Thanksgiving Sermon by Fr. John Mabry

I am kind of a research fiend. I get excited about a project or a subject, and I'm instantly unavailable because I'm haunting the libraries, scouting locations, spending hours on end reading in the bathtub, and holed up with my computer.

In preparation for the new Youth Communion Service at our church, which we have titled "The Festival of Friends," I sought out the Young Adult services of other churches, on the prowl for resources, models, and ideas.

At one of these services at the University Christian Church at GTU about eight of us sat around a low table ringed with candles, for a very informal service which could hardly be called a liturgy. The sermon consisted of our each taking a large sheet of paper and a magic marker and, in the words of the old evangelical hymn, we were asked to "Count Our Blessings, Name them One by One."

Now, as some of you may be aware, Kate and I have been going through a very difficult time in our lives, so getting started was rough going. The first thing I thought of is my dog Clare, who is a never-ending source of joy to me, regardless of my circumstances. Next, I wrote down "My wife."

Now, of course I was not listing these in order of importance, although Kate may argue otherwise...

Eventually the gratitude gates burst open, and in a felt-tip frenzy, my blessings poured out over the page. Curiously, however, I noted that not all of the things I noted appeared to be all that positive at first glance. I was expressing to God, on this sheet of paper, gratitude for my difficulties, of all things, for the challenges, the pain and the occasional heartbreak that has visited my life. When I finally

finished, with a list of 82 items, I was amazed at how many of the items came from God's Left hand, how many were "surprise" gifts which I would hardly have thought as gifts at all.

In the Sermon on the Mount we find Jesus dealing with just exactly the sort of paradox I encountered in trying to enumerate my blessings. For he was not talking to a hypothetical audience, he was talking to an occupied people, who were dominated on the one hand by the Romans, who told them they could not govern their own affairs, and the Pharisees on the other, who told them that God was far from them because the common people were not part of the elite "inner circle" of God's Pharisaical elect. On top of that add a harsh climate and all of the little mishaps that life seems eager to send our way, and you have a pretty vivid picture of the people who are hearing this sermon. And to them, Jesus said

"Are you poor in spirit?" Are you depressed or disempowered? Then you are favored in the eyes of God. You are blessed.

"Are you mournful?" Has great sadness befallen you in your life? Then you are favored in the eyes of God. You are blessed.

"Are you meek?" Do you feel badly about yourself, and feel yourself unworthy of God's grace and comfort? Then you are favored in the eyes of God. God will bless you!

"Are you persecuted because you do what is right?" Then you are favored in the eyes of God. Yours is the kingdom of heaven.

None of these people felt particularly blessed by their hardships, and yet Jesus defied their skepticism, and called their hardships a blessing to them.

And when even your hardships have a flip side to them, what

can there possibly be to fear? Jesus says to us "Don't worry about your life, about what you shall eat or drink, about what you shall wear. Your God knows what you need." God will not abandon you. What you need will be provided. The hardships you face will end in blessing.

I realize that I'm beginning to sound like Robert Schuller and his "Be-happy-attitudes." That's a frightening thought, so I'd like to back up for a moment and provide us with a reality check.

We all like our kitchens tidy. We all like our living rooms presentable to strangers, and our bathrooms spotless. But the truth is that our lives are rarely tidy. Our bathtubs always have a ring, and there is always something in our lives that is inconvenient if not tragic. And that is not likely to change.

But Jesus did not wait for the world to get tidy to enter into it. Jesus is not waiting for tidiness to enter your life in order to minister to you. God is found in the middle of the mud, or God is not found at all. In the recently discovered Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says, "Split the wood, and there you'll find me. Move the stone and there I'll be." It is in the midst of our ordinariness and chaos that we meet God, it is in the most difficult of circumstances that grace comes to bear. It is up to our ears in parking violations, missed appointments, sick loved ones, marital strife, and unreliable appliances that God is waiting to be noticed, that blessings are waiting to be received and that peace is available to any who will have it.

Jesus did not say "The Kingdom of God is above you," or "The Kingdom of God is beyond you," or "The Kingdom of God is in

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Children's Definitions of Love...

A group of professionals posed the question "What does love mean?" to a group of 4 - 8 year-olds and the answers they got were broader and deeper than anyone could have imagined. See what you think.

- 1) Love is that first feeling you feel before all the bad stuff gets in the way."
- 2) When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."
- 3) "When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You know that your name is safe in their mouth."
- 4) "Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other."
- 5) "Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your french fries without making them give you any of theirs."
- 6) "Love is when someone hurts you. And you get so mad but you don't yell at them because you know it would hurt their feelings."
- 7) "Love is what makes you smile when you're tired."
- 8) "Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and

- she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK."
- 9) "Love is when you kiss all the time. Then when you get tired of kissing, you still want to be together and you talk more. My mommy and daddy are like that. They look gross when they kiss."
- 10) "Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and listen."
- 11) "When you tell someone something bad about yourself and you're scared they won't love you anymore. But then you get surprised because not only do they still love you, they love you even more."
- 12) "Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it everyday."
- 13) "Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well."
- 14) "During my piano recital, I was on a stage and scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore."

If my heart can become pure and simple like that of a child, I think there probably can be no greater happiness than this.

Kitaro Nishida

- 15) "My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night."
- 16) "Love is when mommy gives daddy the best piece of chicken."
- 17) "Love is when mommy sees daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford."
- 18) "Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day."
- 19) "I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones."
- 20) "I let my big sister pick on me because my Mom says she only picks on me because she loves me. So I pick on my baby sister because I love her."
- 21) "Love cards like Valentine's cards say stuff on them that we'd like to say ourselves, but we wouldn't be caught dead saying."
- 22) "When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you."
- 23) "Love is when mommy sees daddy on the toilet and she doesn't think it's gross."
- 24) "You really shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget."

(Thank You Maria O'Shea)

Human Bible (con't)

(Continued from page 1)

seats, he just squats down right on the carpet. (Although perfectly acceptable behavior at a college fellowship, trust me, this had never happened in this church before!) By now the people are really uptight, and the tension in the air is thick. About this time, the minister realizes that from way at the back of the church, a deacon is slowly making his way toward Bill. Now the deacon is in his eighties, has silver-gray hair, and a three-piece

suit. A godly man, very elegant, very dignified, very courtly. He walks with a cane and, as he starts walking toward this boy, everyone is saying to themselves that you can't blame him for what he's going to do. How can you expect a man of his age and of his background to understand some college kid on the floor?

It takes a long time for the man to walk to the front. The church is utterly silent except for the clicking of the man's cane. All eyes are fo-

cused on him. You can't even hear anyone breathing. The minister can't even preach the sermon until the deacon does what he has to do. And now they see this elderly man drop his cane on the floor. With great difficulty he lowers himself and sits down next to Bill and worships with him so he won't be alone.

Everyone chokes up with emotion. When the minister gains control, he says, "What I'm about to preach,

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A Monastic Practice

In the Christian tradition there is an ancient practice called Keonisis, emptying. Christ emptied himself of his divinity and humanity when he gave his life.

We, too, are called to empty ourselves of our sufferings and joys and enter the kingdom, now at hand.

A Tibetan meditation technique taught by Tarthang Tulku. Tulku is a Tibetan lama who left the country after the Chinese invasion. His method for eliminating unwanted thought forms and their effects, is described in the book *Hidden Mind of Freedom*.

"Working with thoughts by opening them as they arise can bring many pleasant feelings, which--without attachment--also become our meditation. . . We can even go into the thoughts that judge other thoughts, and, embracing this judging mind, become united with it."

"By relying on the light of awareness you can see that the difficulties you face are manifestations of your own concepts. Going deeply into your thoughts, you will see how you create your experience, how you alone are the judge who determines heaven and hell,

good and bad."

"Whatever experience arises, stay with it, expand it, and heat it up. If you remain within the intense core of the experience, (you) unite with thoughts and emotions, and everything dissolves. Then awareness grows powerful and one-pointed. As thoughts and emotions are increasingly included within this field of awareness, they become more useful. Instead of being a cause of frustration or confusion, they become agents of well-being. . . ."

Be peace.

West Coast Deanery

The West Coast Deanery serves many in the San Francisco Bay Area. Many of us travel each weekend to officiate at several weddings and a baptism or two here and there. We continue to experience an ever growing need for our services.

Fr. Skip Sikora and his wife, Susan, have moved to Monterey, California. Fr. Skip has assumed the position of General Manager of the Seven Gables Inn.

On November 18, Diana Miles will be Advanced to Candi-

dacy for Orders. Diana has been studying and has received the institution of Reader and Acolyte,

We welcomed Fr. Philip Freneau into our clerical community recently. Fr. Philip with Deacon Brooks serve in Northern California by operating a retreat center. Deacon Brooks will be soon ordained to the Order of Priest.

We also welcomed Fr. Ray Rau (Grand Rapids, MI), into our clerical community in September.

And we have welcomed Fr.

John Lula (see Mid-west note) in May.

Fr. Ariost, besides Anglo-Catholic parish responsibilities, serves as executive director for the Convalescent Hospital Ministry of Santa Clara Valley. (408-374-6070)

Fr. John Mabry, continues to spread the good Word by editing *Presence*, the journal for Spiritual Directors International and the *Pacific Coast News*, a publication for the Episcopal Diocese of California. To be on Fr. John's e-mail list for his insightful sermons, e-mail to: homily@apocryphile.net.

Deacon Donna Stoneham, besides facilitating corporate spiritual direction programs, is completing her doctorate in Religious Studies..

Fr. Gerry, serving as Chancellor, invites us to remain present to what we are doing. Fr. Gerry is contacting Catholic priests who may enjoy serving in some capacity with us. Please contact Fr. Gerry geraldcaprio@netscape.net if you know any priests considering their options.

Midwest-Eastern Deanery

Peace!

While not as hectic as the SF Deanery, we continue to toil away serving the people of God in many ways. Fr. Concy has been involved in hospital ministry for the past few years and completed his Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) residency in August.

Fr. John Lula is starting a small monastic community in Northwestern Indiana. If interested in learning more or know any who

may be, please contact from John at papajohn_46312@yahoo.com

Fr. Jim Balijs continues to travel throughout the deanery to celebrate the sacraments with as many people as possible from Atlanta, Boston and Chicago to Newark, Pittsburgh and St Louis.

Thank you.

Fr. Jim and Clerics of the East Coast Deanery.

Spiritual Support Team

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Chaplains of Divine Mercy

In June, 2000 The Chaplains of Divine Mercy became incardinated within the autocephalous Catholic jurisdiction of the White Robed Monks of St. Benedict. The Bishop-Superior is the Most Rev. Robert Smith, CDM.

The Chaplains serve in specific health care facilities in Florida. The Chaplains are themselves residents serving others with similar disabilities.

Their Rule is simple. The Adoration of the Divine Mercy through the Blessed Sacrament and the daily offering of the Eucharist for the disabled and outcast. The overflowing graces result in Spiritual and Corporal acts of Mercy. Thus is their way of Only Just Sitting and Being Present with Compassion.

The CDM Constitutions are

also simple. All disabled men and women who are willing to devote themselves to our Rule and have learned to offer the Eucharist and to administer the other sacraments (using the Western (Roman) Rite) are considered for ordination by the Bishop-Ordinary upon examination and are accepted into the Chaplains upon consensus.

CDM Profession consists in the renewal of baptismal vows according to the Western Rite and profession of devotion to the Rule of Divine Mercy.

Most of the Chaplain's work is done by phone or in person. The Chaplains minister to five halfway houses and to those needing assistance from the Epilepsy Association in their applications for Social Security. This is done on the phone with the Disability Determi-

nation Examiners. The Chaplains also help with food stamps, housing, and utilities over the telephone. The State sends case workers to homes. Bishop Robert CDM reflects, "It is amazing how much you can do without writing when you can't." How true.

The CDMs also care now for 150-200 homeless per week and 60 addicts in recovery homes. Grocery store chains donate food. Doctors and nurses offer medical care pro bono. The CDMs touch at least 300 to 400 disabled persons and family members weekly.

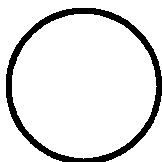
Incardinated priests include: the Reverends Mark Smith, Beatriz Smith, Carmen Soto, Milafros Torres, Tabatha Rutland, Jerry Chicone, Louis Haubner, Donna Whitehead, Thomas Kreinbihl, Ken

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Ausculata (Listen!)



BE AWAKE!

Human Bible Con't Thanksgiving Sermon Con't

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you will never remember. What you have just seen, you will never forget. Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read." LORD help me to be as accepting of others as you are of me. You accept me no matter how I am dressed or what I have done. Open my heart to accept others as quickly and fully in Love! Help me to become more like Christ. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

CDM Con't

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Schmeitzer, Christina Kneeland, and Ian Popeson.

For more information, please contact Bishop Robert CDM: yshwa@webtv.net.

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some far-off future when you get your kitchen tidy." What he said was "The Kingdom of God is amongst you," in the midst of our daily squalor, frustrations, and epiphanies.

My wife Kate was telling me of an acquaintance she made once of a young woman who had lived a very hard life. She had had a baby out of wedlock in her early teens, and ten or so years later, she said, "The worst thing that ever happened to me was getting pregnant, and the best thing that ever happened to me was my son."

As we turn our hearts towards our families on this holiday, I hope that we can forgive the frustrations enough to see the beauty of those we love. And as we turn our minds towards those things we are grateful for,

I hope that you will discover, as I did as I listed my blessings one-by-one, that God's good gifts come in many varieties, some more welcome than others, but all can enrich our souls, if we have the courage, and the patience, and the faith, to receive them.

Let us pray Many and great, O God are thy things, Maker of earth and sky. Thy hands have set the Heavens with stars; Thy fingers spread the mountains and plains. Lo, at thy word the waters were formed Deep seas obey thy voice.

Grant unto us communion with thee, thou star abiding one; Come unto us and dwell with us; With thee are found the gifts of life. Bless us with life that has no end, Eternal life with thee. Amen.