

the CATHOLIC NAVIGATOR

Charting a Course to Christ

16 March 2025 • Cycle C: Second Sunday of Lent

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The Human Soul

Psalm 8:4-10

The Catholic Imagination is the power of the human soul, breathed into man by God at Creation to know what is most deeply real – eternity and the infinite. With the help of the soul's senses, the Catholic imagination can take us nearer to God to apprehend Him in ways we cannot totally put into words. However, with God's permission, we can sometimes experience Him in a place just beyond our words. Let us pray for this...

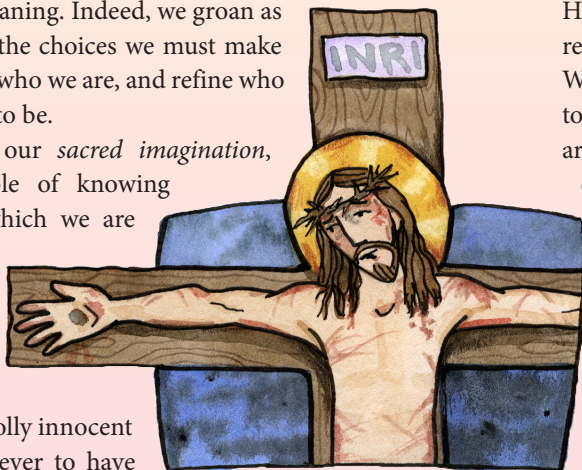


What's in a Word?

The first new word this week is *mimesis*, or *to imitate*. This is no simple repetition of what someone says, or an imitation of mannerisms. This involves more. As *mimetic* creatures, human beings have highly honed observational powers from our beginnings. Before birth, we are bathed in sound – words, music, tone, rhythm, and cadence – sometimes gentle, sometimes not. After birth, we take in sights, smells, tastes, and touches, rejecting and retaining as we choose.

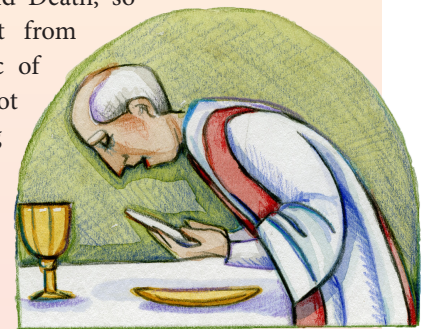
We imitate so acutely that we see and hear and intuit actions, emotions, wants, and responses to people, situations, and events. We 'try on' certain laughs, phrases, facial expressions, and interactions almost constantly. As we grow, we include in our imitation others from our community and from stories we are told. We imitate as we build our life, to both blossom and to find meaning. Indeed, we groan as we grow with the choices we must make to both define who we are, and refine who we most want to be.

Because of our *sacred imagination*, we are capable of knowing realities for which we are not present: We *know* the horrifying depths of the crucifixion of the only wholly innocent human being ever to have



lived. We *know* the embracing breadth of Jesus Christ's willing sacrifice that comes to rest in places within us that are too deep for words... but not too deep for imitation.

Anamnesis, from the Greek, is a 'a calling to mind, a remembrance.' This word is given to the part of the Mass that recalls the events of Jesus' life, making them real to us. Jesus, once living in our time and place, now exists outside of time. Just as our sacred imagination in the 'lifting up of our hearts,' reaches out into the fabric of time to give ourselves over to Christ's Passion and Death, so too does Jesus reach out from eternity through the fabric of time to bring us to the foot of His Cross. We don't drag Him into our time to be re-crucified at each Mass. We, by willing ourselves to surrender to this event, are fed by these words and deeds as they happened,



once and for all, so long ago. This kind of time travel is not mere imagination: A power of our soul, our sacred imagination allows us to, ever-so-briefly, touch eternity.

Knowing now what Jesus meant by 'love,' we are forever changed. We are invited to take on and imitate Christ's sacrificial love enacted in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and submit ourselves to the transformation He desires for us.

Scriptural Secrets

In today's Second Reading, St. Paul instructs the Philippians: "Join with others in being imitators of me, brothers and sisters, and observe those who thus conduct themselves according to the model you have in us." Paul is bidding them to adopt behaviors appropriate to their status as followers of Christ, so that they would be able to stand firm in the Lord.

Gen 15:5-12, 17-18
Psalm 27:1, 7-8a, 8b-9, 13-14
Philippians 3:17-4:1 or Phil 3:20-4:1
Luke 9:28b-36

Paul notes that many "conduct themselves as enemies of the cross of Christ... Their minds are occupied with earthly things." Is Paul referring specifically to those who don't follow Christ, collectively called pagans, or is he tossing a wider net to take in lukewarm converts? Most likely, he is in tears over those who claim a belief in Christ, yet cannot or will not fully commit to Him. The inclination to 'go along to get along' was as strong then as it is today. It is hard being demonstrably different in a culture whose values in many respects oppose Christ's teachings.

Consider, for example, that in imitating Jesus, we must give ourselves over to the Spiritual Works of Mercy, to 'instruct, advise, console, comfort, forgive, and bear wrongs patiently.' Or, to engage in the Corporal works of mercy – feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, and burying the dead (CCC 2447) – we ask if we are lacking state licensing or in conflict with local ordinances? How do we engage in civic affairs, address our children's education, protest injustices, and so on? Following Christ is not for the uncommitted. Take up your cross.



Catechetical

Common

The Mass is 'a visible sign of our communion with God.' (CCC 1071). And yet, in a religion of *paradoxes* (or seemingly contradictory realities which in fact are harmonious), we struggle to feel this communion. In death comes life? God's glory is seen on the Cross? We are fed by the Real Presence of Jesus Christ, 'Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity'? (CCC 1374)



The Mass continues with confusing lessons: It is a meal, but it is more. It is a celebration, but it is more. As a *sacrificial meal*, and a *memorial celebration*, we are brought into seemingly conflicting realities: Do we feel joy or sorrow? Reverie or introspection? Yes. The Mass is a place where we gradually wade into the depths of God and feel His Loving Touch.

Today's Gospel passage from Luke describes how we will one day know Jesus' Glory. With our bodies transformed, the Glory we see now in the Cross will be experienced as the brilliant warmth of Jesus' transfiguration. How? "This 'how' exceeds our imagination and understanding... (yet) our participation in the Eucharist already gives us a foretaste of Christ's transfiguration of our bodies:

Just as bread that comes from the earth, after God's blessing ... is no longer ordinary bread, but Eucharist, formed of two things, the one earthly and the other heavenly: so too our bodies, which partake of the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, but possess the hope of resurrection." (CCC 1000)

Let us pray that this hope grows in us.



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