



What's Inside: Page

Presiding Bishop's Remarks.....	1
Creativity and Christianity.....	1
What Good Is It To Me?.....	2
"Sacralizing" Space.....	4
Another Update From The Ark.....	5
From Rev. Altalo's Bookshelf	6

Creativity and Christianity by Bishop Linda Rounds-Nichols



Photo by Linda/Phil

Pre-COVID (remember those days?) I planned a retreat for the Women's Ministry of the Diocese of the Rio Grande. Naturally, we didn't hold the retreat in 2020, so it was planned again for 2021- you know what happened then! So, finally last year, we were able to gather for a day of conversation and creativity.

That retreat was called 'Bringing Our Creativity to Prayer,' and the participants had a great time, as did I. Planning and facilitating retreats can be a rewarding ministry, for the participants and for the facilitator.

So, when the opportunity arose again, this time to do a similar retreat at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Sedona, I jumped right in. After all, creativity is an integral part of Christianity, as we read in the first few lines of the Bible: "In the beginning God created...." Mary Daly wrote "It is the creative potential itself in human beings that is the image of God."

It's important to know that using creativity as
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Presiding Bishop's Remarks



Photo by Linda/Phil

Dear Antioch Clergy, Seminarians, and Friends,

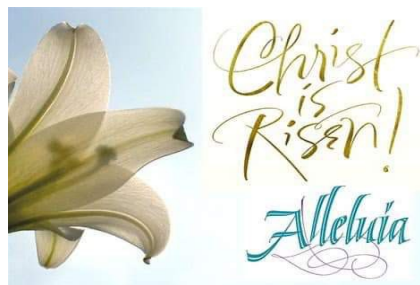
Welcome to another edition of The Voice. In the northern hemisphere it is springtime with its promise of awakening life in the natural world—flowers blooming, trees turning green once again, animals giving birth or preparing to give birth to new families. As I write this, we are still in Eastertide with the memory of the Easter Vigil still strong, the sight of the New Fire still vivid in memory, the Alleluia still proclaimed in our Eucharistic liturgies. Just as the natural world awakens, we too are invited to awaken spiritually to the promise of new life in the Risen Lord.

Spring and Easter share a common theme, the promise of renewal. It is important that we keep in mind that renewal is not a singular event, something that is once and done or something that is to be done only at a certain time of the year. Rather, it is a continual process, an ongoing movement to deeper and more conscious intimacy with God. As we continue to live the Easter season, may the seeds of renewal that have been planted within you continue to grow. May they blossom forth as awareness of the Christ that is you.

Christ has risen!

In truth, Christ has risen!

Presiding Bishop Mark Elliott Newman



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Creativity and Christianity (continued)

a method of prayer and contemplation isn't about the result of the creative activity. Instead, when we create intuitively, without expectation or judgment, we may find we can enter a deep liminal space.

Once we enter that space and allow something to happen, many people find they return to the 'real world' with great insight, answered questions, and a deep wonder, awe, or peace. It doesn't always happen, but sometimes we may actually like what we have done during our creative time, and if it is a tangible object, may find that just looking at it takes us back to our special space.

These thoughts were in my mind as I updated and created (pun intended) the activities and schedule for the upcoming retreat. We will cover three areas: Rhythm, Movement, and the Visual Arts. We'll have time for drumming and chanting, for walking the labyrinth and trying liturgical dance/movement. We'll do some Bible Journaling and make some SoulCollage® cards. This retreat, scheduled for June 2-3, will be called 'Contemplative Living for Those Who Can't Sit Still' because it is the second in a series on Contemplative Living practices, and the first covered quiet activities - those done while sitting still.



As you can see, a mess was created!

I know you all can't come – it's too far for most of you. However, I'd be happy to bring this retreat to our convocation someday. No, you don't have to believe you are 'creative' or an 'artist'. Put those judgments away! God created us in God's own image and God is creative which means we are, too! Besides, if we ever do this together, you, too, may be able to say, as Sue Monk Kidd wrote: "Why didn't I see this before? That my creative life is my deepest prayer."

So may it be!

References: Beyond God the Father; Mary Daly Dance of the Dissident Daughter, Sue Monk Kidd, and the Holy Bible.

What Good Is It To Me?

By Most Rev. Theodore Feldmann



Photo by Feldmann

"What good is it to me if this eternal birth of the divine Son takes place unceasingly, but does not take place within myself? And, what good is it to me if Mary is full of grace if I am not also full of grace? What good is it to me for the Creator to give birth to his Son

if I do not also give birth to him in my time and my culture? This, then, is the fullness of time: When the Son of God is begotten in us." Meister Eckhart (1260-1328)¹ I read this quote from Dominican preacher and theologian, Meister Eckhart, way back in 1986 when I read *Original Blessing* by theologian, Matthew Fox. I found it powerful then and it has become one of my guiding lights on the spiritual journey, especially at Christmas, because I believe that Christmas should not be about just one baby once a year, but also about all of us. In the sentence just before this quote begins, Eckhart suggests that we are all called to be "mothers of God." I certainly do believe that. And I think the answer to his question, "what good is it to me," is obvious: Not much good at all, unless we begin to embrace what he is saying. Western Christianity has spent a good deal of its energy focusing on what Fox calls "fall/redemption theology," the concept that we (and even the planet itself) are tainted with original sin and need to be redeemed. Jesus came to, as my Sunday School teachers used to say, "die to save us from our sins."

But I have come more and more to the conclusion that Jesus' message is about how we live now, not about some big pay off in the life to come. We are to be born and are called to give birth in, "our own time and place." Now is the only time we get. If we are going to find the sacred; if we are going to live our lives "abundantly," as Jesus says, then where else can we do that but now?

Holy Week and Easter are one of my favorite times of the year. As one parishioner said to me after a rousing Easter, "You're an alleluia kind of guy." Yes indeed. But, Easter must live in the context of Holy Week and the Triduum. I may be an alleluia guy but I am also a darkness and silence
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guy. So I would like to take this quote from the great Eckhart and apply it to the Triduum and pose some questions:

What good is it to me if Jesus enters into the tomb and I do not also enter mine? What good is it to me if Jesus dies and rises and I do not also die and rise? And, is it possible that we can do this throughout our lives, “unceasingly?” And what good is it to me? It is very good.

Resurrection is not the same thing as resuscitation. Bret Myers, makes that point this way: “Being resuscitated brings us back to a life of the old fears, anxieties, and spiritual failings of the past. Being resurrected takes us to a new life... To be resurrected into a life of perfect love is to know the peace that Christ gives to us...a peace not of this world, but of a world in which love - unconditional love - is the only thing that matters.”²

In the Easter stories, Jesus was resurrected. He was different. He appeared to people in very different and powerfully symbolic ways. He was transformed, one could even say, new born. “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead?” Luke 24: 1-5 Good question. And when an angel is asking, you better pay attention. Why do we so often look for new life in places where there isn’t much on offer? Why do we repeat the insanity of expecting different answers from people and institutions that have no real intention of growing or changing? Why do we let people and events in our long gone past occupy so much space in our lives now? When we are seeking new life, are we willing to enter the tomb and the experience of the tomb and then let go of past hurts that are holding us back from real forgiveness and growth? I, for one, will admit that I am holding on to old hurts and betrayals that are taking up way too much space in my brain that would be better used for something new.

The Triduum at its most powerful is about walking with Jesus in his own betrayal, death, and resurrection...and ours. And that includes an Easter where we leave the past in our tombs and look up into the morning sun of a new day. I think the wonderful author, Madeleine L’Engle, is on to something, as she often is: “...when we try to control our lives totally with the self we think we know, the result is that growth in self-awareness is inhibited. Faith, on the other hand, consists in the awareness that I am more than I know.”³

And elsewhere in the same book: “How many of us really want life, life more abundant, life which does not promise any fringe benefits or early retirement plans? Life which does not promise the absence of pain, or which is not vulnerable and open to hurt? How many of us dare to open ourselves to that truth which would make us free?”⁴

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. John 12:24 We are part of an evolving universe and it is entirely natural that we, too, are called to evolve, to let old things die and allow new things to be born. We carry with us the lessons learned from what we have been. Let them germinate. What we are to become has yet to be revealed. Easter, among other things, is a time to “dare,” as L’Engle would say, to leave the tomb and be born again. And again.

1. Meditations with Meister Eckhart, Bear and Co. Santa Fe, NM, 81.
2. Bret Myers on April 9, 2015, progressive christianity.org
3. Madeleine L’Engle, Walking on Water: Reflections on Faith and Art, Wheaton IL, Harold Shaw Publishers, 1980, 162.
4. L’Engle, 48.

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If you have anything to share, contact me, Fr. Ron - your Editor, at roncat@zianet.com

Your **VOICE** is an important part of who the Catholic Church Of Antioch (CCOA) is.

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"Sacralizing" Space - A Renewed Consciousness of the Timeless Power of Ritual

By Rev. Mary Altalo



Photo by Linda/Phil

I realized to my dismay that my last newsletter update on "Our Lady of the Bridge" has been over 2 1/2 years ago. I had such grand plans in 2020 in the midst of the pandemic which we all were assured would be over quite soon. I looked through my photos to document my progress and it brought home the reality of what it really meant to create "sacred space". The physical renovation was a bit more than I had bargained for. A re-plastering of the Church walls and ceiling, and installation of heat and air conditioning now provides for a rainproof, climate controlled

sanctuary for services appropriate to a "Free and Independent Sacramental Church grounded in the Christian Mystical tradition." The removal of the stage and basket ball court in the old Fellowship Hall provides space for the "learning center" with 6 seating areas configured for groups of 10 for small group discussion. The installation of a full kitchen facilitates the hosting of retreats and small conferences for continued instruction in practices for a contemplative lifestyle. We are indeed blessed that it only took 2 years!



The Nave



Presider's Chair



The Altar

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A Learning Area



Another Learning Area

However, I believe that the real progress has little to do with the renewed physical structure but in a renewed understanding of the "sacralizing" of space through an inbreak of timeless experience at the performance of sacred ritual. From spontaneous meditative supplication of the angelic realms to evoking the presence of saints, to praying the rosary and particularly in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, as our hearts are lifted up in adoration and praise, the space is freed from time-bound constraints to participate in the ever-originating presencing of the Divine.

As I walked daily with my little contemplative community, some in person and some online, through the joyous rituals of the Christmas season, as well as the sorrows and lamentations of Holy Week, the bonds we formed were for "all-time." We traveled together these "best of times and worst of times," nested in the communities of the ages, giving reassurance that we, as both individual and as cohort, are entrained in that ever-evolving Body of Christ.

So while the restoration of the Church is nearly complete, that was the easy part. Now comes the real makeover which no photo can capture - the transformation of souls, giving meaning and direction to peoples' lives and letting them know who they really are as Divine beloveds of the all encompassing Mystery of existence. Pretty awesome! May God bless you on your journeys, Rev. Mary, Archpriest in the Church of Antioch

Another Update From The Ark by Fr. Scott Carter

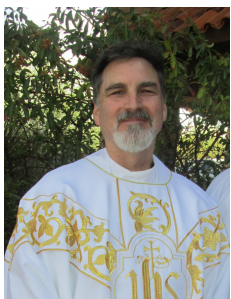


Photo by Linda/Phil

I still feel like Noah. The water, metaphorically speaking, seems perpetually high, and people in the little mountain town I live in mostly seem to feel we're bobbing along with no land in sight.

There are, and here I'm being literal, animals all over town. The migrating geese are back, barking away like dogs across the sky. Bears are on the trails and in residents' garbage cans. Yesterday, a cougar outside a friend's house made breakfast out of one of the many deer in town. (Ashland police chased the cat off with beanbag projectiles.) It's not an exaggeration to say that deer are in the streets regularly stopping traffic—although they do on occasion seem to appreciate and use the crosswalks. Also yesterday, I heard a loud gobbling in my backyard. High up in a tree. I was confused since, sure, wild turkeys in town are a common sight, but I'd

never seen one in our back yard, much less high up in one of our corkscrew willows. So help me, it was a large *crow* that had learned to mimic the town's turkeys. As soon as another crow showed up, the winged

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mpressionist reverted to loudly cawing. Not far from Ashland, one man with very real wounds is trying to convince officials that he's not crying wolf and that it was in fact one of those rarely seen creatures that he had "encountered." Someone else is claiming to have seen an even rarer wolverine. At least Noah of the scriptural story only had to deal with God's creatures in pairs. Our ark's cruise feels crazy over-booked.

As for how far away a metaphorical landing place feels, locals still face a lot. There's the endless American tempest, of course: gun threats sending police to our schools; racist death threats against the black artistic director of the Oregon Shakespeare festival; and political jeers of "Go woke, go broke!" from people who only want to see Shakespeare performed by Anglo people in Elizabethan-style costuming. Do you think they'd appreciate a reminder that the performances they claim to pine for all involved men in drag? Much of Southern Oregon is still slowly building back after a traumatically destructive fire that started just blocks from our house a few of years back, but everyone seems to simultaneously believe that the winter and now spring precipitation *both* won't be enough to fill the drought-hammered reservoirs and will never, ever give way to a genuine spring sunshine. Oh, and that sunshine, they say, would just grow more fuel for future fires. The "new normal" climate means that even fires from far away threaten every summer as inversions trap dangerous levels of smoke in the valley and our children inside. Overdoses are common and increasing. The cost of housing is untenable, and people who need help camp, along with people who refuse help, on any empty public land available, including the lawn of the Ashland Police Department, which currently can only warn them to move within 72 hours. My heart goes out to my neighbors, unhoused and housed.

Spiritually speaking, though, I sense the dove's near presence. We persevere through these challenges, and so many others, as we do. We hear and help. Easter has reminded us that spring has arrived—both is and is not yet—and a warming sun is on its way. Those here who turned inward are more and more looking for that rainbow set in the clouds. It feels as if it won't be long before the number of people saying they'd like to attend Communion is closer to the number who actually do. Love lives!

From Rev. Altalo's Bookshelf
by Rev. Mary Altalo



Photo by Linda/Phil

For the past few months, my little group has been discussing Franciscan Sister Ilia Delio's book "The Hours of the Universe: Reflections on God, Science and the Human Journey." It is not a light read, but a worthwhile one. Her Introduction is key to what she hopes we will glean from this work: to better understand the "inbreaking reign of God," that "God is doing new things through us,, that "we are the new creation in process," that "life seeks more life," that "evolution must be the starting point for all human thinking," and to see that the "Universe is the new monastery, the place to find God."

This book is a series of essays arranged *structurally* on the model of the monastic "Liturgy of Hours" where the entire day is divided into approximately 3-hr intervals punctuated by public prayers reflecting on the life and works of Jesus, the Christ. The

Christian prayer "hours" start at the beginning of the new day just after midnight and conclude before retiring in the evening: *Matins* (dark), *Lauds* (dawn), *Prime* (first hour-6am), *Terce* (third hour-9am), *Sext* (sixth hour-noon), *None* (9th hour-3pm), *Vespers* (6pm), and *Compline* (9 pm). Most Christian as well as non-Christian traditions hold specific "prayer times" for reflection on their Holy Ones. It seems to be a universal tradition - the perennial wisdom tradition.

In Sister Delio's book, however, the "hours" refer to time on the grandiose scale of "eons," the *Coming to be of the Universe and the Universal Christ*. Each "hour" represents the billions or hundreds of millions of years over which the energy of the Universe is manifesting and coalescing, life is evolving, consciousness is expanding and the "Eternal Christ" is being revealed - exploring "Christ-ness" back to the moment of Divine Self-

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manifestation. It is more like Kairos time than Chronos time where time is *experienced* as well as measured. This is the “deep time” of mystics and philosophers, the “Aha moment” which we all have had, and which Fr. Richard Rohr often refers to as the “Oh my God, this is it” moment, where awe and wonder capture the heart.

It is for insights on the revelation of the universal nature of Christ in time that she calls upon a panoply of scholars, theologians, poets, scientists, mystics, philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, popes, -- both ancients and current- as guides, to help unpack the awe and wonder of the process of universal becoming that is eternally unfolding around us, in us and as us. Spiritual navigators such as Meister Eckhart, Teilhard de Chardin, Julian of Norwich, Bonaventure, Dun Scotus, Merton, Plotinus, Berry, von Balthasar, Etty Hillesum, Vladimir Lossky, Beatrice Bruteau, Karl Jaspers, Richard Rohr, Francis and Clare, and Raimond Panikkar, Thomas King, Rilke, Cynthia Bourgeault, Martin Buber, Pope Francis will not be strangers to us. Hopefully they will be trustworthy friends and exemplars for understanding and discernment of our role in this life of the Mystical Body of Christ.

But critical to the premise of her work is the linking of these spiritual luminaries to the works of physicists, philosophers, biologists, psychiatrists such as Einstein, Bohm, Heidegger, Jung, Ian McGilchrist, Whitehead, and many more... to help explain ancient concepts in light of new discoveries in many fields of “the sciences.” This novel approach has yielded new insights into the awe and wonder of the “Christ event” and its link to the intrinsic beauty of the physical world to which we awaken each morning. While there are no photos in this book, images from the Webb telescope kept coming into my mind as I read it. Perhaps one could even say the essays help in the discernment of our sacred role in the future unfolding of the Universal Divine. Perhaps as well, her insights might give deeper meaning to those images of “deep time” and bring a new awareness of the Divine into the sciences. We might say that Sr. Ilia’s hopes for her work is actually being accomplished through us as we perceive the “Universe (as) the new monastery, the place to find God.”

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