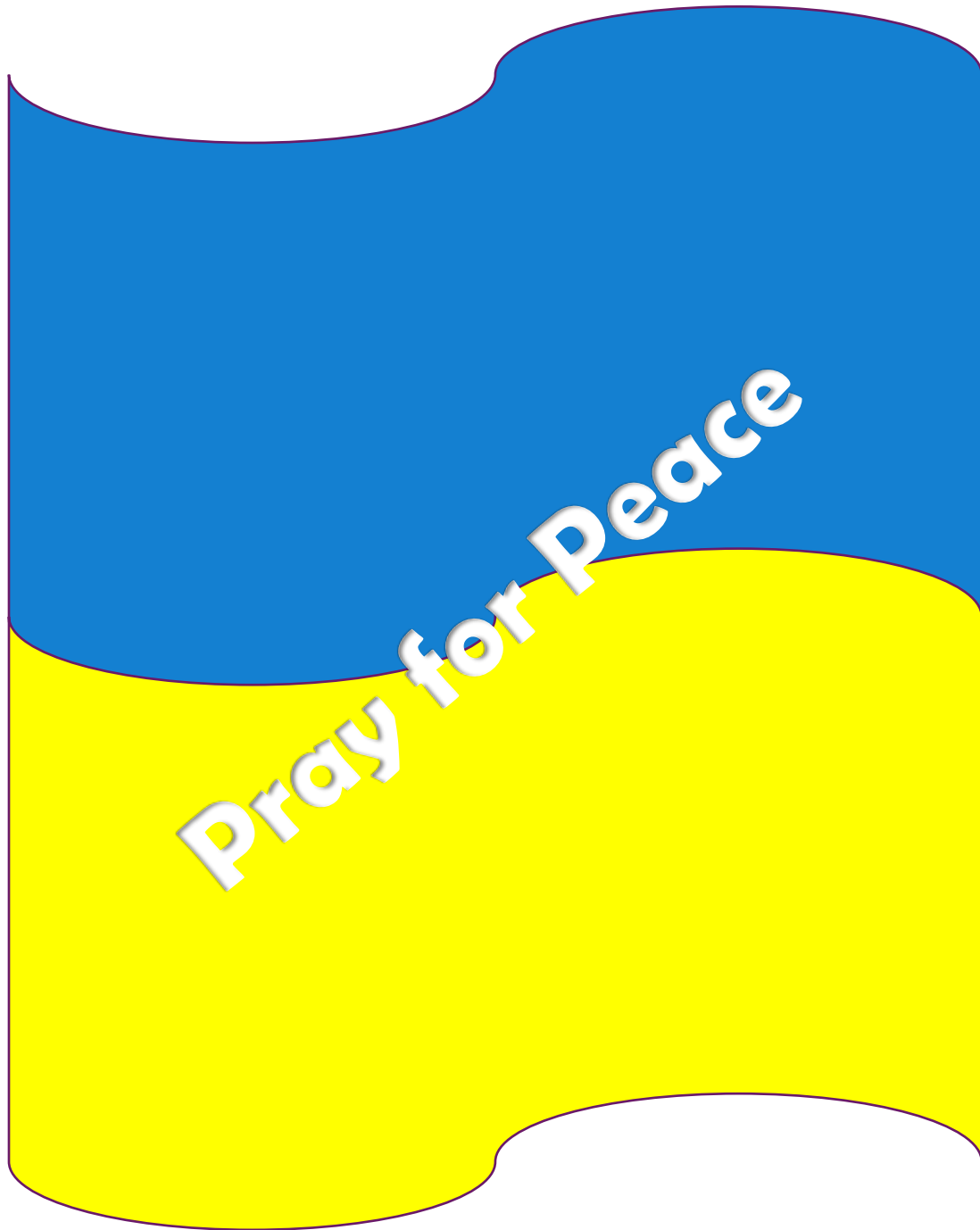


MIDWEST – MIDWEEK

Brothers of Holy Cross – Midwest Province - P.O. Box 460 – Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-0460

March 9, 2022





Lenten Lecture Series 2022

Thursdays in Geenen Hall

March 10 @ 2:00 PM

“The Early Brothers and the Relevance of their Virtues to Villagers Today.”

Br. George Klawitter, CSC

We will look at four Lenten virtues that link Holy Cross Villagers to the early Brothers:

- Kindness-Brother Vincent Pieau
- Strength-Brother Lawrence Menage
- Sacrifice-Brother Anselm Caillot
- Diligence-Brother Francis Xavier Patoy



Br. George retired in 2012 from the English Literature Department at St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas. A frequent contributor to the Holy Cross History Conference, he has published books on the early Holy Cross Brothers in France, Indiana, and Algeria.

March 17 @ 2:00 PM

“The Cup of Life: Holding, Lifting and Drinking It.”

Sr. Adria Connors, CSC

Henri Nouwen, in one of his spiritual classics, *Can You Drink The Cup*, and Joyce Rupp, OSM, who wrote *The Cup of Life*, invite insightful reflection on the cup of our lives through consideration of three movements: *holding, lifting* and *drinking* the cup.



Our personal Cup of Life is closely connected to the Cup of Salvation. Come and reflect on what you are *holding, lifting*, and *drinking* from your Cup of Life which is your Cup of Salvation. **Bring your favorite cup or mug!**

Sr. Adria resides at the motherhouse of the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Among many things she teaches some courses to the first and second year novices at the International Novitiate on the campus of St. Mary's Convent. Prior to this current involvement, Sr. Adria served on Diocesan and Parish Levels, specifically in Adult Faith Formation.

The “Patience” of God

by

Joe McTaggart, csc

Years ago I came upon a quote which meant a great deal to me. I printed it out and put it up in my room where I would see it frequently when I passed by: “God Waits with Eternal Longing.” That notion really helped me broaden and deepen my idea of God and the events in my life then. Of late though, given this war in Ukraine, God’s apparent patience inherent in that statement has become a real conundrum for me. That whole way of thinking is in doubt and uncertainty. It seems an awful theory now. How long, Lord? How long will you let your innocent people suffer?

Richard Rohr’s book *Everything Belongs* is even more of a challenge. Zen Buddhism makes the same point as Rohr. It is central in their take on life. Resist nothing. Take this moment just as it is, “is-ness,” “such-ness.” Be here now.

But, oh my, the challenge of it all. Ukraine is hell to observe, let alone experience. The relentless stream of suffering, destruction, and violence; where is God in all that? I am a news junkie and I had to turnoff that constant barrage of those pictures and videos. Shut down the T.V. But, you can’t just shut down reality. And the carnage of the reality, the war and attack on Ukraine, keeps on and on, and right in the middle of my gut sits a bolder challenge of an all-caring Omnipotent One. So, just where **IS** God in all this? Who hasn’t asked that question?

Still, I know that lament is not new. The Jews and anyone with a heart and openness to history have faced and struggled with the Holocaust ever since Hitler. Where was God then, and where is God now? I suspect everyone will sooner or later be pushed to the darkness and despair of this war as it goes on and on and into an aftermath as bloody as the attack. How can a human heart avoid that, from afar no less?

Elie Wiesel literally in the midst of the Holocaust wrestled with the total slaughter of his family. He posits a simple reply to all he experienced. He denies nothing of the tragedy, not a thing. He can’t. But this deeply

religious man still says of God's presence in the face of such darkness and horror, "and yet." He holds onto hope. Hope against hope. And yet.

And yet what? And yet God is still in charge? And God will save all those children in mothers' arms, and grandmothers with them fleeing to Poland? Their husbands will be back and all will be healed?

My cynicism of where God is in all this is such a huge knot in the pit of my stomach and ache in my head. It is of no help, a cancer in the midst of my faith. So, how do I contend with all of this aside from avoiding the twenty-four hour news cycle of this treachery day in and day out? I can't turn on *Jeopardy* instead and just lose myself in intellectual pursuit while observing smart people perform. There is no escape for anyone. It is with all of us.

Monty Python takes an absurd, comedic, and artistic attempt also at the senseless violence in life in the ending of one of his movies, *The Life of Brian*. He has men hanging on Roman crosses singing, "Always look on the bright side of life!" It's obviously an absurd and farcical statement, but its own cynicism begs the question—is there sense in any of this, war being its furthest edge and the Ukrainian war in particular haunting us now.

Back in the seventies while in campus ministry at Notre Dame, we had William Sloane Coffin speak at a prayer service at Sacred Heart on campus. He, the then sought-after minister of his time during the Vietnam War, the incredibly articulate and pastorally sensitive senior pastor from Riverside Church in New York, gave us hope and something to assuage the impossible, the tragedy of that war then in our life. 1,353,000 total deaths, 58,000 Americans depending on who determines the statistics. Humans are not statistics. Humans matter.

Coffin was no religious Pollyanna. He was an activist and he raised the consciousness of America considerably. But he did hold out a direction for the mind numbing question of God's presence in times of such horror and claimed starkly and baldly that even when pain is deep, God is good.

I found this same take by him later on giving me a chunk of something solid to temper terrible spiritual doubt and darkness when he addressed the

unexpected death of his son, Alex, who, he said, “to his friends was a real day-brightener” and to his family “fair as a star when only one is shining in the sky.” Coffin’s witness to his faith from his own pained experience, and on the larger notion itself of God having some kind of role in “unnatural” deaths and by extension God in “just” wars as well, was challenged.

For some reason nothing so infuriates me as the incapacity of seemingly intelligent people to get it through their heads that God doesn’t go around this world with his finger on triggers, his fist around knives, his hands on steering wheels. God is dead set against all unnatural deaths. And Christ spent an inordinate amount of time delivering people from paralysis, insanity, leprosy and muteness. Which is not to say that there are no nature-caused deaths that are untimely and slow and pain-ridden which for that reason raise unanswerable questions, and even the specter of a Cosmic Sadist—yes, even Eternal Vivisector.

At his son’s funeral Coffin spoke of Alex having a “few too many “frosties” that night before getting in his car, driving too fast, and negotiating a curve, insufficiently marked, plunging him over a cliff to his tragic and untimely death. His remaining son, and brother of the deceased, said at the funeral, “You blew it, buddy. You blew it.” And then from Coffin himself, ever the realist, ever the pastor, the grieving dad and friend of Jesus came this sobering, and pastorally-insightful comment:

“Few of us are naturally profound. We have to be forced down. My own consolation lies in knowing that it was not the will of God that Alex die; that when the waves closed over the sinking car, God’s heart was the first to break.”

“God’s heart was the first heart to break.” Coffin then offers at least some little piece of solace to hang onto in the face of this incredible mess in our time as well of yet more war and more destruction, unnecessary pain and unnecessary death in Ukraine. I can cling to my own passage-picked scripture verses too. “I send forth my word and it shall not come back to me empty. I have called you each by name. I am with you all days. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not think the end is near.” And on and on it goes in Jesus’ charge, never easy, never totally easing the pain, but still offering a hand to hold and a shoulder to lean on.

Still, God’s purposes in the end, I am convinced, will not be check-mated. The end is not annihilation. In a fractured world of this “vale of tears,”

Mother Jones, that great union leader, in working for justice for unions and the eradication of child labor, seeing death as well said “Pray for the dead and fight like hell.” Volodymyr Zelenskyy might well agree with the quote as we too, in all our similar challenges for justice and end to all wars, ultimately hold to resurrection while enduring the worst of what this world has to offer

In this awful war in Ukraine, brought on single handedly by a truly evil man and his truly evil ways, it will be the likes of Zelenskyy and the “cry of the poor” to ultimately checkmate Putin’s treachery. God is not A.W.O.L in this war nor absent on the receiving end of such devastation and unbearable sorrow for so many. That is little solace, though, to offer those fleeing to Poland and elsewhere for their very lives.

It would be obscene to pose those thoughts or offer such consolation for anyone enduring the throes of this war. So, internally I have to cling to my own favorite passages as well, such as, “I shall not leave you orphans; and I have overcome the darkness; and cast thy burden upon the Lord and He shall strengthen thee; and Lord by thy favor thou hast made my mountain to stand strong.” We can believe and love without complete understanding.

Recalling that in no way, though, puts God’s will in the hands of warriors and evil-doers, or a drinking son who drives into the ocean, or a truly addicted smoker who dies of cancer, nor any of the crying traumatized children in their mother’s arms fleeing to Poland and elsewhere, husbands, brothers, and uncles left behind to fight the war.

I and anyone with the least bit of warmth somewhere in their souls eventually must find more than literal poetry in scripture’s reminder that “Weeping may come in the night but joy cometh in the morning” and also in any other scrap of hope to be found in the midst of the calamity we witness night after night. And this quote from the apostles comes to us as well when we despair, “Lord, to whom else shall we turn?” Jesus simply replies, “Will you leave me too?” in our succumbing to a broken heart and spirit overcome by the evil we experience and brick walls we can’t escape.

Carl Jung posed the necessity of living in this tension of opposites as our

task in life, and the necessity of becoming conscious of our deepest deeds and actions. Buddhists speak of “dukkha,” that is life itself being struggle, the “unsatisfactoriness” of it all. We have an elixir as well from our own scriptures, “The vision has its time, presses on to fulfillment, will not be denied.” But why is time so slow when there is no time at all with God? “One day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day.”

Perhaps our prayer for an end to this senseless war can find some solace or succor in ultimate reality itself as seen with eyes wide open in the horrors of the cross AND the redemption of the resurrection. Pain, and suffering, and struggle, and even death will not have the final word we are told again and again. “The cross our only hope” is at the center of our own ethos in The Congregation of Holy Cross. It need speak its truth and its mystery ever more clearly now as a way out, absent panaceas of any kind.

And if so, then it has to be true—“*God waits with eternal longing.*” And, from what I can observe of history, there are no forced marches with God.

In the midst of observing this incredible suffering of others, then, so far away from our own lives and real estate, so out of my sight until I turn on the tube or check my email, I must depend finally on those who have gone on ahead and those who have held up this tradition and did not, in their own time, lose hope or become imbued through and through with cynicism and despair and the apparent hopelessness displayed daily in this war.

Darkness will not extinguish the light, so it is imperative as adults then, with considerable experience informing us, that we know the tradition will uphold us, and this war in front of us as well, and that starkly and realistically we must “keep on keeping on” no matter what and neither grow faint nor weary, still holding in our hearts all the while not only hope for the future but every bit of the ache and pain as well of so many of God’s loved ones, being with them in spirit and in fact, uniting with them in the embrace of goodness at the core and light in the darkness despite what is before our very eyes and God’s “eternal longing” as well.

That is our reality. That is our cross. Still, how long, O Lord? How long?

Holy Cross Roads Writings for the Journey

“Love, Love Changes Everything”

Dear Associates and Friends,

This first line of the song holds a fantastic truth. When we love, our whole world can change. We look how it was the prime motivator in Jesus’ life and his commission to his followers, “Love God, and love your neighbor.” We know how it changed his life, when he heard the words, “You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased” at his baptism. He wanted to share that love in ever widening circles. If we truly love someone, our attitude toward life, even though it might be filled with tragedies of one kind or another, will find meaning and purpose. Richard Rohr reminds us that the essence of the Godhead is relationship. The love within God is the dynamic behind our belief in the Trinity and the force that gives birth to all of creation.

To know that you are loved, no matter what, brings with it a freedom. You no longer have to be a slave to others’ opinions of you or be obsessed being “right” in everything you do. When you know that you are loved by God and allow God to dwell in you and accomplish God’s will through you, that love can change everything. Your life will be filled with surprises. When we look to people like the Dali Lama and Desmond Tutu, we find a lightness of being even though they have endured much suffering. They trusted in the love that they had experienced in their lives.

- Has your love for certain people in your life had an influence on your attitude toward life?
- Is God’s love for you significant in how you think of yourself?

**O God, help me experience your love for me
not for what I do but for who I am.**



Brother Carl Sternberg, C.S.C.

For more reflections to grow
spiritually please visit our new blog
<https://weeklyspiritualinsights.org/>

From the *Voice of Moreau Website*

The website features a Holy Cross sister, a brother, or a priest, with a weekly story on the blog. Check the following link below.



Website: <http://www.voiceofmoreau.org/>



**Brother
Philip Smith**



**Brother
Ben Rossi**



Reflection
Sent in by Brother Thomas Maddix, C.S.C.



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"The world is so empty if one thinks only of mountains,
rivers and cities; but to know someone here and there who
thinks and feels with us, and though distant, is close to us
in spirit—this makes the earth for us an inhabited garden."

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

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March 6, 2022



Brother
James
Kane,
CSC



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