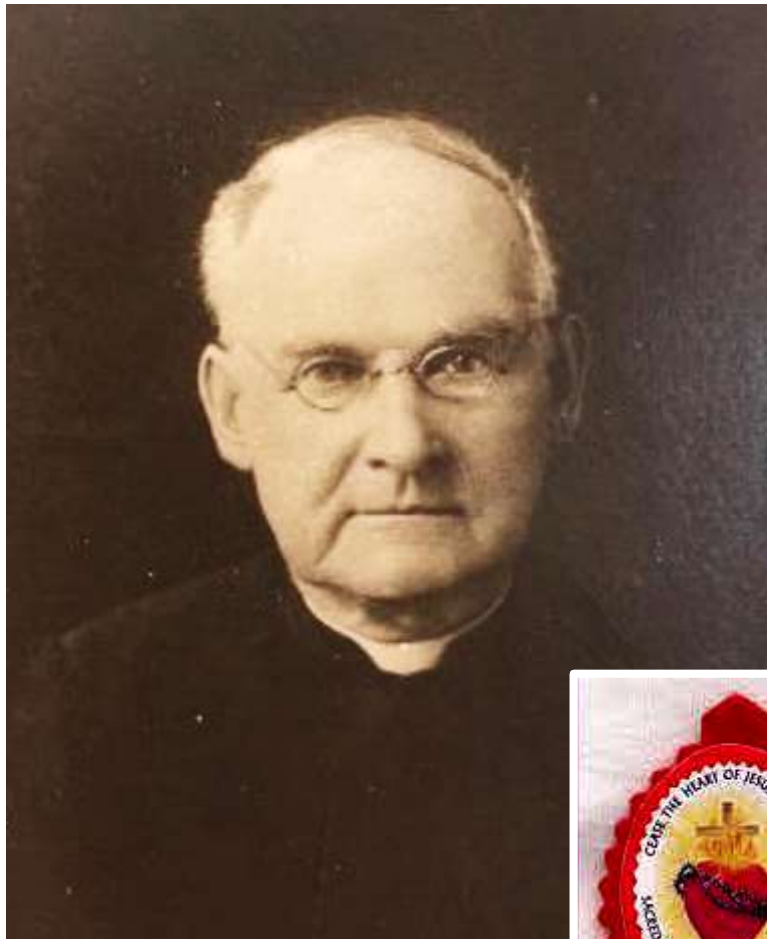


MIDWEST – MIDWEEK

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

June 29, 2022

“Servant of God” Brother Columba O’Neill



“Brother Columba’s sincere and deep devotion and complete trust in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary were profound, reminiscent of Saint Andre Bessette’s deep devotion to Saint Joseph.”

**Decree of Acceptance of
Petition June 24, 2022, Most
Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades**



The Task at Hand in My Declining Years

by
Joe McTaggart, CSC



**Elisabeth
Kubler-Ross**

I spent a week's retreat with Elisabeth Kubler-Ross many years ago, but its content makes much more sense now in what may be the waning years creeping up. I turned eighty, two months ago. The title of that week's workshop under her direction was *Life, Death, and Transition*. It was a hard-hitting time with the remarkable insights she presented as we experienced practice sessions in dealing with so-called "unfinished business." Ross, who did the seminal work on death and dying, maintained that we don't get to "graduate" until we have learned all our lessons, and the older you get the harder the lessons become.

I have found that to be true as I suspect any contemporary of mine would have also experienced that somehow, someway. There are pesky patterns and stubborn ways which may have helped me years ago but fail to provide much of anything now as I realize more and more the entrenched ways I have gotten on with in life. I might have even earned respect or acquired position, as inflated as that may be for my ego. In that same vein and about this time of life, Thomas Merton says we vacillate between consolation and desolation, understanding and obscurity, obedience and protest, freedom and imprisonment.

Awareness of what precisely it is we wish to end up with, the kind of person we want to present at the heavenly gates is a real "woke" existence if I would seize this kind of awareness now in the subtlety and privacy of my inner life. What to cling to; what to toss aside is an informed way to go in a sense, a kind of metaphor or way of framing this time in life, to lighten the proverbial load.

And so it is that I have begun looking into what I hope to "achieve" before I leave planet Earth. Achieve is not the best word, but there are inner pesky and stubborn issues, attitudes, and patterns, as with everyone, which I don't like and which I hope I can address, release, and even get totally rid of hopefully resulting in a much more centered and peaceful life. Most of anyone's unfinished business is internal, and it has come from, at least for me, observing the personal kind of prism through which I have been viewing and interpreting life personally and individually for these many

years. The task now is difficult and different too from all our previous challenges. Yes, it is definitely harder. It is also closer to finally accepting the all-encompassing promise of God's love.

Ironically, this line in the Psalms places my pondering directly before the Lord in a rather cynical way. "For it is not the nether world that gives you thanks nor death that praises you. Neither do those who go down into the pit await your kindness." So, all that negative formation of the past and internal judgments along with it were, in hindsight, way over the top. "Day and night you give me over to torment. I utter shrill cries. I moan like a dove." Phooey. That notion and identification with it has to go. I surely cannot see God in a smirk strutting around with a puffed-up chest, checking through the this and that of my life. I also do not hold anymore that this thing called death is going to be anything like the event my generation was taught—"day of wrath, day of mourning, be sober, be watchful." But, what then is this great passing-over? Everybody seems to say he or she "passed" these days. What will this "passing" be like?

If Kubler-Ross is correct, and I think she is, there is work to do in a sense, and the work is not easy, nor is it, I find, like another thing we were taught of avoiding the "near occasions of sin," or necessarily ridding and blaming those awful patterns others find annoying in me. Some of those things will probably not change all that much. A tiger doesn't change his stripes, but those repeated actions or repetitive responses I have previously found useful in life no longer serve me. What has gotten me thus far, I think, will not be the kind of living which will bring me to the other side freed and awakened to meet my maker drawn all the way by love, not by fear, not by judgment.

I think one brings to this moment the sum total of how we have viewed life, its origins, and its transition. "Naked I came into this world and naked I shall leave." All else is learned, and for many this becomes a pretty subjective take on things. I guess you'd call that a fixed attitude. I hope I am not smug when I say that I don't fear God as much as I used to. So, what has to change in my life now in preparation for the great crossing-over in order to be at peace and be "ready to meet my maker"?

Even that allusion or image is not what I think is in my best thinking now. Humility and ego-slaying are the order of the day. Whose wisdom brought me into being and whose care guides me on my way? I would hope my death could be a welcoming into Love itself and a self-effacing "welcome

home.” I understand, I get it—frail human nature, veil of tears, but still, I hope I am, as some say, precious in the eyes of God. That is a much more informed image I hope I can find on my way somehow during this time as well. In fact, it could well be task number one.

Each person has his or her own way of gaining some kind of peace in the here and now of life when old age comes. What gets in the way though, I think, is seeing that to some degree much of my past behaviors may well have been defensive or a ploy to gain respect or even status. If I am to fess up about what lies deep within and those pesky patterns which get in the way of really resting in the Lord, it comes down to some serious ego-slaying, and more to the point, a letting go of my favorite ways of viewing reality which have gotten me this far in life through education and, yes, the hard work of really trying to grow in, shall I say it, holiness.

We will bring to this final moment, I suspect, an accumulated past but also an introduction to “a power greater than our own” (if I can use the AA model) in giving myself a break for all that I do not like about myself. They have to see alcoholism as a disease and not a moral failure. I need to see (and feel) even more clearly now what the love of God and longed-for love *from God* really is if I am to receive it at this time in my life. If I can change, that will really be the life sought-for “pearl of great price.”

In my current relationship with God I don’t believe in what I felt as a kid and held through a lot of my adult life, pretty negative stuff and judgmental as hell, or just not being up to the task of some silly notion of what holiness is supposed to be all about. I am hoping I can be taken up more and more with the notion of a kinder, gentler God.

This quote from a devotional book I read daily hits the nail on the head for me in my desire and honest regard to change precisely what I don’t like in my life and my person. It is formulated as if God were speaking directly to me (and everyone else too).

It says,

“Give your mind a break from its habitual judging. Allow Me to have My way in your life. Gradually you will become more aware of Me than of people and places around you. This awareness will not detract from your relationships with others. Instead, it will increase your ability to give love and encouragement to them. My peace will permeate your words and

demeanor. You will not find My Peace by engaging in excessive planning or attempting to control what will happen to you in the future. You will be active in the world, yet one step removed from it. My enveloping Presence buffers the blow of problems. This is the path I have set before you. As you follow it wholeheartedly, you experience abundant Life and Peace. Relax and know that I am God *with you.*”

More directly and relevant is this from Jeremiah 29:11:

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

Well, that sure has a lot to do with a fundamental learning of “letting go” of just how I view the world, and how I think things should go, and how I interpret my relationship with God up to this point. And if this “testing and passing” metaphor of Kubler-Ross holds water, then what I read in that devotional book is not pious-piffle, and it should become easier if I have done my homework, the difficult task of this letting-go, bit-by-bit into the ultimate letting-go, into pure Love and ultimately then into death itself.

Maintaining my own metaphor of what it’s all about all these years may be harder and harder to give up because I think those patterns and my own spirituality have served me well up to this point. I am not afraid of becoming excessively troubled at the thought of my demise, but there sure is work to do if I am really to yield over to the love of God and not persistently carry my own view of my own worthiness and production.

Yes, I know I am intense, and yes, I know that from my own patterns I have tended to try and stabilize the world, but all to naught, really. These declining years are a time when I am called to look at my life with its ups and downs much more deeply, and hopefully more compassionately. There is “unfinished business” for sure, and I will steal a line from John Denver to help me express it, “It’s by far the hardest thing I’ve ever done, to be so in love with you (God) and so afraid.” I substituted the word God and afraid; Denver didn’t allude to God and he used the word, alone.

Jim Finley helps a great deal with this concept. He is a graduate of our school, Archbishop Hoban, former novice of Thomas Merton and now psychotherapist member of Richard Rohr’s Center for Action and Contemplation. He puts it this way. **“We are only who we are yet who we are is God being God, God knowing and loving himself in us not**

as vessels of his knowledge and love, but as his very love and knowledge itself in us as persons.”

My issue is not so much doubting, at least intellectually, but rather a yielding over more and more to what is promised, “the love I have in store for you.” Finley is encouraging in this regard. He even uses the word “precious” in seeing ourselves as God sees us.

I wonder, too, after all these years whether I have been working under a really false premise, a view of the world that it is going to hell in a hand cart, and I have to shore up the gospel’s place in that world. It’s nice and supportive to say the gospel is a “good word,” but, hey, have you listened to the news lately, and what do you have to say about the pandemic, and the war in Ukraine and mess with Russia, the Supreme Court, and what about the environment? Lots to be done, right? Major tasks here. It’s a mess.

“We walk by faith and not by sight.” Yes, yes, I know that. I have read that over and over these many years, but I’m beginning to wonder am I alone here, or do others feel the same?

I know my thinking is not THAT inflated, but if I am true to myself and what I am beginning to hear at this late stage of my life, there’s something more here, and it’s not of my doing.

So, I side with Kubler-Ross, and I think what she has to say is really true. Death itself, then, is the great “letting-go” into that absolute love, and I still have time to practice letting go. But the transition is now, and the simple being “here now” is really a challenge. It is also such a very different take on my accumulated world view. What’s getting in the way of that absolute love and even affection? I am getting in the way.

The old Western cowboy notion of “going out with guns blaring” is an inflated image for sure. That clinging to power notion is entirely ego-centered, an appeal to the macho in men and the enticement of women to outman the men. Vulnerability and openness, desire to change and yielding into it are front and center especially now. A spirituality of love and acceptance ought to be a more powerful sway in my life especially now for many of us as the body begins its trending down and its own physical letting go.

A spiritual take and belief in LOVE itself is the only thing that makes sense now or probably ever has. What else is more liberating and hopeful now that I am all the more vulnerable and the clock is ticking? “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall anyone snatch them from my hand.” And, “I shall come back and take you with me so that where I am you may also be.” Lord, increase my faith.



Joe McTaggart, CSC



Luncheon with Columba Hall Brothers
Students leaders from CSC schools
June 23, 2022



**High
Schools**

Hoban

**Bishop
McNamara**

Cathedral

**Gilmour
Academy**

Holy Cross

Holy Trinity

**Notre Dame
College Prep**

St. Edward





Holy Cross Roads Writings for the Journey

Holy, Holy, Holy

We pray these words at every Mass giving God praise. When we praise God a change can come over us if we are aware of what we are doing. This means getting our mind off of ourselves. We might be thinking what is going on in our life today and feeling the emotions that goes with our thinking. There is another possibility. In truly praising God with our whole heart and soul these distracting thoughts would fade into the background. With our mind in the right place we will be free from constantly concentrating on ourselves. Being fully present to this praising of God could lead to an inner experience of joy. We are letting God break through into our lives.

The act of praising God might also give us a glimpse of our holiness. It is not something that we can own but something that God places in our hearts. The outer words of praise give way to an inner realization that God's spirit is active in us. "Holy, holy, holy Lord of hosts. Heaven and earth are filled with your glory." Our joy is ready to receive God's glory.

- Do you experience the praising of God in your prayer life?
- How does your prayer life help you to take your mind off yourself?
- What benefits do you receive from being in a praying community?

O God, help me to experience the joy that comes from praising you.



Brother Carl Sternberg, C.S.C.

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



We are all travelers in the wilderness of this world,
and the best we can find in our travels is an honest friend.

Robert Louis Stevenson

Emmanuel Health...A vital community of health, healing and hope
Compassion | Innovation | Commitment
emmanuelhealth.ca





Brother
James
Kane,
CSC



Past Copies of *Midwest-Midweek*

Since February 2006

Past copies of *Midwest-Midweek* may be viewed by scanning the icon or by clicking on the link below.



<http://brothersofholycross.com/publications/archived-publications/>

<p>View Website at: www.brothersofholycross.com</p>	<p>View <i>Midwest-Midweek</i> at: http://brothersofholycross.com/publications/midweek-midweek-newsletter/</p>
<p>Webmaster Proofreader</p>	<p>Br. Richard Johnson Br. George Klawitter</p>

Save this link in a SHORTCUT

Please send material to the link below by Thursday the week before *Midwest-Midweek* is published.

Send material to this address:

Midwest-Midweek@brothersofholycross.com