

the poor, the presence of God in the Sacraments, the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, and devotion to Mary. ... The Catholic imagination is alive and well among these young people: Sacrament, community, and Mary....”

Do we at St Paul’s need to develop more opportunities for Devotions and the use of Sacramentals (which it was fashionable, if not *de rigueur*, to de-emphasize and even completely abandon after the Second Vatican Council among both “up-to-date” Roman Catholics and Anglicans) which both remind us of and bring us face-to-face with the truth of the ubiquitousness of sacramentality and sacrality throughout all of God’s creation? Do we need to emphasize more the non-central – and often viewed as “optional” – teachings of the Church, such as the Holy Angels?

At a recent focus group of younger adult parishioners of St Paul’s, one Millennial said, “I come to St Paul’s because St Paul’s knows what it believes; lives what it believes; and communicates what it believes.” Father Robert Gallagher when making a presentation on church development always reminds his audience that the greatest mistake church leaders make is to believe that they must have complete consensus among the members of a congregation before they can do anything. “You will *never* have complete consensus. And furthermore manipulative people will malevolently use this conviction of yours to roadblock the will of the majority and thereby prevent growth and development in the life of a parish. To be successful you only need a ‘critical mass’.”

When all is said and done, however, the most important thing of all is that whatever we do in the process of the development of the life and spirituality of St Paul’s Parish be truly authentic (not “playing church”) and that we always remember Whose we are.

Those of you [Catholic leaders] who insist that, because most Catholics now deny the right of their religious leaders to control their lives, they are no different from Protestants, might want to ponder the question of whether there is more to the Catholic heritage than sex and authority [as Francis, Bishop of Rome himself has recently said]. The most important matter, the uniquely Catholic views of God, the world, and the relationship between the two continue to be durable – unchanged and probably unchangeable.

Andrew Greeley
The Catholic Imagination

St Paul’s Parish and Catholic Culture

Christianity is a revealed religion. God revealed Himself and His will first through His relationship with the Hebrew people and His word spoken through the Hebrew Prophets, and then fully in the Person, work, and teaching of Jesus Christ, God the Son, the incarnate Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

Doctrine is the Church’s articulation of this Divine revelation. Dogma is an official, binding explanation of a doctrine, coming through the authority to “bind and loose” – i.e. interpret His revelation – given by Jesus Christ to His Apostles *as a body* – and only to the Apostles as a body – exercised by all the Bishops validly ordained in the Apostolic Succession gathered in a General or Ecumenical Council. (No supplementary teaching or other interpretation of the faith by a synod of Bishops alone – Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, or Anglican – by a national hierarchy of Bishops, by the Ordinary of a diocese, or by the Priest of a parish can contradict or be inconsistent with the dogmatic teaching of a General or Ecumenical Council.)

It is culture, however, not doctrinal and dogmatic formulations, that primarily communicates the faith on an existential and experiential level.* A major difficulty in the life of post-16th Century Anglicanism has been that the “Elizabethan Settlement” (a political solution imposed by the Crown to deal with a very dangerous, literally life-threatening national conflict) established the theology and liturgy of the National Church as non-negotiably Catholic (the Book of Common Prayer, *Lex orandi, lex credendi*), however permitted wide latitude in ecclesiastical culture.

While creating a masterful political solution to an urgent political problem, Elizabeth I unwittingly bequeathed to Anglicanism what has appeared to many people – both within the Church and beyond – to be a confusing “mixed message,” if not an apparent indecisiveness/lack of conviction or even schizophrenia when the ecclesiastical culture has not been consistent with the Church’s official Catholic theology. A five-century old source of confusion, however, has taken on a whole new and critical dimension since the 1960’s when WASP [White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] culture, the dominant culture of Great Britain and the United States and basically a product of Calvinism, has moved decisively from being at least superficially (though perhaps often hypocritically) a religious culture to being an unashamedly secular, narcissistic, and materialistic culture.

Over a period of almost four decades St Paul’s has developed a virtually parish-wide commitment to sound, orthodox, Catholic theology (and even where there may be some differences among a few parishioners in details of application, the commitment to Catholic teaching and norms in principle is unmistakable). While full disclosure to newcomers and continued theological formation of parish members will always be an ongoing process, nevertheless the norm of a theologically informed congregation and the structures for building it are “well on the road” and functioning well.

*Two historical examples of this truth immediately come to mind. The 19th Century Catholic Revival only began to affect Anglicanism as a whole when the Oxford Movement of the 1830’s and 1840’s developed from being an intellectual discussion of doctrine and dogma among theologians into the Ritualist Movement of the 1850’s which concretely, visibly, and publicly affected the culture of the Church. A contemporary example is the U.S. Roman Catholic Church in the decades following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). Although the Council made absolutely no changes in Eucharistic doctrine whatsoever, by the 1990’s scientific poll after poll showed that – as a result of the radical change in U.S. parochial liturgical culture and even more its gross desacralizing abuses – over 90% of all Roman Catholics under 35 in the United States did not believe in the Doctrine of the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

The challenge that now lies before us, I believe, is developing systematic structures for articulating, building, and supporting Catholic culture at St Paul's. Once again, this is not something that "might seem like a nice thing to do," but rather, as I have said before, in the current culture wars (which, I believe, in many quarters are literally a political fight to the death) is absolutely necessary to our survival, not to mention to our being faithful.

Father Robert Gallagher reminds us that Organizational Development studies ("by far some of the best funded and most scientifically thorough contemporary research") have consistently shown that it is culture alone that attracts and retains personnel in the U.S. business/industrial world, not wages, hours, or location. St Paul's is officially and quite publicly countercultural (to the post-1960's mutation of WASP secular, materialistic culture), and interestingly enough virtually all of our newcomers have told us that they specifically want the Church to be countercultural!

A Catholic culture is one that is fully consistent with Catholic theology (at St Paul's it is more particularly Benedictine Catholic culture, in which Anglican DNA was formed and has always been rooted*). Our task is now to identify the elements of Catholic culture, evaluate where we presently are, and plan for where we need to go in our growth and development.

Liturgy Our principal (10 am "conventual") Sunday Mass is Benedictine (the 8 am "Mass of Convenience" is liturgically Anglo-Catholic). I believe that while the Conventual Solemn Mass is fundamentally Benedictine in its form and culture we need to continue to refine further our liturgy into the fullness of the Liturgical Theology of that tradition.

Spiritual Formation We already have well established such spiritual formation structures as the incomparable *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* (which is fully Catholic as opposed to the "unlicensed spin-off" *Godly Play* which teaches an essentially WASP culture) for children ages 2½ through 12, and for adults the *St Benedict for Today Group* and the *Prayer in the Anglican Tradition Formation Group* as well as the *Book of Common Prayer: Anglican Regula*, a six-week short course, and we are in the process of developing *Catechesis for Adults*. Do we need to have other ongoing Catholic spiritual formation groups and offer other Catholic spiritual formation short courses?

Corporate Life Norms We have the "Guidelines for More Effective Communication and Relationship Building in St Paul's Community" which are primarily reflective of the corporate life norms of Benedictine communities. Are there other areas of Catholic community life that we need to explore, articulate, and apply to our own community life?

Individual Life Norms The St Paul's Parish *Rule of Life* was presented on the feast of Pentecost 1997. It summarizes the distinctly Catholic Christian Life prescribed by the Baptismal Covenant, the Canon Law of the Episcopal Church, and the Canon Law of the Diocese of Chicago. The demonstrated commitment to living out the full three levels of the *Rule of Life* is required for obtaining and maintaining full "core" (canonical) membership in St Paul's Parish. Do we, however, need to provide opportunities to understand and grow more fully in the Catholic Christian Life of St Paul's *Rule*? Are there other structures that we need to make available to our parishioners?

"Catholic Imagination" This is probably the greatest challenge of all facing us as we seek to articulate, build, and support Catholic culture in St Paul's Parish. Jon Sweeney in his *Almost Catholic* has written that "Catholic imagination" is a particular way of seeing the world. It, he says, sees humanity as united with God in Christ through the Incarnation (rather than the traditional Protestant worldview that sees humanity as essentially separated from God). "A Catholic mind looks for what binds us together more often than it attempts to examine what differentiates us from each other. It sees the world as a place where God is actively reconciling human beings and all of creation to himself. The Catholic imagination expects that all people will join in the essential

work of reconciling, which extends to all marginalized people. ... A Catholic worldview is one where physical appearances do not exactly explain themselves. Catholics naturally accept mysteries – in fact, they are plentiful. ... To be Catholic is to see things that others miss. ... The world that you were born into, that you awoke into this morning, is made sacred by the presence of God in Christ. ... [In this world] I'm in a holy place where God is, and so are the Saints of old, along with mud, flowers, snakes, angels, and spiders...."

Another way of saying this is that a Catholic imagination focuses on God's gift of Incarnation. It understands God's creation as sacramental and, as created by God, good. It understands Christianity as principally a corporate [communal] reality in which the Catholic Church is a primary, non-optional sacrament, which is universal throughout time and creation (the Church Militant on Earth, Expectant in Paradise, and Triumphant in Heaven all of which are united in Christ). Christianity is not, as the overwhelming majority of Protestants see it, an individualistic enterprise between "me and Jesus" or sometimes "me and the Holy Spirit." It understands that the sacramentality of God's creation goes far beyond what we can see, and that this sacrality fills all of creation. The Catholic imagination understands that God and His sacrality are everywhere and can be available sacramentally through all of God's creation; and His people respond to Him as a community.

The late Father Andrew Greeley wrote in *The Catholic Imagination*, that the Catholic imagination is "the way Catholics picture the world and God's relationship to it.... This special Catholic imagination can appropriately be called sacramental. It sees created reality as a 'sacrament,' that is, a revelation of the presence of God. The workings of this imagination are most obvious in the Church's Seven Sacraments, but the Seven are both a result and a reinforcement of a much broader Catholic view of reality.

"[T]he origins and raw power of religion are at the imaginative (that is, experiential and narrative) level both for the individual and for the Tradition. ... Catholic devotions include, as I have said, Mary the mother of Jesus, Angels and Saints, souls in [Paradise], statues, stained-glass windows, holy water, religious medals, candles. Most other Christian denominations [i.e. Protestant] do not engage in such devotions. Indeed, they dismiss them as superstition and perhaps idolatry. It is not my intention to defend Catholic devotional practices but rather to show that they illustrate how the Catholic religious imagination differs from the Protestant religious imagination. ... [The theologian David Tracy in his *Analogical Imagination*] notes that the classic works of Catholic theologians and artists tend to emphasize the presence of God in the world, while the classic works of Protestant theologians tend to emphasize the absence of God from the world. The Catholic writers stress the nearness of God to His creation, the Protestant writers the distance between God and His creation; the Protestants emphasize the risk of superstition and idolatry, the Catholics the dangers of a creation in which God is only marginally present. ... [Catholicism and Protestantism] are different one from another. ... [For example] Catholics tend to see their churches as sacred places. Protestants do not.*

"The Catholic imagination in all its many manifestations tends to emphasize the metaphorical nature of creation. The objects, events, and persons of ordinary existence hint at the nature of God and indeed make God in some fashion present to us. God is sufficiently like creation that creation not only tells us something about God, but by so doing also makes God present among us. Everything in creation, from the exploding cosmos to the whirling, dancing, and utterly mysterious quantum particles, discloses something about God and, in so doing, brings God among us.

"[T]he confusion of the years since the Second Vatican Council has not weakened the Catholic sensibility among younger Catholics. A study conducted at the Catholic University of America of a representative sample of young Catholics reports that the four strongest indicators of Catholic identity among younger Catholics are concern for

* all of Diarmaid MacCulloch's blatantly biased, if not simply academically and intellectually dishonest, anti-Catholic polemic notwithstanding

* Some might say that the centeredness of Eastern spirituality in Icons ("windows to Heaven" which actually break through the barriers of time and space between the Church on Earth and the Church in Heaven) and the broader principle of the iconic in the life of the Church is the equivalent of the Catholic imagination and might even say that it is more appropriate for Anglicans as Eastern Orthodoxy and Anglicanism share a common Patristic rootedness, spirituality, and culture. However, the Catholic imagination goes beyond the meeting point of Heaven and Earth (the Icon) to the ubiquitous presence of the Heavenly throughout the Earthly. Icons are indeed extremely important complements to the Catholic imagination, however the explicit articulation of the world as sacramental is critical in the West where Calvinism has had a pervasive and destructive influence (spiritually and psychologically) in a way that it has never had in the East.