



Someone said to me that “the problem with St Paul’s Parish is that everything is ‘head centered’ rather than being ‘heart centered.’” However I find the liturgy here – especially during the Triduum [Holy (Maundy) Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday] - emotionally very moving.

That person could have meant one of several things.

- One might have been that because teachers now make up the largest single professional group among St Paul’s parishioners, a significant proportion of the people at St Paul’s have an interest in “the life of the mind, and that is very evident here,” as one newer parishioner said recently, quite appreciatively. That does not mean, however, that St Paul’s is merely an intellectual center with “being cerebral” the focus of life here. The stated mission of St Paul’s is to be a religious community in the Benedictine Catholic tradition, centered in the life of prayer and the Eucharist, whose purpose is the full development and support of each person’s God-given ministry. While St Paul’s does try to provide opportunities for serious theological exploration by those interested in “the life of the mind,” it is always – and will continue to be – equally ready to provide for the religious and spiritual development of any interest group for whom there is an adequate “critical mass” to make this possible. The purpose, though, of all programs at St Paul’s is the same: enabling parishioners’ active involvement in ministry to others in the Name of Jesus Christ.
- Another thing that might have been meant was the parish spirituality at St Paul’s. As an early 20th Century English Bishop, the Rt Rev. Handley Moule, once wrote, “Beware equally of an ‘undevoational’ theology [mind without heart] and ‘untheological’ devotion [heart without mind].” It is very true that either extreme is not only fraught with problems but indeed can easily cease to be fully Christian. It is a very important balance to maintain, as the Benedictine tradition and culture continually remind us.*

It is a fact that right now the majority of St Paul’s parishioners seek to “understand in order that I may believe” (head centered) rather than seek to “believe in order that I may understand” (heart centered). Nevertheless

* An example of this imbalance is the post-Wesleyan Methodist tradition. The two very devoutly Catholic Wesley brothers began their “Holy Club” as a high church renewal society while undergraduates at Oxford during the early 18th Century when the Anglican Church establishment was culturally dominated by dry intellectual Deism (the origin of modern-day Unitarianism) which decried “religious enthusiasm” (“the heart”) as low class and low-brow. After their Ordination as Priests in the Church of England, the Wesley brothers founded “Methodist Societies” (never intended to be “Church”) as a national renewal movement within Anglicanism to provide the devotional “life of the heart” to complement and fulfill the liturgical and sacramental life of the Church in this period of Deist influence. They refused to celebrate the Sacraments or have society meetings on Sunday mornings as they insisted that their members be fully active in the Catholic liturgical and sacramental life of their local Anglican parish churches. When, after the Wesleys’ deaths, their followers were forced out of the Church of England by an arrogant, bigoted, elitist hierarchy, what they continued was the “from the heart” life of the Societies, now Methodist Church, without the complementary Catholic theological, liturgical, and sacramental life of Anglicanism that the Wesley brothers – Anglican Priests in good standing throughout their lives – had believed in so strongly and intended for all their followers.

St Paul's is conscious of and committed to achieving and maintaining that balance in our corporate (communal) spirituality that both St Benedict and Bishop Moule have rightly called us to and of which the *Catechesis of the Good Shepherd* is an important part both for our children now and adults in the future. We have in recent years tried to provide, in addition to our principal ("conventual") Sunday Benedictine Solemn Mass, another more "heart centered" liturgy on Sunday and also more "heart centered" groups (e.g. intercessory prayer and *Alpha*). However, up to this point we have not had the "critical mass" necessary to support that liturgy or those groups. Again, as our stated parish mission is the development and support of each person's God-given ministry, we continue to look for opportunities to broaden our parish life to the full extent of authentic Benedictine spirituality and practice.

- Yet another thing that might have been intended was a reference to the fact that, as the Primates, Archbishops, and Diocesan Bishops of the Anglican Communion world-wide stated at the 1988 Lambeth Conference, in Anglicanism "while all true religion touches emotions, theology is the foundation upon which everything else is built." We live in a time when emotions alone seem to dominate all facets of the life of Western culture and hence seem to be the sole basis of most decision-making. Anglicanism world-wide specifically rejects that emotionally based type of decision-making – an unbalanced (frequently self-serving and often unbridled) "living on the edge of emotions" in place of reason – as contrary to authentic Christian reflection and God-centered discernment, often silly and trivial, as well as sometimes even potentially dangerous.*

There are those (almost always persons caught up in that kind of non-rational sentimentality and emotionalism) who have called St Paul's "rigid" because here decision-making includes and is consistent with historic Catholic theology. However, St Paul's is truly "*pastorally* orthodox," that is, deeply committed to relationships of in-depth care with persons, always sensitive to their individuality and their particular needs, but with the belief that authentic historic Christianity is the greatest and only lasting gift we can give. To give them any less is indeed not only less than fully helpful to them but in truth is actually uncaring.

Yes, you are absolutely right; the liturgy at St Paul's is very moving and at no time more so than during the Sacred Triduum. Catholic liturgy, celebrated with liturgical theological integrity, involves all the senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch, taste), and that is extremely powerful emotionally. Those emotions are ones that form an important part of the total relationship of body, mind, and spirit to which we are called and privileged to be given with the Triune God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

* Historically we can see this in two 19th Century religious phenomena: Mormonism, which was created from a fantasy by Joseph Smith and Christian Science – a purely emotional neo-Gnostic heresy – founded by Mary Baker Eddy which denies the objective reality of the world and essentially teaches that all truth and reality rest and can be perceived only in ones emotions.

A more contemporary example is the current advocating among some of "open communion," inviting all persons to receive Holy Communion whether or not they have been Baptised, an aberration based solely on anti-theological sentimentality and emotional agendas. Of the seven Sacraments validly celebrated, three (Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders) produce an ontological change in the persons receiving them (an objective change in the nature of their being); the other four (Eucharist, Reconciliation, Matrimony, and Unction) support and develop that ontological change. To receive Holy Communion before Baptism is utterly meaningless, even trivializing the Blessed Sacrament (as well as Canonically illegal), because the ontological change has not taken place in the person which the Sacrament of the Eucharist can support and develop.