



Dear Friends,



Once again, we are perched upon the threshold of the great illumination! Like being positioned at the tip of a surging wave, we embrace that singular moment when we cast our eyes forward and apprehend in totality the oceanic vista stretched before us full of life, promise, and possibility! The entire Christian body rears up and prepares to leap crash into the Eastertime of God's super abundant grace!

Intelligent beings that we are, we put to ourselves the perennial question: What's the big deal?

For some of us it'll be just another Triduum, nothing more; business as usual. Same routine: pick the shortest Mass, get in early for a seat, keep the children quiet, survive the long grinding liturgies, jostle in crowded spaces, perform the obligatory rituals, get out. If there's going to be any drama, it's when someone's hair accidentally catches fire during the service of the light. But that's usually too rare to look forward to anyway.

To be sure, it is not due to personal disrespect or callousness that the grand purpose of the Triduum liturgy is lost. Simply that for many of us, the symbols of the Catholic liturgy have already been demythologized. We feel like it has all been explained, we feel like we know exactly what they mean. The science of anthropology tells us that we need rituals for social cohesion and order so they have to be performed. No more *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* – awe and fascination of mortals standing before the majesty of the omniscient Lord of the Universe and stuff like that. After all God is our friend right? We can pray by ourselves at any other time, and even when we fail, God understands.

How can we, assuming for a moment that we want it, recover our vital connection with the numinous at worship? How do we balance out our excessively happy-happy joy-joy relationship with the non-threatening God-of-all-comfort and eternal security?

I would recommend a healthy dose of second naiveté. Beginning with a sincere wish for a return to childlike innocence, we come to know our own dependence on God, and choose to give our Creator the gift of our attention as creatures. Then, remembering all we have received from God, to intentionally approach the story of Christ's definitive salvation with self-imposed humility as a grateful response. When we can suspend our "analysis" of the sacramental symbols, try to immerse (Gk. *baptizein*) ourselves into the faith-filled presence of our brothers and sisters sitting all around us; when we can claim ownership to the words we speak in the sacred conversation with our Maker and one another; when we accept the danger of Christ's Gospel; then perhaps we can hope. We can hope that in our determined and heartfelt receptiveness God will soak us through, like our catechumens at baptism, with the life giving Spirit that is poured out upon all.

Have a beautiful Easter Triduum, and remember to wear your crash helmet.

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Arthur Goh
Associate Director

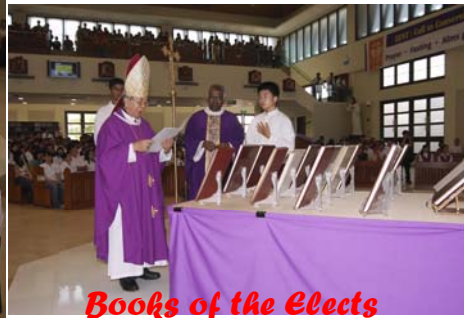
The Rite of Election: A Photo Essay



scenes from Mass



Presentation of catechumens



Books of the Elects



The candidates for full communion



ELECTS



Fellowship



JESUS SAVES!

The popular slogan “Jesus saves!” can often be heard from the lips of evangelical Christians or seen on car bumpers of avid God-fearing drivers. This saying is so common nowadays that it even gets its own running joke: the one where Jesus wins a computer competition against the devil because he ‘saved’ his data!

What do we really mean when we claim “Jesus saves”? The year A Gospel readings of Lent approach this question from various angles.

On the first Sunday of Lent we hear how Jesus withstands the temptations of Satan. In this story we rediscover how Jesus invites us, as God’s representatives in the world, to continually draw our strength from God’s mysterious love. Although the choices that we make to fulfill our human needs are fraught with temptation, Jesus offers us salvation against the falsehoods that enslave us in our quest for making sense of our lives.

Who is this mere man who defies the sinfulness that has captured humanity throughout the ages? On the second Sunday of Lent we are reassured that it is God’s own Son, the long awaited Messiah, who comes to save us. The three disciples who witness the glorious transfiguration of the Divine Saviour are baffled when they are commanded to do the counter-intuitive: to keep Jesus’ true identity secret.

The story of the Samaritan woman at the well is told on the Third Sunday of Lent. Like the woman, our individual experience may tell of a silent desperation that remains hidden from others: a painful loneliness despite being amid the crowd, or a strong sense of being incomplete. There exists a personal thirst that seems impossible to satisfy on our own. Our sin – alienation from relationship with God and others – prevent us from establishing connections with people that are meaningful and lasting. Jesus, the water of life, offers us salvation by offering us healing for the wounds in our relationships and enables us to forgive and to accept the love of others once again.



Blindness and sight is the theme that emerges from the gospel reading of the fourth Sunday of Lent. We learn that sin is present beyond the individual. Like the Pharisees who refuse to acknowledge the healing work of God in the man born blind, entire groups of people – powerful communities – deny the wonderful work of God.

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JESUS SAVES!

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Jesus, the light of the world, helps us to see our participation in the sins of society: in the disregard of the poor, in the irreversible destruction of our environment, and in the rampant obsession of the material. In response to the divine light of Christ, Christians accept the salvation that Jesus offers in the vision of God's reign. They help the world to see through the darkness that blinds us from moving forward together in search of humanity's common good.



On the fifth Sunday of Lent we encounter the most profound problem that confronts human existence – death itself. The end of life is the ultimate consequence of sin in the world. It is the inescapable and universal reality that seems to finally put an end to all things that are good in life. However, as the story plays out, even death cannot separate Lazarus from the love of Jesus! The relationship that Jesus offers to us somehow has the power to reach beyond our earthly life.

On the last Sunday of Lent, we recall the image of our Lord entering Jerusalem on the back of a donkey. We cannot understand the behavior of this supposed “Saviour of the World” who does not use the power he has to right the wrongs of society, to bring a decisive end to evil, or to remove the oppression of the poor once and for all. He appears before us as a fraud, and we are disappointed and angry at being presented with one who is obviously a fake saviour. We take our part among the crowd that shouts “Crucify him!”

As we approach the conclusion of our Lenten reflection and prepare to celebrate the great paschal mystery of Easter, we ask ourselves: what are our expectations of Jesus, the saviour sent by God? Have we changed the way we see what being saved means? Is it good enough for us that salvation is understood as a guarantee of heaven, or a miraculous experience of deliverance from grave danger? Is it the moment of divine intervention that solves our problems, or is it something else completely?

Once we proceed beyond salvation for ourselves and examine our roles as Christians in the world, we also ask: are we expected to help people be ‘saved’ by Jesus? If we take our Lord’s example of bringing salvation through *kenosis* or ‘self-emptying’, what behavior and attitude do we adopt to imitate Jesus in the way we bring God’s salvation to others around us?

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UPCOMING COURSES:

March

- **Women in the New Testament by Sr Maria Lau, IJ.**
4 sessions, 6, 13, 27 Mar and 3 Apr, Thursdays, 9.30am – 11.30am
CAEC, 2 Highland Road. Love offering.
- **Letters of St Paul / The “Captivity” Letters by Fr Ambrose Vaz**
10 sessions, 18, 25 Mar, 1,15,22,29 Apr, 6, 13, 20, 27 May,
Tuesdays 9.30am – 11.30am or 7.45pm – 9.45pm
CAEC, 2 Highland Road. Contribution: \$30
- **Brief History of Western Philosophy (Part 1) by Fr Albert Renckens SS.CC**
8 sessions beginning 24 Mar, Mondays, 8.00pm – 9.30pm
Church of St Ignatius. Love offering.

April

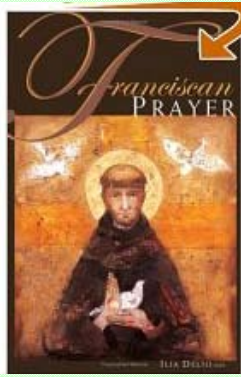
- **Pastoral Care of the Terminally Ill 2 by Sr Una Boland**
19 Apr, Saturday, 2.00pm – 5.00pm,
CAEC, 2 Highland Road. Love offering.
- **Introduction to RCIA by Arthur Goh**
3 sessions beginning 4 Apr, Fridays, 8.00pm – 10.00pm
CAEC, 2 Highland Road. Love offering.

Call 6858 3011 or email: spi@catholic.org.sg to register.

The Feminine Genius

Coming events:

- 6 Mar – 3 Apr: Women in the New Testament by Sr Maria Lau, IJ.
4 sessions on Thursday, 9.30am–11.30am
@ CAEC, 2 Highland Road.
- 7 & 14 May: Feminist Theological Reflection
by Arthur Goh & Vera Handojo
2 Wednesdays, 7.30pm–9.30pm @ 55 Waterloo Street.
- 26 June – 24 July: Women in the Old Testament Part 2
by Sr Susan Thomas, FMM.
5 sessions on Thursday, 9.30am–11.30am
@ CAEC, 2 Highland Road.
- July: Women’s Spirituality
by Edwina Yeow & Sr Elizabeth Lim, RGS.
Dates to be confirmed.
- August: Panel Workshop on the document *Mulieris dignitatem* “
On the Vocation and Dignity of Women”
Drama production on women by Stephanie Kwok and Co.



Ilia Delio, O.S.F. *Franciscan Prayer*, St. Anthony Messenger Press, Cincinnati, Ohio, 2004. 185 pages.

We all want to be pray-ers, there is no doubt about that. Unfortunately, when we settle down to pray seriously, we discover that there is a lot going on within us that prevents us or distracts us from achieving this goal. We become scared. We either abandon the process altogether or compromise, settling for a mediocre or complacent prayer lifestyle.

Delio, begins her book on *Franciscan Prayer*, by addressing precisely, this fear that is within us. Using an image from the Russian Orthodox, she likens prayer to entering the cave of a tiger. Prayer is risky business, according to Delio. However, she continues, if we trust God sufficiently to enter the 'cave' of our heart as Francis of Assisi did, we will be transformed into the power of God's Love (p.3).

The goal of prayer is to make Jesus Christ alive in the believer and to make Christ alive is the path to peace. Simply put, this is what Franciscan prayer is all about. She asserts that this is also Christian prayer –entering into relationship with God that is rooted in the Incarnation. To help us understand Franciscan prayer she brings into conversation three stalwarts of the Franciscan tradition and their experience of prayer. Francis of Assisi, whose gospel way of life spawned the

“Franciscan” movement, Clare of Assisi, a keystone of this foundation who brings a feminine perspective to the movement and Bonaventure the seventh Minister General and brilliant theologian who has given us a Franciscan theological worldview by combining Francis’ spirituality and Christian theological belief.

In each of the nine chapters that follows Delio gives us an in-depth, synthesized essence of the Franciscan heritage tapping on their spirituality and understanding of prayer and evangelical life.

However, because of the sheer depth of the elements and concepts presented in such concise form, I did not find the book easy to read and assimilate at one sitting. Perhaps the best way to approach the book is to make it an experience of prayer, meditatively allowing the images and concepts presented - what it means to grow into the image and likeness of Christ Crucified - to slowly resonate within one over a period of time. Then it yields dividends.

With each chapter Delio moves us deeper and deeper into the heart of prayer and we realize that our attempts at union with God invariably move us outward in compassionate love to all of creation.

Delio states in her introduction that for the structure of the book she has borrowed from the writings of Clare, her second letter to Agnes of Prague. In advising Agnes on the pathway to prayer, Clare presents a template for prayer. Clare tells Agnes to gaze, consider, contemplate and imitate the Crucified Lord. Delio uses this structure to explore and unearth the essence of Franciscan prayer-gaze, consider, contemplate, imitate. After the preliminary three chapters she concentrates on each of these verbs meditating on the “mirror” of the Crucified Lord and its power to transform our life.

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In my opinion, these chapters form the crux of the book. They are profound, exploring and unearthing the heart of Franciscan prayer and its transforming effect in our lives. We gaze at the 'mirror' of the crucified Lord to discover our own woundedness and at the same time our capacity for goodness. We consider the profound meaning of our friendship with Christ in the mystery of the Incarnate Word who suffered and was crucified for love of us. *Contemplation* is to have a penetrating vision of the world and discover that when I accept God's love in me, I can accept God in others, in my enemies and in every living creature. Imitation is to become what we love.

To grow in union with God is to give birth to God in our lives. Delio concludes by saying that the Franciscan path to prayer leads to peace which is relational and communitarian. "Being a peacemaker means living a Eucharistic life, the life of Christ" (p.173).

The book is indeed insightful and is a helpful guide for those who desire to pray and live the Franciscan way.

Book reviewed by Sr. Susan Thomas fmm

This book is available in the SPI Library.



Sr Ilia Delio, O.S.F., will be in Singapore in May to run a series of talks using her book: "The Humility of God" as base. Details soon to be made available by the Franciscans.

The Last Laugh.....

Down the Middle

At a local Burger King an elderly couple came in and ordered one burger, one order of fries and one coke with two glasses. When they got to their booth, the man placed a napkin in front of himself and one in front of his wife, then proceeded to divide the fries, cut the burger in half and divided the coke equally.

A gentleman nearby noticed and offered to buy them another burger, fries and Coke.

The woman then said, "No you don't understand. We've been married over 50 years and all our life we agreed to split everything right down the middle."

Her husband then began eating, as she sat with her hands in her lap.

The gentleman nearby noticed and asked the lady why she wasn't eating.

She replied, "As I said before, we split everything right down the middle, and it's his day to use the teeth first."