

# **Community Newsletter Online Edition - July 2001**

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**Letter From the Editor**

**Dear Brothers and Sisters:**

**I cannot believe time has moved so quickly since the General Assembly in May. I originally wanted to begin our first online edition of our Community Newsletter at the end of June, and here it is the end of July! My apologies to the ensemble. I hope you find it worth waiting for.**

**I am still experimenting with the format, and there are several other approaches I want to try. But, instead of waiting until I found something I was happy with, I decided to go ahead and publish and hope for perfection at a later date.**

**Jason Jensen is busy working on our new web site. I will keep you up to date as the new site gels. I want to thank Brother Mark and Brother Benjamin for helping me with this project. Mark acquired Jansen's service as a webmaster for us, and Benjamin provided Jason with a copy of The Founding Document, informational brochures, and a few of our old newsletters, so he could get an idea of who we are as a community.**

**In this issue there is an article about religion and mythology and some thought-provoking reflections from Sr. Rose (who's got to be my most favorite nun this side of Joan Chittister!),**

**Jedediah Purdy, Fr. Andrew Greely, Robert Bellah, Martin Luther, Karen Holmes, Archbishop Oscar Romero, Henry Van Dyke, and Richard Mullins.**

**And finally, "Links to Look At," interesting web site links, to provide new information and ways to help us live our vows.**

**As always, I await and encourage your thoughts, suggestions, and constructive criticism. On second thought, never mind that part about criticism!**

**Br. John Bowdle, OC**

**Feature Article -- Religion & Mythology**

**Br. John Bowdle**

**The New York Times Magazine recently ran a special issue on religion that included the headline, "Religion Makes a Comeback (Belief to Follow)."**

**I confess that for years I went to church for no other reason than I looked forward to having coffee and donuts with my caffeine-addicted buddies after Mass and talking over the week's goings on. I can remember one time when I actually said this to the group and got several stricken looks. I thought community was a perfectly valid reason for going to church, not to mention spirituality. Francis Fukuyama in his 1999 book, *The Great Disruption*, writes what I was trying to say in these words:**

**"Instead of community arising as a byproduct of rigid belief, people will return to religious belief because of their desire for community. In other words, people will return to religious tradition not necessarily because they accept the truth of revelation, but precisely because the absence of community and the transience of social ties in the secular world makes them hungry for ritual and cultural tradition. They will help the poor or their neighbors not because doctrine tells them they must, but rather because they want to serve their communities and find that faith-based organizations are the most effective ways of doing so. They will repeat ancient prayers and reenact age-old rituals not because they believe they were handed down by God, but rather because they want their children to have proper values, and because they want to enjoy the comfort of ritual and the sense of shared experience it brings. In a sense they will not be taking religion seriously on its own terms. Religion becomes a source of ritual in a society that has been stripped bare of ceremony, and thus a reasonable extension of the natural desire for social relatedness with which all human beings are born."**

**Rollo May in his book, *The Cry for Myth*, says pretty much the same thing about our culture, which has been stripped bare of all of our mythopoetic and historic stories that go beyond words into the deepest recesses of our profoundest fears and joys where mere words fail us.**

**After spending a considerable amount of time worrying about whether or not what I believed about the purpose of religion was "correct" or not, I decided that, if religion and mythology does nothing than help us to form community and give us back something greater than ourselves to believe in, then they will have more than served a positive and useful purpose. There is no one way to do it. However life unfolds is always "the way it's supposed to be." As St. Teresa said, "All the way to Heaven, IS Heaven"!**

### **Gleanings -- Thoughts for Reflection**

**I went to this church for the first time in my life and there was all this fussing about going on up at the front and I said, "What's all this?" And the priest said it was the Last Supper and where to read it in the Bible and stuff and I read it. "Do this in remembrance of me." Jesus was sitting at a meal table, and there they are swinging incense over the holy book and all. And I thought, and I still think it now, "How did they get from that to this performance?"**

**~Sr. Rose; Community of St. Francis; Brixton, London**

**The implications of the economic and the social structure that we're moving into now are twofold: they make it more possible to be indifferent to each other, while paradoxically raising the stakes of self-consciousness about the ways that we are connected. We can get away in some ways with doing more harm for a longer time than in the past, because the harm is not brought to our attention. But at the same time, the harm we do when we don't pay attention to each other's circumstances and each other's needs and injuries, may be worse than ever before. – Jedediah Purdy**

**We have but one life, and it is a shame to limit it by fear and false barriers. Irenaeus, a wonderful philosopher and theologian in the second century, said, "The glory of God is the human person fully alive." It is lovely to imagine that real divinity is the presence in which all beauty, unity, creativity, darkness, and negativism are harmonized. The divine has such passionate creativity and instinct for the fully inhabited life. If you allow yourself to be the person that you are, then everything will come into rhythm. If you live the life you love, you will receive shelter and blessings. Sometimes the great famine of blessings in and around us derives from the fact that we are not living the life we love, rather we are living the life that is expected of us. We have fallen out of rhythm with the secret signature and light of our own nature. – Andrew Greeley, Irish Mist**

**In 1985 Robert Bellah and his research team published Habits of the Heart. They found a nation, or at least an educated class, deep into self-exploration and no longer willing to declare obedience to received spiritual authority.**

**The authors wrote: We believe that much of the thinking about the self of educated Americans, thinking that has become almost hegemonic in our universities and much of our middle class, is based on inadequate social science, impoverished philosophy, and vacuous theology. There are truths we do not see when we adopt the language of radical individualism. We find ourselves not independently of other people and institutions but through them. We never get to ourselves on our own. We discover who we are face to face and side by side with others in work, love, and learning. All of our activity goes on in relationships, groups, associations and communities ordered by institutional structures and interpreted by them.**

**If you could understand a single grain of wheat you would die of wonder. – Martin Luther**

**The hardest part is people.**

**So Lord, help me face them**

**Without rancor or disappointment.**

**Help me see the pain behind their actions**

**Rather than the malice;  
The suffering rather than the rage.  
And in myself, as I struggle  
With the vise of my own desire –  
Give me strength to quiet my heart,  
To quicken my empathy, to act  
In gratitude rather than need.  
Remind me that the peace I find  
In the slow track of seasons  
Or an uncurling fern frond,  
Is married to the despair I fell  
In the face of nuclear war.  
Remind me that each small bird shares atoms  
with anthrax, with tetanus, with acid rain,  
That each time I close my heart  
To another, I add to the darkness;  
Help me always follows kindness.  
Let this be my prayer.**

**~ Karen Holmes, Poet and Teacher**

**~ Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, Arizona**

**The guarantee of one's prayer  
Is not in saying a lot of words.  
The guarantee of one's petition is very easy to know;**

**How do I treat the poor?**

**Because that is where God is.**

**The degree to which you approach them,**

**And the love with which you approach them,**

**Or the scorn with which you approach them –**

**That is how you approach your God.**

**What you do to them, you do to God.**

**The way you look at them is the way you look at God.**

**~Archbishop Oscar Romero, Martyr**

**I am standing upon the seashore. A ship at my side spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the blue ocean. She is an object of beauty and strength. I stand and watch her until at length she hangs like a speak of white cloud just where the sea and sky come to mingle with each other.**

**Then someone at my side says; "There she is gone!"**

**"Gone where?"**

**Gone from my sight. That is all. She is just as large in mast and hull and spar as she was when she left my side and she is just as able to bear her load of living freight to her destined port.**

**Her diminished size is in me, not in her. And just at the moment when someone at my side says: "There, she is gone!" there are other eyes watching her coming, and other voices ready to take up the glad shout: "Her she comes!"**

**And that is dying.**

**~ Henry Van Dyke**

**~Submitted by Br. Dale**

**"We Are Not as Strong as We Think We Are"**

**It took the breath of God Almighty  
To part the waters of the sea  
But it only took one little lie  
to separate you and me  
Oh we are not as strong as we think we are.  
We are frail  
We are fearfully and wonderfully made  
Forged in the fire of human passion  
Choking on the fumes of selfish rage  
And with these our hells and our heavens  
So few inches apart  
We must be awful small  
And not as strong as we think we are.  
When you love you walk on the water  
Just don't stumble on the waves  
We all want to go there somethin' awful  
But to stand there it takes some grace  
Cause we are not as strong as we think we are.**

**~ Rich Mullins and Beaker**

**Note: Since many of our community members work in "institutions," I thought you would find the following news flash interesting:**

**Investigators at a major research institute have discovered the heaviest element known to science. This startling new discovery has been tentatively named Administratium (Ad). The new element has no protons or electrons, thus having an atomic number of 0. It does, however, have 1 neutron, 125 assistant neutrons, 75 vice neutrons, and 111 assistant vice neutrons, for an atomic mass of 312.**

**These 312 particles are held together by a force called morons, which are surrounded by vast quantities of lepton-like particles called peons. Since it has no electrons, Administratitum is inert. However, it can be detected as it impedes every reaction with which it comes into contact.**

**According to the discoverers, a minute amount of Administratitum causes one reaction to take over four days to complete when it would normally take less than a second . . .**

#### **Links to Look At**

**[www.greenpeace.com](http://www.greenpeace.com) (Greenpeace)**

**[www.peta-online.org](http://www.peta-online.org) (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)**

**[www.forusa.org](http://www.forusa.org) (Fellowship of Reconciliation)**

**[www.syraculturalworkers.org](http://www.syraculturalworkers.org) (Syracuse Cultural Workers - Tools for Change)**