

## Preface

REFLECTIONS ON SUFFERING can of course be found in texts that stand outside of Christian revelation. Sophocles in one of his late plays turns his attention to a story mentioned very briefly in the second book of the *Iliad*, a story in which Philoctetes, a great archer, suffers in isolation for many years while abandoned on an island because his agony caused by a wound that will not heal becomes unbearable to all around him. Sophocles finds marks of special closeness to the divine in the one who suffers: the wound that will not heal was incurred when Philoctetes inadvertently wandered into a sacred grove and was bitten by a water-viper, but Philoctetes also clings to a divine gift, the bow given to him by Heracles, and a prophecy finally reveals that the wounded one bearing this gift will be needed to fulfill the plan to which Zeus reluctantly acquiesced, that Troy should be destroyed. It would seem, in Sophocles' account, that Philoctetes clings to his pain with excessive bitterness and resentment, closing himself off to divine will through unrelenting anger, until Heracles appears as a god to persuade Philoctetes to return to Troy with the Achaean ambassadors who had come for him so that the divine plan can be accomplished. Philoctetes readily assents to this persuasion, seeing the manifestation of the god as the fulfillment of a longing that had held him in its grip throughout his long years of suffering.

Aeschylus some years before this play of Sophocles had incorporated into the chorus of his *Agamemnon* an insight explored by the

entire trilogy of which the *Agamemnon* forms the first part: “and we suffer, suffer into truth.” The movement from suffering into the illumination of truth struck the ancient tragedians profoundly.

Ancient tragedy and philosophy, however, even while discovering great truths in human suffering, do not prepare us completely for a distinctive moment of Christian revelation, a moment which we sometimes see emerging from the depth of suffering with a kind of dramatic surprise: the experience of joy when one feels touched by the love of God. (Is Shakespeare perhaps lightly alluding to the dramatic quality of joy near the conclusion of *The First Part of King Henry the Fourth* when Falstaff, stretched out on the stage and thought to be dead by Prince Hal and the audience, leaps to his feet in a mock resurrection?) We know such joy liturgically in the celebration of Easter, with the attendant color and music exhibiting the elevation of joy that accompanies our acknowledgement of the resurrection. The classical world could give us the courage and composure of Socrates, consoled and strengthened by his philosophic knowledge of the immortality of the soul as he prepared for death, but Christian joy exhibits a transforming qualitative difference that has been explored deeply by Christian mystics, composers, poets, and philosophers.

The distinctive qualities of Christian joy and happiness are explored in this issue by **Paul Murray, O.P.**, in “**The Task of Happiness: A Reflection on Human Suffering and Christian Joy**,” and his article demonstrates that suffering is one path to such joy. Father Murray turns to a variety of Christian witnesses to joy, including prisoners on death row facing the prospect of execution and showing the path to joy through suffering, but also including the path of laughter in the example of a number of medieval Dominican preachers. (We might recall here the laughter of Julian of Norwich that shocked onlookers, laughter provoked by her vision of the impotence of the devil in comparison to the power of God.)

Looking closely at Father Murray's article, we find a reflection on the basis of Christian happiness that serves well as a keynote to many of the articles in this issue: when our awareness of God's presence and love in our lives enables us in an act of recollection to find our lives centered in God's love for us and in our free reciprocation of such love, we experience the fullness of life and understand the world with a breadth and clarity that would otherwise be impossible for us to achieve. Christian happiness radiates throughout our lives when our powers of attention find their home in our awareness of God's presence, and we recognize what matters most in the world as we find ourselves capable of discerning the proper order of all that is most worthy of our love, experiencing a harmony in our own internal reordering in accordance with such love.

Suffering, from this perspective, instigates the breaking down of our disordered attachments, leaving us all the more receptive and responsive to what matters most in the world. If joy is the fullest expression of our attention finding its ultimate fulfillment in our awareness of God's love for us, there are other degrees of recollection and attentiveness leading toward such ultimate fulfillment as we experience the pervasiveness of divine presence and beauty in the world around us.

The climate in the United States following the attacks of September 11 bears ample testimony to the power of suffering to reorder our sense of what matters in life, as many commentators have observed rightly and well. Is there a heightened receptivity to the wisdom of the Christian tradition in such times of dismay and reassessment? If so, then there is urgency in speaking out well and clearly about what is offered by faith during such times. May this journal continue to do its small part in such efforts.

Many of the articles in this issue demonstrate the variety of ways in which faith solicits our attention toward that which has deepest value in our lives, thereby bestowing upon us both individually and communally a degree of integrity and wholeness that would other-

wise be missing in our lives (with joy and happiness as the highest manifestation of such wholeness and fullness). **Thomas D. Kennedy** in **“Curiosity and the Integrated Self: A Postmodern Vice”** observes the contrast between postmodern fragmentation and the contemplative and worshipful repose of those who know what it means to keep the Sabbath. “Curiosity,” in this account, points not to the deep love of knowledge that is rooted in the spiritually sound soul but to the fragmented and disordered desires of a soul that has lost its inner integrity.

In the realm of music, **Jacques Janssen’s “Modulating the Silence: The Magic of Gregorian Chant”** explores what he calls the “magical effect” of Gregorian chant, its power to summon the soul to a proper ordering toward that which most fully deserves our love and praise, a power that again exerts a counterforce to the temptations toward distraction and fragmentation breaking in upon us from our culture at every turn. After carefully exploring the interaction of text and musical elements such as rhythm, Janssen concludes that “in the quest for meaning the words lose their original signification and . . . the ensuing semantic silence permits new, inexpressible significations.”

Turning to the world of learning, **Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.**, Archbishop of Chicago, in **“Catholic Faith and the Secular Academy”** points to the “service of the truth” that the Catholic faith can offer even to secular universities, a service through which the multifaceted and (again) fragmented modern university can seek out the underlying wholeness and integrity of the truth, seeking on a communal level a wholeness analogous to the inner unity experienced in the spiritual dimension by the individual faith-filled seeker of truth. In **“Catholicism and Academic Freedom: Authorities in Conflict?”** **Stephen Fields, S.J.**, demonstrates the compatibility of the Catholic university with academic freedom, showing once again that the spiritual wholeness that emerges within the horizon of faith incorporates freedom and brings freedom to fulfillment in the pursuit of truth, turning aside the disruptive power of degraded forms

of freedom understood merely as the exertion of will detached from knowledge and love. **Michael A. Smith** reminds us in **“Beyond Fideism and Antirationalism: Some Reflections on *Fides et ratio*”** that in true spiritual integrity we find reason and faith to be unified while distinct. **Tad Dunne’s “College and the Christian Vision”** expresses the integrity of the Christian vision that can be embodied in universities that seek the wholeness of truth, highlighting three key doctrines that capture much of the wisdom of the Christian vision.

The Christian experience of wholeness and unity should extend even to the way in which we experience our bodily existence, argues **William Fey, O.F.M., Cap.**, in **“Taking Seriously Our Bodily Being.”** Father Fey boldly pursues his reflection to include an effort to articulate what it means to speak of our risen bodies in a condition of “perfected delight in being together and exchanging the gift of ourselves with each other at the ‘heavenly banquet.’” We can observe that this effort to imagine the resurrection of the body points again to the integrity that grounds human happiness and then extends that happiness to even greater fulfillment in the beatific vision.

Within the wholeness and integrity of vision experienced in the life of faith we find the reality of God’s love for us that grounds human happiness and precludes the need for a defense of God’s action in the world, according to the argument put forward here by **Guy Mansini, O.S.B.**, in **“Apologetics, Evil, and the New Testament.”** Mansini sets the trial of Socrates and the trial of Jesus side by side, contrasting the philosophic arguments of Socrates with the silence of Christ, showing that the death and resurrection of Christ as acknowledged by faith precludes the necessity of a defense of God.

We have, finally, in the observations derived from linguistics and literary history by **Dennis D. Martin** in **“Give and Take in Grail-Quest, Gawain, and Roman Missal: Why Perceval Just Doesn’t Get It”** a demonstration that the wholeness and integrity of

Christian spiritual experience is embedded in the supplicatory language of Christian liturgy and theology, the language that pairs divine giving and human receiving, divine donation and human responsiveness to the gifts we receive. Spiritual wholeness for the Christian depends on our receptivity to the gift of God's love and is thus discovered and fulfilled by us in the experience of faith. The liturgical model of such patterns of giving and receiving can be seen to have influenced basic patterns of plot and language in medieval Christian literature, according to Martin's meticulous argument.

The richness of Christian spiritual vision then, is such that it opens up countless paths for the exploration of the harmonious whole resounding all around and within us and we are pleased to call your attention to some of those paths in this issue.

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