

HOLY REDEEMER



GRACE NOTES

July 2023

July Newsletter - 2023

Introduction...

In a few days we will celebrate Independence Day, doing so with fireworks, picnics, parades, and numerous speeches about patriotism. And in what has become a tradition in many churches, concluding the service by singing “America the Beautiful;” an anthem that both touts the country’s accomplishments – “Thine alabaster cities gleam,” but also begs for divine intervention to address the country’s lingering challenges – “God mend thine every flaw, Confirm thy soul in self-control, Thy liberty in law.”

It also a good month to remember when during the dark days leading up to World War II President Franklin Delano Roosevelt asked his fellow citizens to put “patriotism ahead of pocketbooks,” and to remember the values that the country stood for.

“In the future days we look forward to a world founded upon four essential human freedoms.

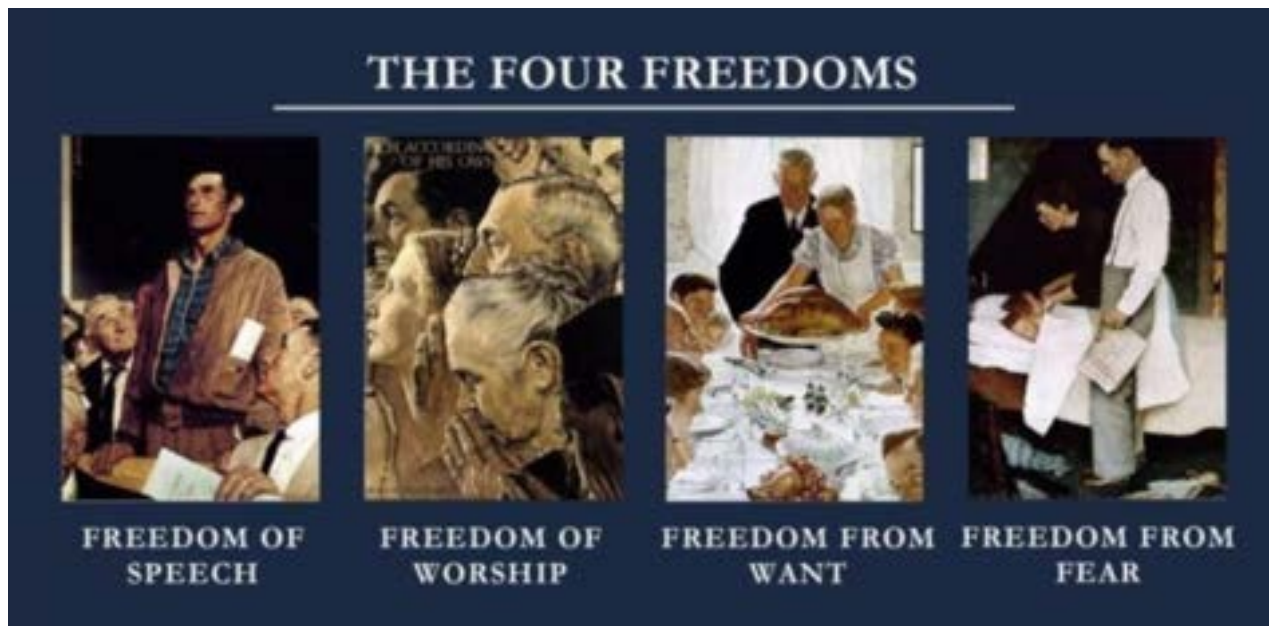
“The first is freedom of speech and expression.

“The second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way.

“The third is freedom from want.

“The fourth is freedom from fear.

“This nation has placed its destiny in the hands and heads and hearts of its millions of free men and women, and its faith in freedom under the guidance of God.



That was a great way to describe patriotism in 1941, and it still holds up well today. Have a Happy Fourth of July.

On the Shoulders of Giants – The Apostle John

Isaac Newton said that all he had accomplished in life was due to “standing on the shoulders of the giants” who came before him. Each month we remember one of the giants upon whose shoulders the parishioners of Holy Redeemer are perched. Grace Notes is currently focusing on the Apostles and individually illuminating each of their life stories. This month it’s John.

John was the younger brother of James, and together they were the two apostle sons of Zebedee and Salome. The brothers spent their days fishing on the Sea of Galilee with their father, and often worked together with future apostles Simon (Peter) and Andrew. Upon meeting Jesus he called all four of them to follow him and “fish for people.”

John was thought to be the youngest of the 12 apostles, but despite his youth, he became one of the most well-known. His was part of Jesus’ inner circle, which also included Simon Peter and John’s brother James. As a sign of their importance, the trio were the only apostles present on three key occasions during Jesus’ public ministry, the Raising of Jairus’ daughter, the Transfiguration of Jesus, and Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.



Though he was rebuked for his rashness in his early years – Jesus occasionally referred to John and his brother James as “The Sons of Thunder” – John’s lasting legacy is as a beacon of love and charity. In his scriptural writings John used the word “love” more than 80 times.



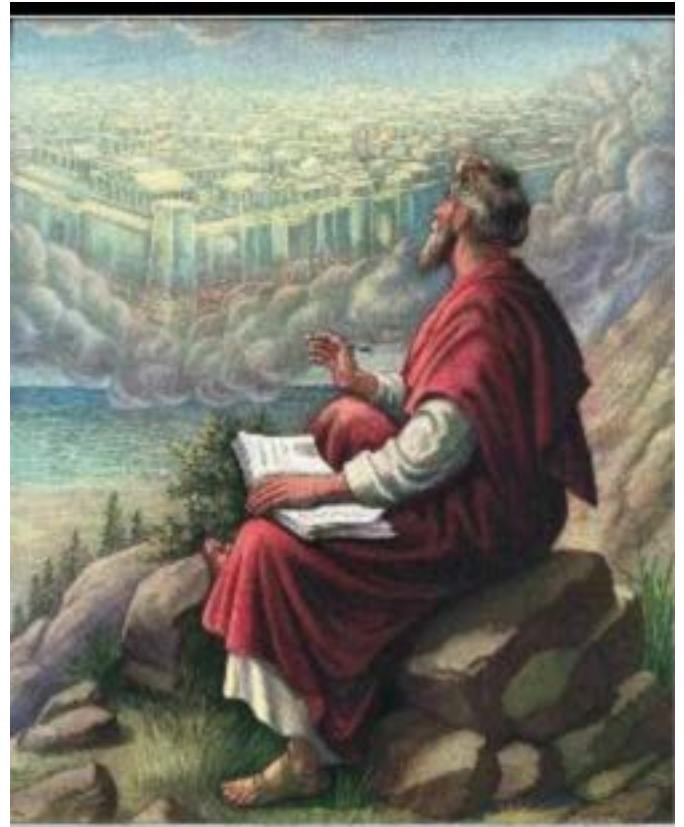
John had a very close relationship with Jesus and was often referred to as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John was also the person that Jesus asked to look after his mother following his death. During his crucifixion, “Jesus looked to his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby...he said to her, ‘Woman, here is your son,’ and to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.”

There is no clear information concerning the duration of John's activity in Judea following Jesus’ death. According to most scholars, John and the other apostles remained in Judea for roughly twelve years, until the persecution of Christians under Herod Agrippa led to their scattering throughout the Roman Empire. John and Mary are believed to have gone the Ephesus, which is on the western shore of present-day Turkey. Paul had founded a church there, which John maintained, and where he trained his many successors.

Although some modern biblical scholars have questions about whether “The Gospel of John” was written by John the Apostle, most accept the fact that John consistently contributed to the writings of early Church. Which brings us to John’s role in the writing of the final book of the New Testament, The Book of Revelation.

Following the assumption of Mary John ran afoul of the Roman authorities and was banished to the Greek Island of Patmos (just off the western coast of Turkey), which is where he wrote The Book of Revelation. John’s writing was believed to be inspired by an angel sent from God: "I was in the spirit on the Lord 's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet."

History appears to have been a powerful influence on John’s writing. He wrote Revelation not long after thousands of Roman soldiers had stormed Jerusalem in 70 A.D., burned down its great temple and left the city in ruins after putting down an armed Jewish revolt. And while the all-out-assault on Christianity by emperors like Nero -- who executed numerous Christians including the Apostles Peter and Paul -- had recently concluded, ongoing Roman occupation meant that Christians continued to live marginalized lives and feared what might happen to them next.



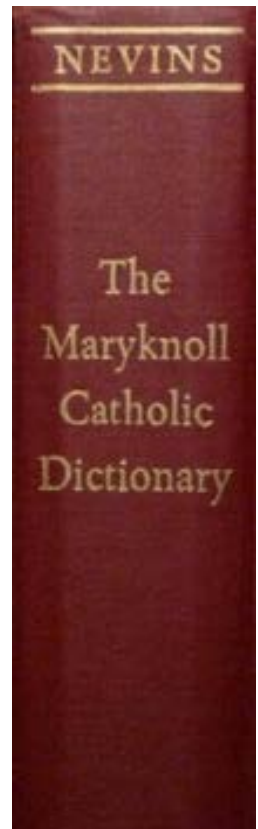
It’s easy to imagine that the Book of Revelation was written to comfort the beleaguered Christians of the day. In the way that Genesis provided a glimpse at the beginning of all things and laid a crucial foundation, Revelation provided a glimpse of the end and served as a capstone on God’s plan of the ages. By providing God’s perspective of events on Earth, John suggested that evil would not prevail and would be avenged. Putting aside the intense imagery -- The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, The Battle of Armageddon, The Anti-Christ -- the triumph of good over evil depicted in Revelation would inspire hope in the early Christians at a time when their world seemed doomed.

Although he suffered greatly during his life, as predicted by Jesus John was the only one of the 12 apostles who was not put to death for his faith.

Jeopardy for Catholics – Here’s the way this works. We will give you several definitions of important aspects of Catholicism as defined in “The Maryknoll Catholic Dictionary,” and ask you to name them. As always, your answers must be worded in the form of a question. This month we’re focusing on the funeral service. Here goes.

- *Number One:* A cloth that covers a casket or coffin at funerals. HINT: The same name is also frequently given to the stiffened square card covered with white linen and often embroidered with a cross which rests atop the chalice during most of the mass.
- *Number Two:* Small, devotional pictures that usually depict a saint or a religious scene which are often handed out to attendees at a funeral. The reverse side typically contains a prayer or an accompanying passage from scripture.
- *Number 3:* A raised platform or structure that supports a coffin or casket. This type of platform/structure was most famously employed to support the caskets of President’s Lincoln and Kennedy when their bodies lay in state for public viewing following their assassinations. Double points if you get this one. Also, it helps if you know a little French.

The answers are provided on the final page of Grace Notes.



Calling All Children

This summer Holy Redeemer will conduct two “Children’s Masses,” in which children will have important roles in the service, such as bringing up the offertory gifts, singing together with members of the choir, and perhaps giving the readings. We also plan to have reserved seating for families of participating children.

The Children’s Masses will be take place at 10 am on Sunday, July 23 and 10 am on Sunday, August 20. These Masses will supplement what Holy Redeemer is currently doing for our children from September to mid-May through the Liturgy of the Word and Faith Formation classes. Treats will also be provided for the children following the two masses.



If you would like more information about the upcoming Children’s Masses, or if you have children who would like to participate in the masses, please contact Rita Shields (ritashields7097@gmail.com) or Amanda Constant (aconstant83@comcast.net).

Do You Believe In Miracles?

Even in our technology-driven world most people believe in events that defy explanation based on current scientific knowledge. According to a CBS News poll although most Americans have never personally witnessed a miracle, nearly 80% say they believe miracles occur. Despite their widespread acceptance of miracles, the poll also indicated that the public thinks that authentic miracles are few and far between. This disparity may explain why so many people can readily accept that miracles occasionally occur at places like Lourdes, but they profess to have difficulty believing that during the Eucharistic offering bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. In other words, in believing that every Catholic mass includes a miracle.



The polling data from CBS News suggests that the Church's current effort to restore belief in the concept of "transubstantiation," or "the change of the whole substance of bread into the substance of the Body of Christ and of the whole substance of wine into the substance of the Blood of Christ," may be challenging.



Perhaps part of the battle is simply the word "transubstantiation," which certainly has an academic-oriented feel to it and conjures up images of a Church doctrine that was issued long after the life and death of Jesus. While it is true that the term "transubstantiation" was not formalized until the Fourth Council of the Lateran in 1215, the belief that the Eucharistic elements are transformed into Jesus's body and the blood goes back to the earliest days of Christianity. In 106 AD Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Roman Christians that "I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life." St. Augustine declared that the bread consecrated in the Eucharist actually "becomes" the Body of Christ: "The faithful know what I'm talking about; they know Christ in the breaking of bread."

Modern Catholics are not alone in their skepticism regarding the miracle of The Eucharist: jettisoning belief in transubstantiation was one of the fundamental elements of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther declared the concept to be “an absurd and unheard-of juggling with words.” To say that the Luther’s sarcastic repudiation of transubstantiation led to a hardening of positions would be an understatement. The Church of England declared that "Transubstantiation cannot be proved by Holy Writ; but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." Shortly thereafter laws were enacted in England against participation in Catholic worship, and such worship remained illegal until 1791. And for a century and a half – from 1672 to 1828 – holding any public office in Britain was made conditional upon applicants explicitly denying transubstantiation.

Much attention has been focused lately on a 2019 Pew Research Report which found that 69% of United States Catholics believe that in the Eucharist the bread and wine "are *symbols* of the body and blood of Jesus Christ", while only 31% believe that "during Catholic Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus." However, these numbers are somewhat misleading, since two-thirds of the Catholics who said that the bread and wine are only “symbols” also said that they believed that a “symbolic Eucharist” was actual Catholic doctrine. Which is obviously an incorrect assumption. So perhaps the real challenge facing the Church in its effort to restore belief in the miracle of the Eucharist is one of education rather than reversing some strongly held belief that what happens during communion is merely a symbolic recreation of The Last Supper.



And while the Church is mounting it’s re-education effort, perhaps it might also want to consider coming up with a more user-friendly word than “transubstantiation.”

Getting to Know the Members of the Parish – Ellen Stoll

The Beatles’ Ringo Starr didn’t write many songs, but when he did he usually hit paydirt. One of his best was “It Don’t Come Easy,” which has some lyrics that are appropriate for Holy Redeemer parishioner Ellen Stoll. For example...

“Got to pay your dues if you wanna sing the blues, and you know it don’t come easy.”

We’ll come back to Ellen’s dues in a bit, but first a little about her formative years.



Ellen grew up in metropolitan New York City and attended *Saint Mary Gate of Heaven Church*, on 101st Avenue in the Ozone Park section of Queens. The area was very Italian at the time – “We had lots of great delis!” – and the most prominent native son was the mobster John Gotti. “Everyone there just loved John Gotti. He was their hero.” Indeed, when Ellen and her schoolmates were asked to write a composition entitled “Who’s Your Hero,” half of the class wrote about John Gotti.

Ellen stayed in Queens for college, attending St. John’s where she received a master’s degree. Upon graduation she taught elementary school for several years and met her husband-to-be Ken, who worked for the accounting/consulting firm Price Waterhouse.

She continued teaching after they were married and moved to “the apartment from hell” in Garden City, which featured no heat and an extremely hard of hearing next door neighbor whose volume dial on his television was broken because he kept turning it higher and higher.



Those are the sort of mundane dues that newlyweds are often expected to pay, but then came the first real dues: September 11, 2001. “We lost over 20 people from our town when the twin towers collapsed. The father of one of the children I taught was among them. We could smell the smoke and ash all the way in Garden City. It changes you.”

It wasn’t long thereafter that Ellen and Ken decided the time was right to begin raising a family. After a frustrating period where every pregnancy test came back negative, a friend that Ellen taught with mentioned that she had recently adopted a baby from Ukraine. So in 1993 Ellen and Ken decided they would take the same approach. Then fate intervened. Not long after the adoption paperwork been finalized Ellen became pregnant and was told she could not travel to Ukraine. And in a plot twist that could have come from a John LeCarre spy novel, Ellen’s twin sister accompanied Ken to obtain their baby daughter, a trip that included multiple flights to Moscow, multiple trains to Ukraine, lots of questions from the authorities and lots of passport checks.



Then the dues began coming in droves. The adoption facility in Zaporosha, Ukraine was poorly run. None of the babies had diapers and there was very little human interaction. Ellen’s and Ken’s baby –

they named her Brianna or “Bree” for short – was thirteen months old when they obtained her. She was significantly underweight, behind in most of the normal developmental activities, and developing an attachment with Ellen and Ken was very difficult. “Lots of prayer saved Bree. It’s a miracle she’s where she is now.”

And where is Bree now? She’s 31 years old, has a beautiful 6-month-old baby of her own (Oakley Marie), and calls her mother frequently. And what of the baby that Ellen was carrying when Ken and her twin sister journeyed to the Ukraine to get Bree? His name is Peter, he’s 30, and he’s also doing very well.



The development of both children included a stint in Omaha, Nebraska. Shortly after Ellen and Ken’s household doubled in size Ken was “made an offer he couldn’t refuse.” Not by John Gotti, but by an investment company that wanted him to move to Omaha and run the company.

Ken retired several years ago and he and Ellen began considering where they wanted to spend the next chapter of their lives. Chatham quickly rose to the top of the list, aided by the fact that Ellen had been spending time on the Cape since high school. Not surprisingly, there was one final “due” to be paid: the move to Chatham coincided with the high point of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was especially hard on both of them since they were anxious to develop an attachment with the Holy Redeemer community, which was challenging given online masses, followed by masks and restricted seating in the church. However, the challenge made a bit easier by the newest member of the family: Marti.



Ellen has since made up for lost time. She now works with Kathy Mitchell and a number of other parishioners involved with making sandwiches for the St. Joseph Homeless Shelter in Hyannis. She also joined Marilyn Whelden’s Bereavement Ministry, and she and Ken were regulars at the soup and supper meals in Holy Redeemer’s Church Hall following Stations of the Cross during Lent.

Which brings us back to Ringo Starr and the final verse of his song “It Don’t Come Easy.”

*“Please, remember peace is how we make it
Here within your reach if you’re big enough to
take it.”*



...Conclusion

We started this issue of Grace Notes with a Fourth of July story and we’ll end with one.

John Adams and Thomas Jefferson were two of the most famous Founding Fathers, and for most of their lives they worked closely together. While Jefferson is widely regarded as the author of the Declaration of Independence, Adams’ played a critical role in editing the final version. Both men also served together as emissaries to France during the Revolutionary War.



After George Washington chose not to seek a third term, Adams and Jefferson ran against each other for the Presidency; their friendship splitting over issues like Adams’ belief in a strong central government, and Jefferson’s championing of states’ rights. The election was close, with Adams winning the Presidency by three electoral votes. In an awkward technicality, the Constitution of that time called for the second-place finisher to become Vice President. Adams asked Jefferson to join him in forming a strong, bipartisan administration, but Jefferson turned him down cold.

In 1800, Jefferson and Adams faced off again. The campaign was bitter from start to finish, with both sides launching heated accusations, vilifying each other, and engaging in slander and character

assassination. Jefferson won, and Adams skipped the inauguration ceremony. The rivals did not speak again for 12 years.

Finally, another Founding Father and fellow Declaration signer – Benjamin Rush -- wrote to both men, saying the other wanted to rekindle their friendship. (And thus a timeless comedy device was born). Rush sealed the deal by telling both Adams and Jefferson that he had a dream in which they revitalized their friendship through letter-writing before they later “sunk into the grave nearly at the same time, full of years and rich in the gratitude and praises of their country.”

Prodded by Rush, Adams and Jefferson started writing again in 1812 and eventually mailed more than 185 letters to each other. Their letters quickly became tinged with tenderness and forgiveness. Adams wrote, “You and I ought not to die before we have explained ourselves to each other.” Jefferson responded, “Crippled wrists and fingers make writing slow and laborious. But while writing to you, I lose the sense of these things, in the recollection of ancient times, when youth and health made happiness out of everything.”

On July 4, 1826, Benjamin Rush’s dream turned into reality when both men died on the same day; their deaths ironically coinciding with the 50th anniversary of birth of the country they helped found.

A month later, wordsmith Daniel Webster was called to deliver a joint eulogy. In commemoration of July Fourth and the life of the two politicians, he said: “Adams and Jefferson are no more. On our 50th anniversary, the great day of national jubilee, in the very hour of public rejoicing, in the midst of echoing and re-echoing voices of thanksgiving, while their own names were on all tongues, they took their flight together to the world of spirits.”

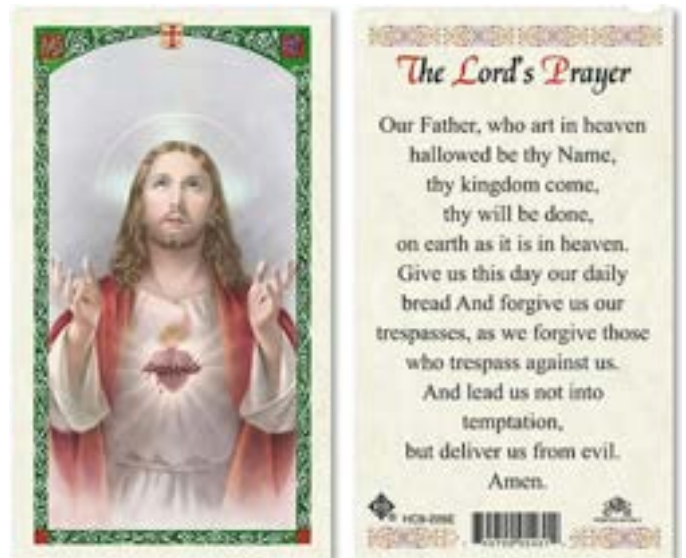
Webster could also have added the following: *“For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.” (Matthew 6:14)*

Answers to Jeopardy for Catholics

Answer to Number One: What is a pall?



Answer to Number Two: What is a prayer card?



Answer to Number Three: What is a catafalque?



An illustration in Harper's Weekly in May 1865 depicts President Lincoln's funeral. (Library of Congress)