



BY NISSA BAUSBAUM

In my early years of ordination, a parishioner from one of the congregations in which I served expressed considerable concern when I suggested that praying did not come easily to me. She, I would guess like many others, regarded prayer as something that should be natural for a priest. Confirming this, I haven't read many parish profiles that do not include an expectation that the prospective priest be "a person of prayer." Since that encounter, I have given a lot of thought to the nature of prayer and to the origin of my discomfort. It has taken me years to sort out my seeming uneasiness, but in the process of doing this sorting I have not only reached a number of conclusions about prayer but have also developed a restful rhythm with it.

What I have come to understand is that prayer is like

a prism, which breaks up light into the colours of the rainbow, or reflects this light. My difficulty arises from a sense that people often only describe prayer as "talking" to God or, even more troubling, as merely petitioning God for things to happen. In contrast to this, what I am now able to comprehend is this prism-like quality which gives prayer much more depth than this rather one-dimensional approach.

In my own prayer life, for example, I have discovered that food, and all that this encompasses, plays a central role. While at times I do find myself "in conversation" with God, there are just as many times when my prayer is reflected in action, particularly in the actions of preparing and sharing food and even sometimes — in some way, shape or form — of actually becoming that food. With respect to the latter, one parishioner from my past told me that

each time I preached she experienced me as "breaking off a piece of myself and handing this to the congregation to be consumed." As such, while listening to the homily on one particular Sunday, this woman said that she found herself wondering why I did not fear that one day I might break off so much of myself that there would be nothing left to offer. As I have pondered this statement, I have come to the conclusion that there lays within it something central about the message of the gospel: in particular, as this message is described by the resurrection.

The Christian story cannot get much more allegorical than what is depicted in this image; that we are a people intended to "break off a piece of ourselves and give this away to others." The celebration of the Eucharist is the epitome of such allegory. In this sacrament, those of us who come to the table receive a portion of the body of Christ and, as we share in this act of com-

munion, we each become a part of that body. Having done this, it can never be our call to hold onto this body — much as the author of the Gospel of John reveals when, upon finding herself in the presence of Jesus for the first time following his death, Mary hears the risen Christ say to her, "Do not hold on to me." (John 20: 17) These few words teach us that just as Mary did, it is also our call to let go, to rush headlong into the world for the simple purpose of giving away the divine that we have consumed and has now become a part of us, even at the risk of there being nothing left of us once we have done this. Here, when we find ourselves in unity with the divine, is the moment of true resurrection and also perhaps the moment of true prayer. By our consumption of the bread and the wine of the Eucharist we, like Mary, take hold of the Body of Christ with the sole intention of ultimately letting this go. Our

task is to share this with others. Yet, as we know all too well, it does not always happen this way. Too often, we cling foolishly to the body, desperate to hang on to our illusions and too fearful to give God any freedom.

Christ is risen — the prayer which all Christians say, sing or shout during the Easter Season — is a prayer which will most fully be realized when each of us comes to recognize what Mary was able to comprehend on that first Easter Day more than 2000 years ago. Like her, through the resurrection, we are divinely named through our encounter with and consumption of the bread and the wine (read Jesus) of the Eucharist. As such, it becomes our call to rush headlong into the world to share this divine naming with others. We do this with confidence and joy, without barriers or boundaries. □

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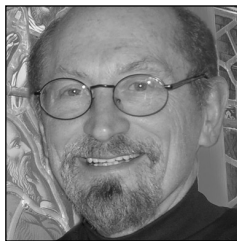
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BY JONN LAVINNDER

Archbishop John, having a full schedule visiting our companion diocese in Northern Mexico, graciously relinquished his column this month to our new Dean, Nissa Bausbaum. It is appropriate that her first article is on "prayer" following the popular series "Many Ways to Pray" published in *The HighWay* and submitted by the diocesan chapter of the Anglican Fellowship of Prayer. I, personally, look forward to the next article written by Ken Watts on "Walking Prayer" scheduled for next month's edition.

I attended the Diocesan Council last month and was made aware of a number of events that either didn't make it to *The HighWay* or are about to happen. Our front-page article

regarding the potluck dinners with our Primate, Fred Hiltz, focusing on PWRDF is one. It should be in full swing by the time you read this issue.

The other event is the Kootenay Family Gathering. This year it is at Sorrento Centre with Bishop Gordon Light as keynote speaker. I would attend this event just for him alone. He has written some beautiful spiritual songs that are in the Book of Common Praise. Norene Morrow mentions one of Gordon Light's songs in her column this month, "She Flies On." If you like playing contemporary arrangements for the piano, you should try the arrangement in "Songs for a Gospel People." The song is also known as "She Comes Sailing on the Wind."

Google "Gordon Light" and don't be surprised to find

many references to Gordon Lightfoot. It's an interesting comparison; however, I prefer spiritual songs to secular songs any day.

That being said, I would like to mention that Peter Davison, whose column this month discusses "Why is Easter so important?" is also a spiritual troubadour. His song "The Singer and the Song" is in the Book of Common Praise as well.

Having received the Sorrento Centre insert last month, you might plan to take advantage of some of the summer courses offered there. You might also recognize a few of the presenters. I see Archbishop David Crawley and Peter Zimmer are "Back to the Garden" again! □

Editorial