

Shifting Language and Liturgical Catechesis

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(Note: citations are incomplete)

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Introduction

During the almost forty years since the promulgation of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, persons involved in the formation of ecclesial ministers face challenging questions. To what can we attribute the desire among our people – students, parishioners, other ministers – to reconstruct a nostalgic, pre-Vatican II liturgical universe? To what complex of factors can we attribute the reactionary directives of the Congregation for worship? On the other hand, how might we account for the absence of so many Generation X-ers and others from the celebration of the faith? It seems that several issues have surfaced that may well be precipitating factors in these phenomena. I would suggest that the following issues are among the most influential and interrelated facets of the current *historical* context in which we live, and in which we attempt to make an account of the convictions of our faith: the crisis of or challenge to patriarchal

exercise of authority, the rise of feminist consciousness, the value and beauty of other world religions, and the impact of new science and cosmology. On what grounds has the exercise of authority been questioned? Is it a desire to be disruptive, or rather an impulse toward more accountability among ourselves and of our leaders? How does this challenge manifest itself in issues surrounding the governance of the Church and the celebration of its life in Christ in the liturgies of the sacraments? Is feminist consciousness the mischief of a few disgruntled persons, or rather, is it consistent with the Reign of God proclaimed by Jesus? Why is it necessary to consider the reality and beauty of responses to the Mystery of Life in other religions of the world? Given the assertions of the Second Vatican Council in the Decree on Ecumenism (21 November 1964) and the Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (28 October 1965) that the grace of God is offered, not simply beyond the Catholic Church but beyond Christianity, what demands does this place on our account of the offer of grace by God and the meaning of liberation from sin in Christ? How is it that the new science image of the cosmos influences our understanding of authority, feminist consciousness, and appreciation of world religions? And, to the point here, how can we speak with and about persons of variant cultural and religious distinctions? That is, how can we make the particular claims of our faith about God acting to liberate humanity in Jesus, about the Church as the sacrament of salvation, and about our public liturgical worship as the intense expression of this faith, and do so while respecting the activity of God among others? Clearly, the expansion of our understandings (we might say, the retrieval of a deeper understanding of the gospel) places considerable strain on the use of language

with which we have been familiar.

In this postmodern era, and even though we may never have formally studied the causes of the phenomenon, the Neo-Scholastic language in which we were initially formed in the faith, and the image of the world and social structures that it presupposed, are no longer capable of adequately naming the ecclesial experience of increasing numbers of persons. We have noted that the same term or expression can and has come to mean various things to various persons. How might we appreciate this 'fragmentation and expansion' of our language?

Before considering a possible alternative model for approaching issues and terms with which we are familiar, such as faith, grace, sacrament, sacramentality, liturgy of the sacraments, salvation, and so on, we would do well to pause a bit and consider the meaning of meaning. That is, what does it mean to say 'I understand'? Can we honestly answer that question the way we once did? Where does meaning lie, and how does human language express meaning? This is a particularly important activity, because 'theology' means 'God-talk', that is, talk about God by *human beings who live in concrete, social situations*. This study, therefore, consists of two parts: (I) the historical context of the fragmentation and enrichment of language, and (II) an exploration of a possible approach to articulating the meaning of ecclesial and sacramental life drawn from language of New Science.

I. THE FRAGMENTATION OF LANGUAGE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A. The Historicity of Language

In every generation Christians are engaged in an effort to make a verbal

account of the manner in which we say that we, as Christians, know and respond to God, that is, as the First Letter of Peter says, to make an account of the hope that is in us.

From earliest times and because of their experience of the risen Christ, Christians held it to be *true* that the manner in which we respond to God has been revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. In other words, it is our conviction, our fiducial faith, that what has taken place in the life of Jesus tells us about our own destinies as human beings. Thus, whereas Jesus can be shown to have lived and died (empirically verifiable truth), the statements about the relation of Jesus to God, of Jesus to the whole of humanity and the cosmos, and the specific relation of Christians to the risen Jesus are attempts to articulate the experience of the *truth of revelation* by God. Here, the language of faith uses metaphor and analogy. Still, that language is always spoken from out of the stance of fiducial faith and from within a social context. Language does not fall from the heavens.

The following illustration pertains to the relation between Jesus and the Church. Even though we can no longer honestly assert that Jesus, while he was living in Palestine, directly intended and actually determined any concrete, historical structures of the Church, Christians have always presumed a *vital* relationship *between* the life and ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus *and* the existence and mission of believers *who exist in a concrete, social empirical reality we know as the Church*.

Christians expressed that relationship by saying that the same Spirit of God that united the humanity of Jesus to God's Word in the womb of Mary, and

that enabled Jesus to live and die faithful to God, is the very Spirit that Jesus has poured out (and continually bestows) upon his followers through his Self-offering (sacrifice) on the Cross. Paul describes the concrete, historical implications of this relationship -- ethical behavior in the Church, rather than escape from it into Gnosticism -- by way of several metaphors from human experience. Clearly, there is no escaping the fleshy, social nature of the experience of Christ. And so, Christians could say that the flesh is good, humanity is good, creation is good, because of that revelation in the flesh of Jesus. Knowing the risen Jesus, the Christ, therefore, is to revere all matter, and to take delight in the whole of humanity, as well as the humanity that makes up the Body of Christ in history. It is precisely the material body of Jesus, his utter involvement in our joys and tears, which is crucial to our hope.

Even more to the point, we do not say that 'the Self-expression of God *seemed* to take flesh', or that the Word *seemed* to be made flesh and *seemed* to dwell among us. Rather, we say that the Self-expression of God assumed the materiality of the cosmos in the womb of Mary in the flesh of a human being *who really lived human life*. How often, have we proclaimed that 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'? How often have we hailed the womb that bore the flesh of Jesus?

In short, Jesus of Nazareth lived and died within a concrete social reality. He was born into a pattern of language, just as each of us is born into a world shaped by language, and into language patterns that shape our conceptual world. As Rosemary Haughton has said: The Catholic Thing is utterly earthy. For Catholic Christians, any dichotomy between "spirituality" and life lived in this

glorious and messy Church is some form of escapism. But, in making an account of this revelation, we must use language, and all we have is our own. Precisely because of our convictions about the Incarnation, linguistic enculturation is crucial to Christian life.

B. Living in Language

When we consider the conscious and preconscious influence of the faith-language of our life experience, there is no neutral corner (non-contextual corner) for us to evaluate the religious landscape, because each of us has been affected by language on the subject of Jesus, Church, and worship, and has internalized it in various degrees. However, as philosophers of language would tell us, this implies that, while we can speak of 'objective empirical reality' (walls are hard), much more nuance is needed when speaking of 'objective truth', especially truth of the faith. For Truth(s) of faith is mediated in history through human beings. And, that experience, without anyone's permission, is bound to be shaped by the language patterns in which we live.

The biologist, Julian Huxley, once said that "the evolution of verbal concepts opened the door to all further achievements (man's thought) of human thought." Benjamin Lee Whorf observes that language is the best show that (man) human beings put on. While other creatures have developed rough communication systems, they have no true language. Indeed, language is crucial in raising our young, in structuring human communities, in handing down our culture from generation to generation. (Stuart Chase, Foreword, in John B. Carroll, ed., Language, Thought and Reality: Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee

Whorf (Cambridge, MS: The MIT Press, 1995), vi). The ability to reason constitutes the 'uniqueness of human being' for philosophers and biologists. Without claws, sharp teeth, thick hide, quick feet, or raw strength, members of *homo sapiens* must think their way out of tight places.' It has been among their main tools for survival (Carroll, vi).

C. *The Greeks on Thinking and Speaking*

In Western culture, the Greeks were the first to reflect on logic and reason. The sophists, whom Stuart Chase refers to as the Madison Avenue boys of the Aegean, taught their students how to topple their opponents in debate or in a court of law. And, Aristotle invented the syllogism.

However, and for our considerations here regarding language and understanding, the Greeks, our philosophical ancestors, *took it for granted* that there existed some universal, uncontaminated essence of reason that was shared by all thinkers. Words, they thought, were simply the medium in which this deeper effulgence found expression. This implied that one language could be translated into another language, or words communicated to another, without loss of meaning (Carroll, vii).

We are all familiar with the image of the world that has come to us from the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. And yet, what we know now is that *their very image of reality* -- a pyramid reflecting a hierarchy of beings -- was itself a reflection of the way those patriarchal societies were structured. Today, it is a commonplace assertion among scholars that the language -- images and

metaphors -- that we live by, that is, by which we make sense of our lives, are themselves *derived from our social experiences*, and that those images, in turn, tend to *reinforce the social structures from which they have been taken*.

D. A Surprise Reversal

However, on our way to appreciating our language as a function of our social structures, and of the relationship between our language and the understanding of the cosmos at any given time in history, the cosmological discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo heralded the beginnings of the deconstruction of Western language with which we are coming to terms to this day. Prior to the 16th century, our patriarchal social structures and untravelled experience gave rise to the images of a pyramid of beings in a universe with the Earth at the center. However, and even though the Magisterium has resisted their implications for making an account of the faith, discoveries in cosmology are now more consciously reversing what we are saying about creation itself, about human relationships, and about salvation. For example, if all is in flux in the universe (New Science - Chaos Theory), are monarchical/ patriarchal forms of governance really 'the will of God' for societies as a whole, or for the Church? If all is in flux, can the rather static categories of scholastic language account for the dynamism of the universe and the tremendous variety of social structures we now know marked the early churches, and which variety is struggling for acknowledgement today? Can the language of Plato and Aristotle bear the weight of describing the activity of the Spirit in the Body of Christ? Or, might we use the language of Chaos Theory (among others), with its recognition of change, stability, and renewal of open systems, to more profoundly regard the movement

of the Spirit in all creation and in the Church, that is, to make an account of the hope that is in us?

How are these insights and questions playing out for the issues of authority, the rise of feminist consciousness, an appreciative regard for other world religions?

First, so long as that patriarchal social construction of reality was not seriously questioned, *authority and its exercise* were seen to reside in free males. Indeed, precisely because of the *social status* of females, women could not have been described as full human beings. For, if they were, that fact alone would have implied that the social structures were unjust, and would have disrupted the relationships and the language that made patriarchy cohere. For example, in that social system, women would be expected to please men by being 'feminine'. They would be taught to be content to be cared for and led by males, and expected to return their gratitude by being submissive. Exceptions have only proven the overall rule. (Recently, a bishop sincerely attempted to console women on a theological faculty by comparing the Church to a jet liner. Women, he said, have excellent seats, are catered to by others, and have a great view out of the windows. They would do well to leave the flying to the men.)

Clearly, a 'double standard' of behavior pervaded human relationships in that construction of reality. In addition, it would be an understatement to say that such patriarchal double standard assumptions continue to pervade some images of the Church and its public worship, the liturgies of the sacraments. Given the long hegemony of this view of reality, we are not surprised at the active resistance to its demise at this time in history, for a 'language world' is collapsing.

Further, so long as Christians rather uncritically absorbed this patriarchal construction of reality into their ecclesial practice and God-talk (theology), it seemed to follow logically that anyone who was not a baptized Christian could not possibly know the saving love of God. Thus, with the discovery of vast territories and millions of persons beyond Christian lands, a restrictive understanding of the teaching, "Outside the Church there is no salvation," impelled missionaries around the globe for the purpose of offering the grace of salvation where they presumed there was no grace. Why? The social structures of the Church had been attributed to the direct word of Jesus and, therefore, to be the 'will of the Lord of the universe', as *Sacerdotalis Ordinatio* stated. To the extent that one holds this view, all grace must come from those in this structure.

And so, for Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) and Galileo (1564-1581) to have discovered and publicly taught that the sun, rather than the earth, is the center of our planetary system, appeared to contradict the creation stories of scripture, which were presumed to be virtually true, rather than a literary myth that communicated revealed truth about the origin of creation and human responsibility. The discovery also appeared to question the controlling image of society, itself based upon a social order composed of a patriarchal ranking of beings. To get some idea of the anxiety that authority figures, as well as others, experienced because of these discoveries, all we need to do is to recall the possible anger, fear, hurt, or resentment we may have felt when we received some new information that immediately challenged the way we had previously conducted ourselves and given meaning to our lives.

It is not at all surprising that, within one hundred years of their promulgation, the cosmological discoveries of Copernicus and Galileo would

challenge the authority of monarchies of every sort, including the monarchical, patriarchal authority structures of the Church. Not only the fall of monarchies in Europe, but also the very existence of these United States, an experiment in elected governance by the people rather than a monarchy, are only two of the consequences of the Modern Scientific Era ushered in by the telescopes of Copernicus and Galileo. *Yet another consequence was the gradual fragmentation of language*, even though many of us continued to presume, well into this century, that the 'perennial philosophy' and its categories were well suited to the articulation of our faith. How did scholastic language continue to "crack"?

E. The Turn to the Subject

It is important to recall that the description, based on Plato and Aristotle, of the social order as expression of the divine or spiritual order served to reinforce the stratification of society. The crisp clarity of its language gave the alluring impression that its categories lucidly named truth. And those who guarded that truth were authority figures. But, what if, in addition to ongoing study of planets, someone discovers other rich cultures that do not use the same language categories? An even larger wedge is made in the language-web. Increasingly, persons came to recognize scholastic language precisely as the product of the society that it preserves. (See, *inter al.*, N. Max Wildiers, *The Theologian and His Universe: Theology and Cosmology from the Middle Ages to the Present* (New York: Seabury Press, 1982))

Consequently, for Copernicus and Galileo to have discovered new *truth* -- empirically verifiable truth -- that had not been taught by either civil or

ecclesiastical authority figures -- would be to raise many discomfoting questions: What is truth? Can we be sure that there is some untouched, pure fullness of ideas that clearly expressed in our words? Can the truth be controlled? Is the classical system of thought and language capable any longer of being completely adequate about *what is?* And, if ordinary human beings can *discover truth for themselves*, and can do so by the use of reason, is not the very notion of *truth* revealed *by* God absurd? The idea of God, some said, is a creation of the human mind when it cannot or will not seek the truth. Further, human beings had used language of God, Christ, and Church to justify hurting others. It is no wonder that Nietzsche's Mad Man could shout: God is dead! In short, Enlightenment anthropology displaced Revelation as arbiter of truth with reason. (See Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996, for the implications of Descartes, Locke, Hume, Newton)

Still, these scientific discoveries of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries -- that is, the *discovery of discovery* --yielded the euphoric Idea that MAN, if HE made the effort, could discover the meaning of all things, could set out a method to achieve scientific certainty by the use of reason. What Martin Luther (1483-1546) had accomplished by asserting individual freedom from Church authority, Rene Descartes (1596-1650) would accomplish in philosophy. Not the authority of the Church or Aristotle, he asserted, but reason alone would lead to certainty of truth. In his wake followed John Locke (1632-1704), David Hume (1711-1776), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). These and others represent the *turn to the subject* as the source of authority. And with this move, modern science and human reason could and did look upon this globe as the plaything of science and

technology, to be used and abused at will. And, the individual male was seen as the center of reality. Initially, however, this very *turn to the subject* and scientific prowess, with its cries of liberty and fraternity in governance was applied to males only. And yet, the discovery of discovery laid the way open for the scientific discoveries that would overturn the centuries-long assumption that female persons are misbegotten males.

In short, if the process of knowing in the classical world seemed to be the simple seeing and attaching what was seen or heard with universal ideas, the *turn to the subject* brought with it the 'hermeneutic of suspicion', that is, a series of questions about the source of supposed truth, its historical context, its purpose, and so on.

F. The Turn to Language

At the turn of the 20th century, scientists themselves made discoveries that called the adequacy of the explanations of modern science itself into question. For, to that point, and even if the descendants of Descartes had worked to discard the metaphysics of Aristotle and the authority of the Church as articulated through Aristotelian language, they had themselves sought to replace it with another meta-explanation, or metanarrative, of reality. In other words, if the meta-explanation of Aristotelian philosophy could no longer account for reality, surely, they thought, mathematics or some other system would or could explain reality. In this atmosphere of heady glorification of empirical truth, the practice of religion could be embarrassing. Thus, engaging in religious practices would be a private, personal affair. This development had some concrete consequences: either of driving a wedge between reason and faith, or of presuming that the faith

was empirically, logically verifiable, or of dismissing religious faith altogether.

In any case, with the discovery of galaxies beyond our own, and with our engagement with myriad cultures brought about by electronic communication and global travel, philosophers, theologians, and scientists began to ask: If all language is culture bound, is *any* meta-explanation of reality possible? If all is in flux in the universe, what social system best reflects this? Can we communicate with any one outside of our own culture, our own 'language game'? Or, do we need to be content to speak to persons within our own spheres of life? On this planet earth, how can we speak to others about ultimate concerns? And when we converse about the origin of the Church, the liturgies of the sacraments, grace, and so on, can we any longer presume that we know what the other is saying? What language can we use? Is there a meta-story anywhere?

It is from this context, in which massive challenges to the patriarchal account of reality has and continues to be made, that all the world religions influenced by Aristotle's metaphysics are challenged to re-say, to re-articulate their particular fiducial faith claims. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have all absorbed the classical worldview of Plato and Aristotle. Each is involved, to one degree or another, in asking similar questions: Can one be a good Jew, an honest, Church-going Christian, a fervent Muslim from within structures that are not patriarchal? Can we speak to each other about matters of ultimate concern?

The language of classical philosophy could give us the impression that reality was purely and simply 'objective' to ourselves. If we trusted that metaphysics to give us ageless language by which to speak of our faith, and if now many of us recognize its patriarchal social roots, what are the options? We may

recognize some or a combination of them in ourselves. Certainly, one option is a form of nihilism. Such a position holds that philosophically there is no grand story, and that we cannot speak with each other about matters of importance. There is only sheer variety and the emergence of random and unrelated subsystems of all kinds. And this realization has the potential to lead to alienation and isolation from wider social engagement.

A reaction to this nihilism among some of the Reformation Churches took the form of Biblical Fundamentalism. This position maintains that every word in scripture is the direct will of God. Hence, Inspiration by God would take no account of the active involvement of the human scribe who, it was taught, is Totally Depraved and involved in corrupted social structures. Fundamentalism presumed to secure truth through biblical literalism.

Within the Catholic Church, the threat to the 'perennial philosophy' was met by the papal assertion that Aristotelian metaphysics was the only vehicle for language about God, and that the Ordinary Magisterium (i.e., the pope and bishops) would interpret the scriptures for us. So, whereas the search for absolute certainty found expression in Biblical Fundamentalism among some of the Reformation Churches, that same search for certainty within some Catholic circles takes the form of unquestioning Papalism, captured in the expression "The Holy Father says", or in an attempt to isolate an imagined period of time and pattern of liturgical practice of the faith that is presumed to have provided security in the past.

Yet another option is complete subjectivism and relativism. These options view reality from the perspective of what makes sense for one's self alone, or persons with whom one agrees, and can take the shape of separating oneself from

the practices of the wider social and ecclesial society. Here, reality is created by subjective desire. "Something is true because I want it to be."

G. Taking the Challenge

As we struggle to re-articulate the hope that is in us *in this language fractured historical context*, there is no question that we do well to recognize both the beauty as well as the severe limitations of the philosophical system that under girded our initial formation in the faith, even as we move beyond it. For that language, perhaps at times in spite of itself, has been the carrier of the tradition, even while clouding it.

Weaving our way through this in-between-time can present some options. On the one hand, somehow to have equated the Church and the account of our faith with the patriarchal structures and language can lead to a clinging to them in these times, and be a kind of return to an image of security. On the other hand, somehow to have equated the Church and the account of our faith with that patriarchal structure and language, and then to have recognized its severe limitations, could easily lead to the assumption that the Church is purely and only a patriarchal reality, and that the Christ Event has no meaning outside of that scholastic philosophical explanation. If that were the case, then the only self-respecting thing to do would be to leave. That certainly has been the conclusion of authors such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson (among others). But, would we be sitting here if we genuinely equated the reality of the Church and its sacramental life with patriarchy?

Today, and with the rich insights given us by the biblical and liturgical movements, systematic theologians of the liturgies of the sacraments know well

that Scholastic philosophy and theology can no longer respond adequately to the modern or to the postmodern sensibilities of Christians. However, we do make some important distinctions.

There is no question that the telescopes of Copernicus and Galileo, and the contributions of Einstein and Steven Hawking today, have exploded any illusion of a grand narrative of the whole of the cosmos in terms of one philosophical system. But that fact does not remove the experience of our ancestors, and of ourselves, of the presence of the risen Christ among us for the peace and salvation of all the world. In making an account of the faith, therefore, it is not a matter of needing to choose between the use of reason, on the one hand, or, on the other, of engaging in a kind of blind acceptance of what authority figures say about revelation. Rather, the demands for rationality in science are distinguished from the demands for rationality with regard to the experience of revelation. Granting that reason is exercised and language is used in circumstances that are finite, conditioned, and historical, it is truly *reason* that is being used to articulate the experience that grounds our trusting faith, an experience that knows more than it can say.

The purpose here has not been to give an exhaustive account of the fine points of each philosophical position, but to paint in broad strokes some of the developments that have fractured our scholastic language and the model of the Church and its liturgical life that it preserved. Clearly, it would be safe to say that we can no longer expect to find one philosophical system on which to hang our ecclesial and sacramental hats, but that does not imply the derogation of the whole of the scholastic philosophical system. Rather, it seems that the

fragmentation of our language may well be a tremendous liberation for reclaiming the dynamic images at the heart of the tradition, even while struggling with attempts to recreate a pre-Vatican II nostalgic universe.

In her book, Leadership and the New Science: Learning about Organization from an Orderly Universe, Margaret J. Wheatley beautifully describes Chaos Theory. As a student of the Church and its liturgies of the sacraments, it seems to me that Chaos Theory is no enemy of the use of reason in making an account of the hope that is in us. Indeed, as I have come to appreciate it, Chaos Theory is most appropriate to speaking the truth of revelation.

II. An Exploration: Liturgies of the Sacraments as Namers of Chaos

Every religion of the world has stories (myths) by which it makes an account of its origin, and social ritual patterns by which it interprets the limit situations of human life. Limit situations present themselves as events over which we have no ultimate control: birth, commitment in marriage, illness and death, naming leaders of worship, healing social rifts, among others. As such, they call for interpretation, that is, for some naming that indicates their relation to the presumed origin and meaning of the respective group.

If there are many centers of religious expression in the religions of the world, how can we make our particular faith claims regarding life in the body of Christ and the meaning of the liturgies of the sacraments, our public ritual patterns? As we have seen, the language of the classical worldview (scholasticism) has served the Church for so long because of its internal coherence. That language shaped our minds and our affections as well.

Theologians in the field of the public worship of the Church today must have a deep respect for and knowledge of that system, because it has been, for all of its limitations, a vehicle of the mediation or transmission of the faith. But, given all the factors to which we have pointed, especially the scientific discoveries regarding the full humanity of women, and the post-scientific (postmodern) contributions of New Science and Chaos Theory, it would seem that we have at hand yet another pattern of language by which to speak the truth of our experience of revelation.

Chaos Theory

In her book, *Leadership and the New Science*, Wheatley consciously uses the language of Chaos Theory to address the workings of social organizations (think *Church*). According to this theory, Chaos is the ever-surging life force. But, there is inherent order in Chaos (121). Indeed, Chaos is the final state in a system's movement away from order, but within Chaos is a pattern, "the Strange Attractor". We might speak of 'order without predictability' that respects the boundary of itself (122). Chaos, it is said, slumbers deep inside the perfectly order system, and is the 'urge' to self-organization (125), to self-similarity (128). That is, what appears at first to be random movement carries with it *the pattern of its origin*.

In drawing an analogy of Chaos Theory to social systems (think *Church*), Wheatley writes: "A self-organizing [social] system has the freedom to grow and evolve, guided by one rule: *It must remain consistent with itself and its past* (emphasis mine). The presence of this guiding rule allows for both creativity and boundaries, for evolution and coherence, for determinism and free will" (135).

Wheatley makes the point that social organizations need to "grow in the belief that [social] systems can evolve into an orderly shape when they center around clear points of self-reference" (137).

I find this language extremely appropriate to the task of re-speaking the hope that is in us.

A Possible Catechesis:

The Chaos-Spirit groans at the heart of the cosmos, is its ever-surg-ing life force. That Spirit is the source of the revelation that the whole of creation is good, is the source of confidence that 'all will be well', and that disorder does not have the last word. And inherent in Chaos is *the pattern of the dying and rising of Christ, the 'Strange Attractor'*.

Might we say that the assurance that all will be well is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth? Could we say that Jesus, throughout his life, names disorder in the human heart and in social structures that presumed to be secure, and that he paid with his life? Could we say that Jesus gave his person over to the Chaos-Spirit? The Spirit impelled him into the desert to face the temptations of the human heart. It was unsettling to know this Jesus, to have someone around who completely entrusted his person to the Order that Chaos-Spirit reveals. For the life of Jesus names 'apparent order and security' as DISORDER, a lie.

Such a personal presence was and is a reproach to false security. And an attempt was made to destroy him. But in what appeared to be the end of the pattern is revealed as the pattern of our lives. The Chaos that shaped the life of Jesus is the Spirit that he bestowed upon believers precisely in the act of giving himself to that Spirit and in facing the consequences of that self-gift. As

Augustine loved to preach: Church is born from the side of Christ as he slept the sleep of death. And from age to age, believers know that 'all will be well', because the Chaos-Spirit-Love between Jesus and Abba is greater than any death dealing system.

Indeed, the mission possesses this holy and messy Church, and impels it to name the pattern that appears in the whole of life and especially in limit situations of life. Two examples may illuminate this truth of faith.

In the waters of baptism and by the anointing with oil, the Church invokes the Unearned Gift of the Chaos-Spirit to draw this child or adult into the Body of Christ, so that the 'alluring Strange Attractor', the dying and rising of Jesus, might be the pattern that gives them hope.

In the full celebration of the Eucharist, the Church admits that the 'Strange Attractor' governs it. It is convened – called together – by Jesus, the Strange Attractor who, in the proclamation of the Scriptures, speaks to and interprets our lives to us. And, in turn, we interpret the Strange Attractor (Surely, You are the One....)

In every celebration of the Eucharist, we are the disciples on the Road to Emmaus. Each is saddened by deep disappointments and painful memories; things have not always turned out as we would have wanted. And as we walk away from Jerusalem, so often blinded by pain, the Strange Attractor asks: Why are you so sad? And often we respond: You must be the only one who does not know how our hopes were dashed!

And beginning with Moses and Miriam, beginning with the ancestors, Jesus interprets our history to us, tells us who we are by telling us Whose we are,

by naming the pattern of our lives (Did you not know...?) Sunday after Sunday for two thousand years, we have said: Please come and eat with us, only to recognize the Strange Attractor in broken bread and the cup of the New Covenant revealed on the Cross. In the eating of the Broken Bread, we eat the history of the ancestors from whom the Attractor cannot be separated. In drinking the Cup, we give ourselves, yet again, to the pattern of our lives, the dying and rising of the Christ.

III. Some concluding observations....