

WILDERNESS WORDS

Editors

If there is anything that you would like to have included in the Newsletter: 313-673-6519 and dmc@chem.wayne.edu or pcoleman@chem.wayne.edu

This Sunday:

Leading: Karen H.
Preaching: Mary Ellen
Presiding: Mary Ellen
Treats:

Readings this week:

Fourth Sunday of Easter, 7 May, 2017

First Reading: [Acts 2:42-47](#)

Psalm: [Psalm 23](#)

Epistle: [1 Peter 2:19-25](#)

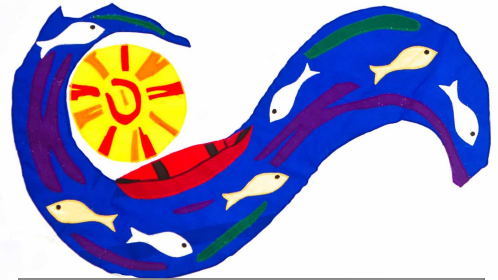
Gospel: [John 10:1-10](#)

(Click on citation to link directly to the reading.)



Reflections:

By Mary Ellen Ashcroft



*Inviting Mystery, Embracing
Compassion, Encountering Christ.*

We slipped from the noisy market and dusty Mexican street into the church, sporting bars instead of windows to let the breeze through. As we sat down in the fourth pew on the left side, we were grabbed by the front wall of the church where a stage backdrop displayed a scene from an oldy-worldy garden. In front of the backdrop there was (perhaps a ladder?) covered in a white sheet. Atop that a white Jesus mannequin stood, arms up, victorious over death.

Absorbing the scene, I thought, “kitchy, manipulative, racially insensitive.” It took me a few minutes to notice the man on the front right pew. Was he just sitting? No he was talking. To the Jesus up there. Sometimes it seemed a confidential conversation; then his voice rose like a domestic argument row. There was no question who he was talking to, even though, since he was speaking Spanish we couldn’t understand his words.

After ten minutes the man stood and turned to leave. His face: it was clear life had been hard on him. Ill? Under the influence? Certainly unwashed. He didn’t notice us as he made his way out of the church.

A part of me was full of judgement: this man was ignorant, superstitious, embarrassing, drunk.

But I also realized that he was right. “At least he knows what to do with life’s vicissitudes—bring them to Jesus.” A profound lesson: forget your superior aesthetics, your fine racial sensitivities, your sense of what’s appropriate. Instead bring to Jesus your confidences, your anger, your sorrow.

I whispered to Suzanne, “I feel like I’m in a Graham Greene novel—a combination of *The Power and the Glory* and *The End of the Affair*.”

Set in Mexico, *The Power and the Glory’s* main character is an alcoholic Mexican priest who has fathered a child. He is ashamed of his weakness, but even as his life is threatened he

Forums: 2016 - 2017

Forums — immediately following services we grab our coffee and treats and spend an hour learning.

June 4 — Prayer by Milan Schmidt

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hears confessions, baptizes, and presides at Eucharist to meet people’s needs. The ‘power and the glory’ is made manifest in this weak, flawed character seeking to love and follow God.

Greene’s *The End of the Affair* features several lonely people in wartime London. In a key scene, the woman who has been having an affair with the novel’s narrator writes in her diary about going into a church to get out of the rain:

“I hated the statues, the crucifix, all the emphasis on the human body. I was trying to escape from the human body and all it needed..... So I looked at that material body on that material cross and I wondered, how could the world have nailed a vapor there? A vapor of course felt no pain and no pleasure.... Suppose God did exist, suppose he was a body like that, what’s wrong in believing his body existed as much as mine? I walked out of church and in defiance of all the reasonable and detached, I did what I had seen people do in Spanish churches: I dipped my finger in the so-called holy water and made a kind of cross on my forehead.”

The man in this church. And the cross—foolishness to the reasonable and detached, but the power and wisdom of God, as Paul writes to the church at Corinth. My high-browed ponderings vs. that man’s ravings: who left that church unburdened that afternoon?

Ruby’s Pantry: Tuesday, May 9th. Please come and assist if you are able.



One more Science March Photo: Karen H, marching with family in St. Pete's. 2,500.