

Book explores communicating through story

I am in the process of reading *Amazing Grace*, a book by Kathleen Norris. The book's subtitle, "A Vocabulary of Faith," conveys a sense of the author's theme: to express in language as concrete and accessible as possible the meaning of a range of more or less technical terms frequently used in the Christian tradition.

The author offers her reflections on more than 60 such entries, including such terms as Antichrist, Incarnation, exorcism, repentance, grace, heresy and mystic.

As I understand it, her intent is not to argue that technical definitions of technical terms are unnecessary. Much less does she wish to put aside such definitions in favor of her own.

It seems to me that what she wishes to accomplish is to help her readers grasp some of the richness of these terms and to relate that richness to human experience — its joys, sorrows, questions, quests and dilemmas. She does this by story and reflection on humans.

I am enjoying the book very much because thus far it has helped me to think about my own experience. It also has caused me to think about how reflecting on my faith helps me to understand better

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

the realities of daily life and how thinking and praying about life's experiences can open the way to deeper and stronger faith.

If *Amazing Grace* holds that kind of personal enrichment for me, it also serves as an healthy reminder of how important it is to communicate in language with which people are familiar and that they can readily understand.

Be clear on this: I am not referring here to the intelligence of speaker and listener. I am speaking about a vocabulary equally accessible to both. We can be reasonably intelligent individuals and still feel lost when we find ourselves with people who use language we do not easily understand.

That can happen to me very easily

when I speak with computer buffs, those involved in the health-care industry and people who are deeply immersed in the world of finance. In such circumstances, I find myself asking often, "What does that term mean?" or "Could you break open that acronym for me?"

Such experiences remind me to try at least to be careful in the language I use with my friends in computers, health care and finance.

Some of my daily duties require me to use language that is technical, time-tested and carries a lot of meaning. But I need to be careful in endeavors like preaching and teaching not to use such language, if indeed it leaves listeners shaking their heads and asking, "What was that all about?"

So I am grateful to Kathleen Norris for her engaging work in which she explores ways to convey, through story, a sense of the great themes of our Christian heritage in language and terms we can grasp. If that is her gift to us, her hope is that we'll find our own story and language, which will allow us to share the treasure of our faith with others.

Peace to all.

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The Monthly Prayer Request For Priests

THE BEAUTIFUL HANDS OF A PRIEST

We need them in life's early morning,
We need them again at its close;
We feel their warm clasp of true friendship,
We seek them when tasting life's woes;

When we come to this world, we are sinful,
The greatest as well as the least;
And the hands that make us pure as angels,
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

And when we are tempted and wander
To pathways of shame and of sin,
'Tis the hand of a priest will absolve us
Not, once, but again and again.

And when we are taking life's partner,
Other hands may prepare us a feast,
But the hands that will bless and unite us
Are the beautiful hands of a priest.

God bless them and keep them all holy,
For the Host which their fingers caress;
When can a poor sinner do better
Than ask Him to guide them and bless?

When the hour of death comes upon us,
May our courage and strength be increased
By seeing raised over us in blessing
The beautiful hands of a priest.

Prayer Suggestions: Mass, Rosary, Fasting, Day Offering, Eucharistic Adoration, Offering Sufferings, Divine Mercy Chaplet

March, 2000

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Look for the April MPRP Calendar in the March 30th Courier.		Revs.	1 Gerald J. Appelby	2 Francis E. Blighton	3 Michael R. Brown	4 Bishop Matthew H. Clark
5 Pope John Paul II	6 Inactive Priests	7 Brian C. Cool	8 Edward J. Dillon	9 Peter Enyan-Boadu	10 John V. Forni	11 William J. Gordinier
12 Thomas D. Hoctor	13 James P. Jaeger	14 Charles J. Latus	15 Donald E. McCarthy	16 Neil R. Miller	17 Kevin P. Murphy	18 William Onuh
19 Edwin Oblorah	20 Robert J. Schrader	21 Dennis R. Sewar	22 Dennis J. Shaw	23 Louis A. Sirianni	24 John J. Steger	25 Norman C. Tanck
26 Michael G. Upson	27 Robert T. Werth	28 George Wiant	29 Thomas H. Wheeland	30 Vocations	31 Seminarians	

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