

Living the Mystery
Fr. Augie Gothman

I've invited a fellow liturgical scholar to write this month. Some of you may be familiar with the author from her weekly columns in your parish bulletin, "Living Lenten Liturgy." The title is mine, but the words are hers.

"If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow completely into Christ..." (Eph 4:15)

Growing up, whenever I wanted to learn something, I'd consult my dad. Before I could read, I would follow his finger along the page as he read me bedtime stories, making a connection between my visible and audible memories. In second grade, I asked him how to make a cursive f. When I was in sixth grade, he took me to a college library to show me how to use the card catalog. All these skills were useful; the reliability of what Dad taught me enkindled an abiding trust, one that I maintain even now.

In high school, however, a remarkable thing happened: I stopped going to Dad and started consulting other sources. This had a mixed effect. I sought something more, believing (as any aspiring English major would) that there was more than one way to answer--or ask--a question.

Experience has shown me that when it comes to Roman Catholic questioning, Roman Catholics tend to rely on the source of authority with which they've grown up. I wonder what would happen if Roman Catholics, tried asking questions in a new way, seeking answers from new sources **without** dismissing old sources. Those who are ordained get years of training in this. Suppose, having listened to the trusted priest or deacon break open God's Word each Sunday ever since childhood, a layperson picked up the Word of God and read it aloud, pondering the sound and rhythm of the words, noticing a familiar phrase in a new way, allowing it to shed Christ's light--the light shared at the Easter Vigil--on her or his encounter of faith.

In speaking and singing scripture, in praying the hours and the Lord's prayer, in smelling the sweetness of incense and chrism, in tasting the bread that is Christ's Body, in mending the brokenness of relationship through the touch of Christ's peace, we might discover not only new answers, but new questions. And we might discover that as we start to articulate these answers and questions, others will trust in our authority as baptized persons of faith, just as a small child from Ohio learned to trust her dad.

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