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# REFLECTIONS OF FAITH

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FORMED/REFORM

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The days are coming, says the Lord,  
when I will make  
a new covenant ...  
It will not be like the covenant I made  
with their ancestors ...  
because they broke my covenant.  
This is the covenant I will make.  
I will put my law  
in their minds  
and write it  
on their hearts.  
I will be their God,  
and they will be my people.

*Jeremiah 31: 31-34*

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# Parenting and Grand-parenting

## A Study in Forming and Re-forming

### The best book I have read on parenting is

“The Teenage Brain: A Neuroscientists Survival Guide to Raising Adolescents and Young Adults” by Amy Nutt and Frances Jensen. It provides a science-based explanation of what things the teenage brain does well (learn new things!) and what things it does not do well (remember and execute future tasks!).

Not long before reading this book, I had asked my middle schooler to turn on the rice cooker when she got home from school. It was all set up. It was about three feet from the door she would walk through when she came home from school. She just needed to press "on." It was the key to our whole plan to have dinner ready before piano lessons. No. She forgot, and I was mad and hungry.

The book explains that the ability to plan and execute future tasks is one of things teenagers have a hard time with because the part of the brain that controls that functionality does not fully mature until humans are in their early twenties. This information caused me to be much more deliberate about what I ask my teenagers to do and when. Given my full-time work schedule, I do sometimes need to delegate tasks to my children, but I try to build in as many safeguards and reminders as possible.

Yesterday, I had to leave the house with 15 minutes left on something in the oven. A child was selected to do the job, but this time I had her come sit right in the kitchen with her homework, so she would be next to the oven when the timer went off. I also left fully prepared to accept the results with-  
out anger if I came home to a ruined dinner.

*Katherine Lazarski*

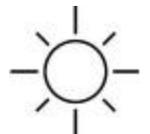
### Even a small child knows when to "re-form" her behavior. If one thing doesn't work, try another.

There was one evening that we had just put our two and a half year-old daughter to bed. We had finished our routine of books and songs, but she did not want to go to sleep and was trying to delay bedtime with unnecessary requests such as: needing the blankets on her bed in a different order on top of her, ice in her water cup, etc. As we left her room, after reinforcing our bedtime rules, we heard her call for us — at first calling out “Mamma! Dadda!” Then we heard her call out using our full names, “Jim! Mary! Jim Hil-Brand, Mary Pham!” It made us laugh so hard that evening.

*Mary Pham*

I have 15 grandchildren and through the years, I've made it a practice to spend time with them, individually or in a group. I thought I had the “grand-mother routine” down pat. But one grandchild didn't fit the routine. She couldn't focus on anything for more than a few minutes, so I had to find new ways to deal with this child who needed constant changes in my grand-mother routine.

*Jane Kornburger*



*One summer afternoon, four of my grandchildren—all about 7-10 years old — were sitting at the kitchen table—arguing. As I came into the room, I could sense the tension increasing minute by minute. My first thought was to call out to correct them, but an inspira-  
tion set me to singing, “You are my sunshine, my only sunshine . . . “ They all burst out laughing — with me or at me — it didn't matter. Mission accomplished, tension diffused.* *Bernadette Davel*

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# Faith Formation and the Pendulum

My journey to faith formation reminds me of a pendulum, swinging back and forth. Many of you may have been baptized at birth, but that was not my journey. I grew up with a Baptist grandmother and attended a Catholic school. I don't know why my mother chose that school, but I think it was because of academics. Every Sunday, I would have to go to both Mass and the Baptist service. It seemed that the one-hour Mass opposed to a three-hour Baptist service with fellowship may have swayed a young man, but it seemed like cruel and unusual punishment.

Attending a Catholic school, I learned that there are rituals that Catholics had to observe — Mass, confession and other sacraments just to name a few. Growing up watching and being a part of these traditions help influence my decision. I remember having energetic discussions with my grandmother about the Catholic Church. She would say, “Why are they worshipping those idols in Church like the statues and the crosses? What’s up with all that kneeling, standing and sitting?” Needless to say, I would never win in those discussions, but they always pointed me to one fact: there is a God.

After a few years, I decided to get baptized. My grandmother even commented on how this was done, but I believe she was happy that I had decided on a faith. It felt good to know that I belonged to a bigger collective than just myself. I now truly had something in common with my fellow classmates. The nuns nurtured my faith and made sure that I received all the sacraments, i.e., First Communion, Reconciliation and Confirmation, for which I am eternally grateful. I was even serving as an altar boy before I was baptized. Now the pendulum was getting ready to swing again.

I was accepted into a Catholic Jesuit high school. While the traditions were the same, they

didn't seem to be strictly adhered to. So I became lax in my faith devotion. Although I still believed in God, the practice of worship wasn't as prevalent. My grandmother was older, and her attendance at Church was more difficult. I guess that I thought I was in control of my destiny. However, though my faith gave me a moral compass, my faith had not deepened, and I pursued earthly things, as teenagers do. When I went to college, faith wasn't at the forefront of my endeavors, but again it was the moral compass that allowed me to respect others and try to keep me on a righteous path. The pendulum swings.



Then I met my wife, and we decided to get married. We had to attend Mass and prove to the priest that we attended. At the time, that was St. Rose Parish. I renewed my faith a little, but life got in the way. I was just trying to make a living and provide for my family. I seldom gave a thought about my faith and formation. The pendulum swings.

For the past three years I have been coming to St. Catherine's. It has aided my faith journey. I see a greater purpose than myself. I see humanity as an extension of my family — one that needs to be cared for and nurtured. I see a God that is merciful, forgiving and all-knowing. The pendulum isn't swinging any more. I see a path that I must continue to walk to fulfill God's promise.

My faith journey continues.

*James Napper*

Our hearts are restless until they rest in you, O Lord.

*St. Augustine*

# The Cross

It's Lent; I'm paying more attention to the Cross, looking to understand more fully its meaning in my life and in my Church's tradition.

We Christians use the Cross to represent Jesus' sacrificial death. "We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world." The unadorned wooden cross we carry in procession on Good Friday represents His cross. It also represents our cross. Fr. Jack used to remind us that we belong on the cross too. Quoting Daniel Berrigan, he used to say, "If you want to follow Jesus, you'd better look good on wood." We are called as disciples to take risks just as our Master did, to be true to our calling in response to our Loving God.

In the middle ages, Christians used a jeweled cross to represent not only Jesus' death but also the glory of the resurrection. Jewels at the sites of the nails remind us that wounds, ours and Jesus's, do not disappear, but are transformed by the grace of God.

The crucifix as we know it, with a sculpted body (corpus) on the cross, dates from the 5<sup>th</sup> century. For hundreds of years, the corpus portrayed the Risen

Christ, since the resurrection was the center of faith. Starting about the 11<sup>th</sup> century in Western Europe, crucifixes with a corpus of the dead Jesus became popular.

What intrigues me is how Jesus is depicted. Traditional crucifixes generally portray a European. It is understandable that our European ancestors would portray Jesus to look like themselves, but why does that depiction continue? Jesus was not European. He would have looked most closely like Palestinian men of our day. If Jesus were so portrayed, would I, looking upon the crucifix, have more sensitivity to the suffering of the Palestinian people?

Alternatively, I can think of the crucifix as a reminder of suffering imposed without cause upon human beings loved by God. "Whatsoever you do to one of these least of my brothers, you do to me" (Mt. 25:40). Many in all parts of the world, especially racial minorities, suffer harsh sentences including death, like Jesus, due to biased court proceedings or no court proceedings at all. How would my perception be changed if the body on the crucifix was portrayed as a person of color?

*Mary Krolkowski*



Each Friday, this Lent, we followed Jesus on the way to the Cross in the Stations of the Cross. And each week, we offered a new perspective for reflection. We focused on different artistic interpretations of the Stations, inviting us to *form* our own response to the artist's depiction and *re-form* our prayer response to God.



**The First Station** - Jesus is Condemned to Die. Wherever human rights are denied, people are condemned to live in the shadow of fear, denied a voice and the opportunity to throw off the bonds of oppression, poverty and racism. We often condemn those who protest these injustices, holding respect for property above respect for human rights. When we do so, we condemn YOU, Lord, who honored all people, who reached out to those who were suffering. You accepted suffering and a disrespectful death so that everyone might have life with dignity.

## The Stations

# Ubuntu

When I was growing up as young boy, I knew all women the age of my mother were my mothers too and the same for my dad, and all the children of my age and older were brothers and sisters. We were all related in a way, and I valued that very much. As a child and a teenager, I know I was formed by my village. If I did something wrong and there was an adult around, I could be punished and later reported to my parents who could also punish me.

This brings the concept of African philosophy, “Ubuntu.” “I am because we are.” A concept in which your sense of self is shaped by your relationships with other people. It’s a way of living that begins with the premise that “I am” only because “we are.” Ubuntu is rooted in what is called a relational form of personhood, basically meaning that you are because of the others.” My being is because of parents saying yes to life and of having been shaped by my community. A good example; two years ago when I visited my childhood parish to celebrate a thanksgiving Mass, they were so happy and emotional saying, “This is our son,” because I belong to the community.

I am who I am today because of my faith community. I think my whole life has been “churchish.” Apart from my immediate and extended family,

90% of my friends are from the Church connection. Not a wonder my pastor saw a priest vocation in me, which I had not thought of. I would categorically say my formation from teenager to adulthood is from the Church community. I value and cherish it.

With time, the concept of ‘Ubuntu’ is changing and African people now define themselves as an individual, “I am,” not the community, “we are.”

This has left people and the community broken and that’s why we have all the conflicts we have. “I” has become the center, not “we.” I think the words of Rene Descartes, who is often called the first modern philosopher, “I think, therefore I am” have laid the ground-

work for how we conceptualize our sense of self. But what if there’s an entirely different way to think about personal identity — a non-Western philosophy that rejects this emphasis on individuality?

I think the Ubuntu concept and Christianity have the same values which go beyond the individual. Putting God first, others second and myself third. If I can think beyond my needs and think about others, then I will be reformed, and our society and country will be reformed too. Change starts with me. I will continue valuing my childhood formation because it defines who I am today.

*Fr. Peter Patrick Kimani*

Ubuntu:  
“I am” only because  
“we are.”

## of the Cross

**The Seventh Station** - Jesus falls the Second Time. Jesus is on his hands and knees; the cross pins him to the earth. Where does he find the strength to keep getting up every time he is beaten down? It is Love for each of us. WE know the power of Love. It motivates parents; it strengthens spouses; it causes neighbors to care; it is the presence of God.



**The Tenth Station** - Jesus is stripped of his garments. This Maryknoll image portrays a person who is literally skin and bones, dressed in rags. Do we see Jesus in this person? We ask, “How has my life as a privileged American contributed to this level of poverty? And what must I do to bring about effective change to the life of this person or others like him?”





# The Winds of Life

On January 31, 2021, St. Catherine's Sunday morning Mass was cancelled. Not the first time in recent memory did this happen – we can well remember March through June 2020 when all in-person Sunday Masses were cancelled. But on this day, overnight heavy wet snow and wind that continued into the morning made it just too dangerous to travel. And where would we park if we got there?

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in — fascinated by — the weather. This January Sunday storm was predicted several days ahead of its exhilarating appearance in southeastern Wisconsin. But where did it come from? How did it get here? Where would it go next? I watched *The Weather Channel*, read articles, listened to local broadcasters with inquisitive suspicion.

Yes indeed, there was more to the story. Deepening cold air over northern Siberia buckled the jet stream forming a strong high pressure system that conversely brought warmer air up the northern Pacific Ocean and formed a perfectly shaped low pressure system that, over the Gulf of Alaska, had all the natural elements and plenty of room and time to strengthen into a beautifully symmetrical storm. Picking up all the moisture it needed as it traveled down the Pacific coast, it made its predictable turn into southern California, blasting the

land and hills that had burned so ferociously just weeks before now with winter rains. The Sierra Mountains forced its enormous energy higher through our atmosphere wringing out so much of its moisture and turning it into feet of snow, welcomed by the drought-stricken mountains for banking needed water for months ahead in 2021.



But the process drained the storm of moisture, of energy, of life — but not completely. As it staggered over the California mountains, beyond the desert southwest and toward the Texas panhandle, its circular symmetry now began to pick up warm, moist air from the Gulf of Mexico. Again following the steering movement of all weather in the Northern hemisphere, it turned northeastward. Now feeding on the moisture it had tapped, the rising warm air that energized it and the winds aloft, its life, its strength is restored. Now moving northeast and collecting much colder air, its strength fully restored, it roars into the western Great Lakes and upper Midwest, picking up more moisture from Lake Michigan and huffs and puffs and dumps all its treasure on us.

And it moves on. Here it comes, New England; over the Appalachians and right at the mid-Atlantic states— what you all look forward to as a “Nor’Easter.” What FORMED in the Gulf of Alaska, was continuously RE-FORMED by the

California mountains, the desert southwest, the Gulf of Mexico, and finally — at least for us — the Great Lakes. Of course, it had plenty of life yet to go. It would be further RE-FORMED by the Appalachian Mountains, the Gulf stream of the North Atlantic coast and however it would continue beyond our purview into the North Atlantic Ocean and on to the European west coast.

Good, faith-filled parents and family, supportive schoolmates and friends, perceptive grade school teachers all took the constant interest little Larry Chapman had in thinking about being a priest and carefully FORMED it. Seminary priests and fellow classmates, an enthusiastically changing Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council, powerful examples of priestly servant leaders RE-FORMED this interest, this person. And more: all really good, joy-filled, and dedicated Catholics at Holy Ghost Parish (South 31st St. and Lincoln Ave — good ol’ Milwaukee south side) was the crucible that RE-FORMED Larry.



The winds of life did not stop there. The people of Kenosha, Wauwatosa, Burlington, Elkhorn, Wilmot, East Troy, the west side and near north side of Milwaukee — they all RE-FORMED what was an “interest in being a priest” into a magnificent life of experiencing GOD in so many unexpected ways.

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# Search for All There is to Find

I think that we have to change and reform ourselves over and over again. It is not really an option. As people, we have to know when to change, what to accept, and simply what to do. In every situation, there is a different way to go about things.

When I think about how and when people have truly had to adjust, I automatically think of this past year. We have had to physically take on new challenges, like putting on a mask, or staying apart from those we love the most. But if I had to tell you the thing that has been the hardest for me, it would have to be considering what I have missed out on. I am in 8th grade this year which would normally mean so much. Ever since I began at St. Sebastian, I wanted to be the eldest in the school - to experience all of the lasts, as well as all the firsts. Almost all of those first and lasts will not happen for me. My last birthday snack, my last trick-or-treat, my last Christmas Concert, forensics, basketball, volleyball, acting in our school play . . . so much more. I dreamed of being in an 8th grade classroom, acting as a leader of the school, and taking the class trip to Washington, D.C. Instead, we have class in the basement of our church, and our trip was cancelled.

It sounds really bad, but so many have experienced worse. It really makes you think. This is where reform comes in. You have to change the way you think. If I spent all of 2020 thinking about these things, of course it would be terrible. The thing is that it was not all terrible. I get to go to school every day, and so many students do not. I walk into my classroom and

see 30 of my 34 class mates right in front of me. I am able to have every single student in my grade in one room. I hear their cheerful greetings and thrilled goodbyes. I get to laugh with friends and run around at recess. The one thing that I treasure most out of all this is the fact that my entire grade gets to be together. Usually, we are split into two classes and we would rarely see the other half of the grade - my last year of school would be spent without the other half of my family. The people that I have gotten to know over the last 10 years are my family. Because of COVID, our class started out with only enough in-person students for one class, and we did not have enough teachers for another homeroom. This meant that we moved to the church basement so we could have enough room for all of us! This experience has been one I would not trade for anything.

If someone had asked me last year if I would rather go to D.C. or have my whole grade be one class, I would have chosen the trip. Now, I am almost positive that I would say the second option. After this year, I know what it is like to feel separated. I think that spending every day with the people you love can be more monumental than a three day trip gone crazy. It goes against what I would have said before, and that's how I have changed. It's difficult to change in all aspects, and with every act of reformation, there is a fight to discern what is the right way. What I want to challenge you is to not focus on all that is lost, but to try and reform yourself to search for all there is to find.

*Eliana Melendes*



The twists and turns, the warm winds and wild storms of cities, small towns and the country RE-FORMED what I thought would be interesting and fun life into a life of accompanying so many in the most significant moments of

life, in regular family gatherings, simple suppers, bike rides, casual conversation, unexpected tragedies, hugs, memorable words of encouragement -- all great and simple celebrations of life. YOU have continuously RE-FORMED me. I am all the better for it, at least when I listened attentively and learned humbly.

And where will I go? Who knows! God knows. I don't think it is out into the North Atlantic, but whatever happens, I still believe I am very interested in being a priest. Thank you!

*Fr. Larry*

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# Teaching

## A Lesson in Forming and Re-forming

I was working at a school with a group of students who were, overall, great. There was one exception, however, and no matter how I tried to discipline him, nothing seemed to curb his disruptive behavior. Finally, one day I decided that a new tactic was needed. So instead of negative punishment, I started class by making him my special helper. I kept him with me the whole time - which let me keep a close eye on him - but he felt really useful and included. Since all he wanted was attention, it was exactly the right thing to do.

Elizabeth Krueger

All teachers appreciate it when students have an attitude of determination - the "I can do this" look. Imagine my surprise at the beginning of one school year, when I handed out books to a first grade reading group and one boy received it, holding it eagerly - upside down! I knew then that I would have to start this year with a different strategy.

Marianne Hondel

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## Only God is in Control

I am blessed! A son of immigrants, I was baptized into the Catholic Church, raised in the Great Depression, and World War II and further wars, with sacrifices. Sent to the Notre Dame Sisters at 5 and to Jesuits at Marquette High and University, with jobs as paper boy, stock boy, factory worker, park patrolman--all jobs to pay my tuition. I received a broad Liberal Arts education and taught at MU. Besides Baptism, I received the sacraments of Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist and Extreme Unction. A server, lector and Eucharistic Minister, I was privileged to take Communion and prayers to five families. The New Testament powerfully influenced the choice of my life's work. Today, I'm involved in Bible Study with non-Catholics.

A recent *Catholic Herald* article by Bishop Schuerman speaks of the relationship of "Catechesis of Religious Education and Faith Formation and Evangelization"--the "proclamation of the life and teach-

ings of Jesus." Where to start in proclaiming the life and teachings of Jesus? It seems everything needs reform. While active in the National Assoc. of Social Workers in 1983, I was asked to write a training proposal for police. In it, I emphasized psychological screening in hiring and promoting understanding the history of other races and cultural differences. While the proposal went nowhere with politicians, I would like to think it would be useful today.

There are other examples of proposed reforms. When President Eisenhower left office, he warned of the Industrial-Military Complex and its influence on wars and nuclear proliferation. In his book, "JFK and the Unspeakable," James Douglass relates the pressures on JFK from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, CIA and big business and suggests why several assassinations occurred in the 1960's. When former President Truman learned the truth of these, he said the CIA needs

serious reform and had lost its original focus.

Politically, I am Independent. I see serious flaws in both parties and candidates. Often, the choice is the lesser of two evils! Hate and hypocrisy reached intense levels in a toxic personality inappropriate in leadership. In 1960, the debates between JFK and Nixon were performed fairly and civilly without interruptions and with an impartial moderator. Journalists used to pride themselves in objectivity and fairness. I want civility, fairness, objectivity and TRUTH, not lies. All people have strengths and weakness. Give credit when due. Avoid scapegoating. Be aware of propaganda methods to try to control thought and speech. Pray for the wisdom of the Holy Spirit; study Scripture and the lives of the saints. As humans, we must recognize our limitations and that ONLY GOD is omniscient, omnipotent and in CONTROL!

Ernest A. Herre

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# “The Good Sisters”

Oh, how many times have we referred to religious sisters in this way? Those of us who have been educated by religious sisters as youth probably have more stories than can be imagined. What an evening of mirth and wine/beer we’d have sharing those stories!

My best story — and trust me I have many — is of a summer afternoon at St. Joan Antida High School. I was heading back to my office after working with the “auction women” in the basement of the building when I came upon Sr. Monica, the principal of the school, in an old farmer’s apron over her habit and no veil, down on her knees scrubbing the steps going into the main part of the building. I was appalled and asked her what she was doing. “Cleaning the steps for the girls” was her reply! As you can imagine, I quipped that maybe at her age and status, she could let the cleaning staff take care of this. “Oh no, they don’t do it right,” was her calm reply, and back to work she went as I tiptoed over the wet steps. *All for the girls* was a lesson of total dedication that I learned from the Sisters both at St. Mary’s Academy and St. Joan’s.

I have been utterly impressed by the leadership of the Sisters in our community as their numbers have decreased. They have pursued a vision to turn empty or underused properties into whole new ways to offer service. Take, for instance, Sr. Edna Lonergan, OSF who founded St. Ann’s Center for Intergenerational Care. She saw an empty ball field on the Seminary grounds next to her motherhouse, went to Archbishop Weakland with the vision of a new building as a way to bring all generations together for care. He gave her his blessing, and starting with \$1.00 she was off and running. Now there are two state-of-the-art facilities serving the needs of the children and the elderly, the original next to the seminary grounds and the second on east North Avenue.

We all have to be inspired by the use of open space on the Mount Mary Campus grounds and the new buildings designed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. With careful planning to save as much of the forest of trees on their property, they have the vision of building housing to provide an intergeneration living environment for their sisters and single mothers who are students at the University — a homelike setting

on a quiet university campus. And as good stewards of their community, they’ve been part of the planning for the future use of their Elm Grove convent and surrounding property they recently sold.

And finally, we all have to applaud the School Sisters of St. Francis for what they have done at their Layton Boulevard site. Not just affordable housing in their convent building and the newer Maria Linden Independent Senior and Assisted Living Apartments built just north of the original building, but a health care clinic, community space for gathering people living in the area and all kinds of social and educational outreach programs for those living in that area.

*Formed in Christ,  
the religious sisters have  
re-formed their mission  
to meet the  
changing needs  
of the people  
they serve now and will  
serve in the future.*

They went from primarily teaching to caring for the needs of the transitioning community on the near south side of the City.

At St. Mary’s, we, the staff, always ended the school year by gathering to send off the graduates with a Mary’s Day Celebration around the Marian Grotto. Of course, there were many family members, graduates and Sisters all singing Marian hymns with the students, but the last bit of formation for the young women was a quiet sharing of the Prayer of St. Francis. The young women were reminded that they were to live this prayer: as graduates, they were to be living signs of St. Francis and Clare as they went into their next step in life.

Once I was at a prayer event with Sr. Edna and philanthropist Marty Stein, a leader in the City and in the Jewish community. What did Marty pull out of his pocket when it was his time to offer prayer — the Prayer of St. Francis! Franciscan values and all the values of Christian people that the Sisters have shared with all of us bridge all faiths!

*Steve O’Connell*

# A Potter's Story



My vocation as a potter was inspired in high school by a visiting artist who came to visit our ceramics class at Pius XI. He was a potter and a poet, and I loved how he wove his two passions together for his career. I attended art school in Cleveland, Ohio and then apprenticed under two (married) potters in Lake Geneva, WI. Art school helped form and develop my skills, while the apprenticeship helped me learn how to run a business and sell my pottery. And now that I have been self-employed for over 25 years as a potter, I am continually being formed and re-formed as I learn and adapt to changes in retail, style, technology and the needs of my customers.

Today, because I need to sell everything I make in order to support myself, I don't have the luxury of improvising much! I always have a specific form in mind, and have to plan to make the best use of my materials and time. And because I create pottery that is intended for everyday use, function is one of the top goals for the final piece. That being said, ideas naturally evolve and change in the process. Techniques are improved and ascetics change as an artist creates.

When working as a studio potter, I feel I am always reforming, developing, correcting,

amending, refining my work. There is a natural drive to keep improving upon the work that keeps me interested and engaged in creating. Once a piece is finished, I always assess the quality and craftsmanship to decide if I am happy with the design and function or if I need to make slight improvements the next time.

The greatest gift I receive from making pottery is the connection that happens when people use my pieces. I always say there is an "energy" that exists in art and fine craft when it is made by hand. An artist brings their experience, craftsmanship and creativity into the work and I feel that somehow gets passed onto the recipient when they engage with that piece.



As they sip their cup of coffee from a handmade mug, gaze upon a painting that they find enriching, or adorn their body with a piece of jewelry or hand-woven garment, a connection is created between the maker and the user.

Being a potter has formed and re-formed me personally. It has been very humbling. I have been supported by my family, friends and community at large. It is a

great honor to be able to brighten someone's spirit and bring beauty into the simple pleasures and routines that people enact in their daily lives.



I feel fortunate to be able to pursue a career that challenges me to keep improving not only the craft that I create, but the way it can affect, form and support a community as well.

*Jean Wells*

## Reflections of Faith - Issue 129 April 2021

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**Pictures:** Bernadette Davel, Jean Wells, June Wessa

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# Formed/Reform

## Reform is a threatening word

to some, a word that connotes devaluing what is, criticism of the present and the past – as if to say the new “form” is far better, and what is now has to be discarded.

Yet we need to consider what our world, our country, our Church, our faith, our families – our very lives – would be if something, someone had not been re-formed. Would we all be huddled in dark caves fearing to re-form how we might encounter the outside world beyond gathering food nearby? Would we all be British citizens carrying the burden of growth-stifling regulations, unwilling to challenge our colonial status and re-form our future as a new nation? Would we be living with an unstable papacy if some had been unwilling to go to Avignon and demand a solution – think St. Catherine of Sienna or St. Bridget of Sweden. Would we be a Church closed to the “signs of the times” if we hadn’t responded to John XXIII’s opening the windows of Vatican II?

Would our faith be centered inward if we had shut our ears to the words of the prophets and apostles calling us to re-form our response to God’s word and reach out to bring God’s promise to all? Would we marry and have children if we let the fear of divorce or what might happen to those children hold us hostage in our present situation? Would we seek an education, explore our horizons, find friends, if we let the risks darken our personal growth and thwart the challenge to re-form who we are now to be what God wishes us to become?

God formed man and woman in his likeness and gave us the gift of free will. From the begin-

ning, that gift was fraught with opportunities to choose to live not in God’s image, but to form our own personal plan of living in this world God had created for us. And from the beginning, we chose our ways over God’s ways, re-forming God’s plan for us. Yet our story didn’t end in disaster because the God’s love kept reaching out to us to re-form us into his people. He formed a covenant with Abraham, renewed that covenant over and over, called down a flood and sent prophets to re-form us, wooing us back to live in harmony with his plan. And finally, he sent his own Son to re-form the world. He gave everything – his very life, that we might have new life in him.

As citizens of this world, this country, members of the body of Christ, the Church, and of the community of faith and the family of God, we are part of a living body, a body that is always changing, physical and spiritually. Our present form will always need to re-form – to survive, to grow, and to celebrate the glory to which we are called.

Jesus provides a model for re-forming. He honored the words of the prophets and the deeds of his ancestors. “I have come not to destroy the prophets or the law, but to fulfill it.” (Mt. 5:17) He calls us, his followers, to something greater than what is, “I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.” (John:10,10)

*Bernadette Davel*

Grapes must be crushed to make wine. Diamonds form under pressure.

Olives are pressed to release oil. Seeds grow in darkness.

Whenever you feel crushed, under pressure, pressed, or in darkness, you’re in a powerful place of transformation. Trust the process. Trust God.

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# Reflections of Faith

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## Next Issue: Simplicity

- What is your personal definition of simplicity?
- How is it possible to live simply in an increasingly complex world?
- What is your personal definition of clutter?
- What is the benefit to clearing out mental/spiritual clutter?
- Can a focus on simplicity strengthen your spiritual life?
- How does the Gospel influence your understanding and practice of simplicity?

**Deadline: May 24, 2021**

*Simplicity is a matter of the heart.  
It is living deeply the present moment . . . .  
Simplicity is ordering life's value according to priorities - living in the truth of things, staying focused on God's guiding, interior Presence.*

*Bishop Robert Morneau  
St. Anthony Messenger, April 2000*