



A Light in the Sacristy

A newsletter for and about the Altar Guilds in the Diocese of Iowa

FROM THE BISHOP



Taking pause is one of the gifts of summer. I tend to stumble across such moments rather than plan them. But they have been cropping up more frequently of late. It tells me, as my mother used to say as she watched my life unfold as a young person "someone somewhere is looking after you!"

I want to tell you of two recent ones.

In the first example the "someone" is a newly ordained deacon, who gave me a present of the book "Father Joe" by Tony Hendra. It was published a couple of years ago, but I had not come across it, nor had I remembered that it was cited in Rowan Williams' book "Tokens of Trust" which I had used for the E-Seminary class on the doctrines of the Apostles' Creed. Killing two birds with one stone, I want to recommend to you the William's book, and "Father Joe", as ideas for summer reading.

Father Joe was a monk living on the Isle of Wight who played a pivotal part in the up and down spiritual journey of the author, Tony Hendra. It is a biography within an autobiography, but also a spiritual journal written without any pious pretence, but which addresses the reader in what I would call a raw or straightforward use of language rarely dared or associated with a book of the religious genre. I hope that alone gets your attention to wonder what do I mean by the word "raw"? I encourage you to do yourself the favor of searching out the book. It is a book version of one of those paintings in which the subject matter seems to be looking straight at you whichever direction you look at it.

The second "moment for pause" came on my recent few days at home intended to get on with some garden and house work. Two years ago the summer ended with a strong storm

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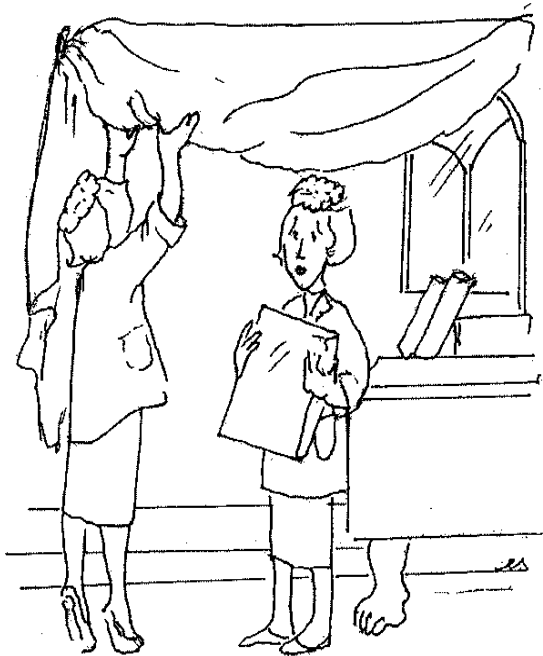
DIRECTOR'S LETTER

"God Almighty first planted a garden. And, indeed, it is the purest of human pleasures."*



A garden is many things and each gardener develops his or her own relationship with the garden, with its rhythms and lessons. All life's lessons seem to be found within the garden: nurturing (one can give that instinct full reign), birth, death, love, passion, obsession, joy. I have been spending many hours in several gardens which occupy my thoughts and physical energies: digging, planting, pruning, rediscovering, preparing them for the summer and the seasons beyond. Suddenly everything that had been empty and brown has sprung forth with a sumptuous flourish. Spring's first flush or rush is miraculous to me. Of course, the weeds are also eagerly springing forth, and there seems to be many more of them than the longed for flowers. But, I have found that taking the time to weed gives me space and quiet time - time to also grow and spring forth. A friend once said that 'weeding is a gardener's meditation.' I believe that is true. A garden is certainly a sanctuary of sorts. Enjoy your gardens this spring and summer.

I wish that we could all travel 'en masse' to the General Convention in Anaheim and partake together of the many workshops, guest speakers, a tour of Huntington Gardens and the general good cheer and camaraderie that will be a part of the Triennial Convention of the National Altar Guild. There will be workshops that explore how the modern altar guild director can recruit busy people to the altar guild ministry, CM Almy will offer tips on the care of your church silver and brassware, and Textiles 101 will look at "visual theology" in fabric and thread. Guest speaker, Rev. Marylyn

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"Hmmm. Well, yes, I guess you could call the Bishop the Diocesan Alpha Male!"

In everyone's life, at some time, our inner fire goes out. It is then burst into flame by an encounter with another human being. We should all be thankful for those people who rekindle the inner spirit.

Albert Schweitzer

FROM THE BISHOP *(continued from page 1)*

smashing to pieces the glass table top of our patio table. Glass shattered all over the graveled floor in the garden. I shoveled most of it up with the gravel and deposited it in the garbage. In 2008 I bought a new glass table of the same type, but only managed to put it up and never got the chairs out or even used it the whole summer. Lambeth, Brechin, Swaziland all took care of the rest of the summer and fall.

So my first act of 2009 vacation was to bring out the table and the chairs, thoroughly clean and set up them up for potential summer jaunts in the back garden. As I attempted to place the umbrella pole in the center of the table, it slipped, got jammed, and, yes you guessed it, the glass top smashed into smithereens as I tried to adjust the table to ease the tension! I spent the next two days visiting Home Depots etc, and then places like the Ames Mine to find out that the gravel was limestone and of a certain size and coloring only available at one or two mines probably in the east or north west of Iowa!

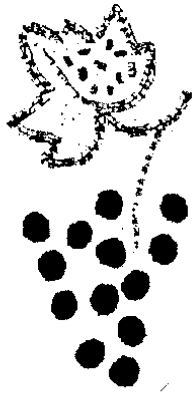
Eight supermarket paper bags of limestone and glass shards stood in a row off my back door steps. The poor paving area looked quite bare. I did not want to replace with river rocks. So one afternoon I stepped outside, sat down by one of the bags and began one handful at a time to sift through the glass and the limestone. I deposited glass in a paper bag, and the limestone in a bucket. I reckon I have thirty hours of work ahead of me. Soon I realized that this was going to be my God time for these days ahead. It is probably not a bad way to prepare the heart and mind for General Convention, and to ponder on the excellent book I had just finished! I cannot say how many days it will take to get through the bags, but as I turn it into prayer time, if I think of each piece rolling through my hand as a potential offering of intercession – just as I did when marking each step of the run from Davenport to Des Moines a few years ago – perhaps I have stumbled yet again into God's gracious moment. May you discover such moments these coming months – though I would hope not out of such circumstances! There may only be one Inspector Clouseau or Mr. Bean in the world – but some of us give them a close run.

+ Alan

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**76th GENERAL CONVENTION
OF THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH**
July 08 – July 17, 2009



Episcopal Diocese of Iowa



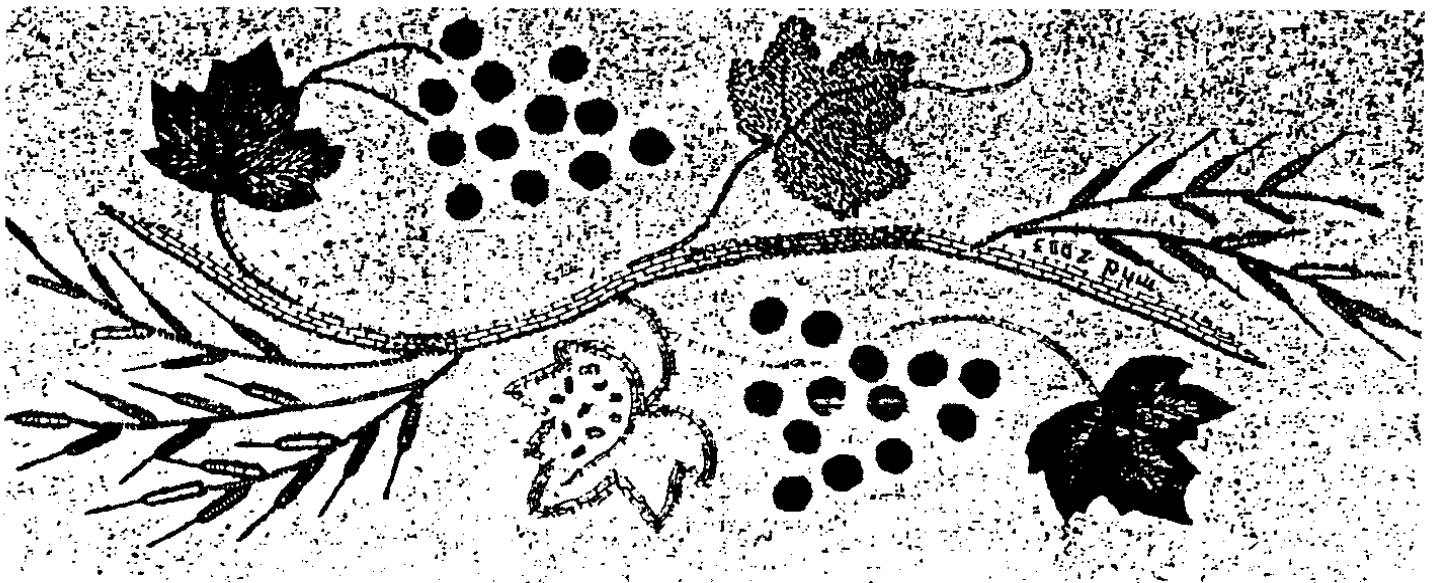
Summer Ministry School and Retreat July 24-26, 2009 Grinnell College Grinnell Iowa

Tract 13: SYMBOLISM AND THE CREATION OF EMBELLISHMENTS FOR THE CHURCH

Students will explore the many symbols found within the Christian faith, discuss and explore the many medium for expression of these symbols and will actively participate in choosing and designing a project for his or her faith community.

Phyllis Melton, experienced embroiderer and director of St. Paul's Cathedral altar guild has been a member of the Embroiderer's Guild of America since 1987. Her training has included classes with Elizabeth Elvin, Royal School of Needlework. Her service to embroidery includes jurying studies in white work, Ukrainian embroidery, black work, gold/silver work and silk embroidery as well as sewing linens for the cathedral.

For reservations or further information, contact Elizabeth at 515-277-6165
www.iowaepiscopal.org/ministries/ministries_retreat.php



“DOING” WEDDINGS

Barbara McDonald, Epistle #111, Spring 1999

Weddings can be the most exciting and frustrating times in the lives of couples about to be married. They can also be the most exciting and frustrating times in the lives of altar guilds, particularly if the parish doesn't have an established, written policy and procedure detailing who does what and when and what is allowed — a parish “wedding customary.”

In addition to an altar guild wedding committee or wedding director, parishes need a wedding policy. Writing one can make life easier for all concerned — the priest, the altar guild, the bride and groom, and everyone else involved in the wedding.

A good parish wedding policy is the joint effort of the rector, the altar guild, the flower committee, the music director, the church office staff, the vestry, and members of the worship committee not part of the above. As with all matters having to do with the liturgical life of the parish, the rector has final say, but all these people have a role in the *Celebration and Blessing of a Marriage* and it is important that they understand the policy and have some input.

The policy needs to be in print so that a copy can be given to every bride and groom at their first appointment. They can then sign a contract stating that they have read the policy, understand its provisions, and will abide by it. By doing so, any possible misunderstanding or confusion can be avoided.

Your policy will have many elements. The committee should first write a statement about Christian marriage, another about the canonical requirements for marriage in the Episcopal Church, and another about special requirements of the diocese as to eligibility, acceptable music, and the like. We offer the following questions, compiled from several parish wedding policies, to help round out your Parish Wedding Policy.

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QUESTIONS:

- † Who may be married in your church? Some parishes have strict requirements, while others are more lenient. Canon law requires that one person be baptized.
- † What are the days and hours when weddings may NOT take place in your church?
- † If there is a wedding Eucharist, will the bride and groom present the oblations and will all baptized Christians present be invited to participate? If there is no Eucharist, will the couple be given an opportunity to offer their new marriage at the altar at another Eucharist?
- † In what ways may outside Episcopal or other clergy participate in the service?
- † Is the altar/flower guild solely responsible for wedding flowers, or may florists decorate the church in consultation with the altar guild?
- † Are there restrictions as to flower selection and placement or other wedding “extras” such as aisle runners and special pew markers?
- † Will an effort be made to discourage the use of a “unity candle” since it has no liturgical significance?
- † What fees are expected for the church, the parish hall, the organist, the sexton, the choir, service bulletins, and the flowers if provided and arranged by the altar guild? Will the fees be paid as a lump sum or individually? When? Will fees be higher for non-members?
- † Who will select the acolytes, lay readers, chalice bearers, and lectors? (Are there any limitations?)
- † Is the organist or the rector responsible for approving music, soloists, and additional instruments?
- † Will the number of attendants be limited? The age of flower girl and ring bearer?

(continued on page 5)

WEDDING MUSIC

John R. Shannon, Professor of Music Emeritus, Sweet Briar College, reprinted with editorial changes to reflect current understanding and practice

A church wedding is not primarily a social occasion but a service of congregational worship. The center of the service is God, not the couple, and the music selected for the occasion needs to reflect the majesty of God, to give thanks for the blessings of marriage, and to ask God's favor on the mutual covenant being made by the couple.

To this end, texts that are to be sung should be true to the biblical foundations of Christian faith and should express both the heritage of faithful people throughout history and the resolve to live out this faith in our own day. In the Episcopal Church *The Hymnal 1982* is the basic source book for appropriate music since a theological standard has already been placed on its contents. This primary source may be supplemented by hymns and anthems from other sources with comparable biblical and theological integrity. It is appropriate to use hymns for processions and recessions and for the congregation to sing hymns during the service. By using *The Hymnal 1982* as a basic source book, one is protected from secular musical intrusions. Secular music, whatever its quality, is not appropriate in a worship situation and can be deferred for use at the wedding reception. Those planning weddings need to seek and accept the advice of church music professionals who are trained to guide in the selection of music. The repertory they can offer will provide many alternatives to the uninspired music that has unfortunately become all too common.

Music is a powerful symbol. Music for a Christian wedding symbolizes the hopes and aspirations of all for the couple's commitment to each other and to their future in Christ. †

SUGGESTED READING FOR THOSE GETTING MARRIED

Bond and Covenant: A Perspective on Holy Matrimony from the Book of Common Prayer, R. David Cox, Church Publishing

First Comes Love? The Ever-Changing Face of Marriage, John C. Morris, Pilgrim Press

Dearly Beloved Navigating Your Church Wedding, Andrew Macbeth, Seabury Books

Planning Your Marriage Service, Christopher L. Webber, Margaret Webbet, Morehouse Publishing

"DOING" WEDDINGS

(continued from page 4)

- † What restrictions apply to the time and place for all photography, both professional and personal? Who supervised photography for the parish? Is tape recording allowed?
- † Will there be a special service booklet? Including what?
- † What are the arrangements for premarital counseling, which is not an option?
- † What time is the wedding rehearsal? Who participates? Who conducts it? What "paper work" is to be completed at this time?
- † If the parish hall is available for rehearsal dinners and receptions, what church equipment may be used? What music and decorations are allowed? Who is in charge? Who cleans up? Is there a closing time?
- † What are the parish rules for the use of alcoholic beverages?
- † Are there restrictions covering rice, confetti, birdseed, and the like?

These questions will undoubtedly raise others pertaining to the particular parish. Answers to these questions will refine the resulting policy into a true parish "wedding customary." Remember to update your policy periodically. †

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SUMMER FLOWERS

Clara Fowler*

Summer will be very welcome this year and many of you will be planning to use the garden flowers to save money. I hope you have planted some spiky flowers like snapdragons, larkspur and campanula; some large rounds like bovardia, sunflowers; smaller rounds like yarrows, coreopsis, gaillardia, Shasta and other daisies, black eyed susans, and odd shapes like lilies and iris. Roses are always beautiful.

You can also cut greens from your yards. Unless you know they are stable, try them out first. Always wash and condition greens - immerse if smooth on back of the leaf and stem only if fuzzy.

Carefully choose your flowers, whether from a garden, florist or grocery store. The pollen is the clue - if the pollen sac is closed tight, the flower is young; if open and you see pollen, the flower will not last long. A flower should be firm on its stem. If it is floppy, it's probably broken or needs water. Any flower you take should be cut on a diagonal, leaves removed to water level, and placed in a bucket of water. Cut it again when you place it in an arrangement. Hollow stems should be turned over and filled with water. Put you finger over the stem and put it in the water.

In the summer due to the heat, arrangements use more water. The easiest way to arrange garden flowers and greens is to use a plain vase containing chicken wire for support. Never have any leaves under the water. It promotes bacteria growth, bad odors, water discoloration and flower death.

**National Altar Guild Association, Issue #151*



TIPS FOR ARRANGING SUMMER FLOWERS



- Always remember that flower arranging is a hobby, not to be taken too seriously. It is not a task, it is a gift, a gift of creative talents and of the beauty of God's world.
- Flowers in the sanctuary follow no rules. Whatever arrangements blend into the background and beautify the place are suitable. Try varying the position of arrangements from week to week, adapting size and shape to the location -- on stands, on the floor, on the retable. And one arrangement is just as suitable as two or three.
- If you will add two tablespoons of vinegar and two tablespoons of sugar to your cut flower arrangement it will extend the life of the flowers.
- If you find hydrangeas difficult to arrange, submerge them in a bathtub filled with water overnight. (Keep the guests out of the bathroom!)
- If flowers won't stay put, us a little glue on the bottom, then stick in the oasis.
- Select different styles of flowers, mixing various shapes and sizes. Insert the largest flowers first. Add the remaining flowers and herbs, filling empty spaces, particularly around the rim.
- Strip leaves that may fall below the water line and re-cut the stems.
- Pipe cleaners will strengthen and lengthen the hollow stems of daffodils while conveying moisture.
- When the flowers wilt, cut a couple inches off the stem, at an angle. Put them in warm water in a dark place until the water is cool. Then put them in cold water. They should perk up.
- When arranging tulips, to prevent drooping heads stab a straight pin into each stem at an upward angle, just below the flower. Be sure the point has gone up into the cup, pull out the pin immediately.

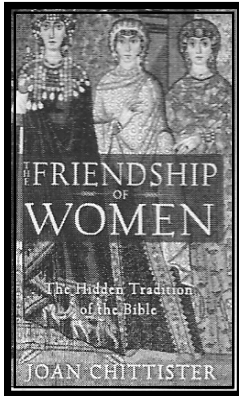


BOOKSHELF

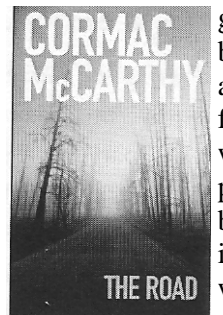
SUMMER READING: A LIST

*Polly Marshall**

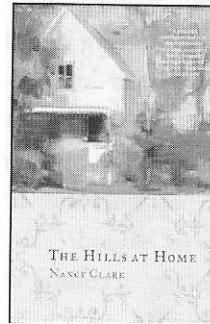
Who doesn't love to share book titles? No one waits as anxiously as I do to hear a friend say "you must read this book." If you haven't already, you may want to read the following: High on my list is *The Friendship of Women: the Hidden Tradition of the Bible* by Joan Chittister, a book that will lift your spirits and make you grateful for your women friends. Perhaps, as Chittister suggests, it's that women feel friends are superior in some way - someone to emulate. Drawing on the Bible stories of Lydia, Prisca, Deborah, Phoebe, Esther, Martha of Bethany, Veronica, Elisabeth, Ruth, Anne, Miriam, and Mary Magdalene, we take on qualities that make us strong for our journey. As Chittister says, "Women carry women friends down the rutted roads of a woman's life until the friend is strong enough to make the journey on her own."



Nothing satisfies more than a good work of fiction and *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy will hold your attention as it stirs up unspeakable fears, only to settle on a truth that we all know: love between two people ultimately makes the unbearable bearable. A father and son journey in a burned-out world, moving forward relentlessly although there is on hope in sight. They are able to endure only through the father's love for his son and the son's belief in his father. McCarthy's definition of love - "each the other's world entire" - and the description of courage that allows people to go on in the face of odds too many to count will resonate with you long after the book ends. You go on, the father says, because you have to carry the fire." This is a heartbreaking book but one that will leave you with immense hope. Set aside uninterrupted periods for reading because you will find it difficult to put this book down.



Relax, smile and enjoy a beautiful spring and summer in your garden or in a garden lounge chair reading a favorite book. Always remember gentle, saintly Julian of Norwich's words: "All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well."



For a lighter touch, try Nancy Clark's first novel *The Hills at Home*. It is shot through with laughter, and charm. This is the first book in a series of three about an extended family whose ancestral home is inhabited by the matriarch in charge of this holy land, retired schoolteacher Lily Hill. They all descend on Lily at once and stay.

Lily is an endearing character with many eccentricities, but there are other family members to warm your heart. Find your favorite in one of the best books you are likely to read for a while. Even now, I will pick up this book and let it fall open to any page, and just have a little visit with this lovely and beguiling family.

And yes, you should buy *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*, as well.

*National Altar Guild Association, Issue # 151

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DIRECTOR'S LETTER *(continued from page 1)*

Doyle, will present what sounds like an especially fascinating session. She feels that we have a special responsibility in the church..."we do visual theology. The moment we enter worship our ears hear words and music, our bodies taste the bread and cup, we smell the flowers and touch the hymnal. Yet, most of the information we receive is through our eyes, so we who care for the worship space have a special responsibility...we do visual theology. We tell others who God is by our care for the worship space."

Blessings and love to you all,

Martha

* From Francis Bacon's essay "Of Gardens"

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DIOCESAN ALTAR GUILD LOAN CLOSET

The door of the Diocesan Altar Guild Loan Closet has been opening and closing with much enthusiasm as vestments have been received and altar items dispersed. Joann Olson, Altar Guild Director at St. Anne's by the Fields, Ankeny, brought many beautiful, hand embroidered stoles and chasubles to the Loan Closet. We are exceedingly thankful for the vestments and very happy that Joann found some needed altar vessels to take back to St. Anne's.

Sarah Lopez, warden of the Church of the Savior, Clermont, called to ask if the Loan Closet might

have a pair of processional torches. An unused pair was found within St. Paul's Cathedral. Also, the Church of the Savior was in need of a thurible. Thankfully, St. Mark's Church, Des Moines, happened to have a second, older thurible that was in storage and gladly and generously presented it to Clermont. Sarah is also looking for a cover/lid for their sacristy piscina. I was at a loss with that request, but will refer it to all of you throughout the state. I don't believe I have ever seen such a lid (and am very curious.) also I will contact the National Altar Guild Association concerning Sarah's request, as well as Donna Hostetler's search for an olive green Almy chasuble. If you have a need don't hesitate to call me or to visit the Loan Closet. Sarah reports that the thurible was used for the first time on Rogation Day and preceded the procession around the boundaries of the parish.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

OF COURSE, WE MEET!
WE MEET WITHIN YOUR HEART,
AND GATHERED IN THE CIRCLE OF YOUR LOVE
WE GREET EACH OTHER FONDLY
AND BEGIN THAT INTERCHANGE
OF THOUGHT AND JOKE AND PRAYER
THAT KNITS US EACH TO EACH.
NO MATTER THAT OUR LIVES ARE LIVED APART.
YOU REACH ACROSS THE MILES
AND BY YOUR LOVE
UNITE US IN YOUR HEART.

*Elizabeth Rooney, Packages,
Published by Brigham Farm
Publishing, www.brighamfarm.com
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National Altar Guild Association*

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